

Northshore School District Case Study.

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Xerox digital printing solutions help Northshore School District's print shop generate a return on their investment in technology, despite historic budget cuts.

Northshore School District Printing and Distribution Services

Northshore School District is located in Bothell, WA, and covers a 60-mile swath that includes 32 schools with more than 19,000 students. The Printing and Distribution Services department is responsible for meeting the demanding printing needs of this rather large district.

Typical applications include sports programs, color brochures, large-format posters, and yearbook supplements. The print shop can also output specialty applications such as window decal stickers—which were recently produced for one of the district’s championship-winning football teams. Two operators work split shifts from 5:30 am to 6:00 pm to meet the demand. Currently, the print shop generates 200,000 black-and-white and 50,000 color impressions per month.

While the print shop is there to serve the district, the schools are not required to use its services—so quality, turnaround time, and customer satisfaction are key elements to keeping print work within the district and not with outside vendors.

"We were ready for something new—we had been planning for the future—and Xerox created a solution that fit what we needed."

–Paul Katz,
Manager of Printing and
Distribution Services,
Northshore School District

Challenge

The Northshore School District's print shop serves as a resource for 32 schools with more than 19,000 students from kindergarten through 12th grade. Increasing demand in both volume and speed for four-color work had put a strain on the two offset printing presses the shop was using for color.

In addition, like many schools and businesses around the country, budgets were being slashed. Paul Katz, manager of Printing and Distribution Services for the district, saw the need for his print shop to become more efficient. “Somehow, we needed to figure out a way to do the same amount of work with less labor—to touch each project fewer times—and at the same time, allow for growth, get new customers, and plan for the future,” he explains.

In addition, his department is also responsible for things like graphics, mail processing, a media resource center, and more—further diluting the resources and budget dollars that can be allocated to the print shop. A daunting challenge, to be sure. Katz knew that to increase efficiency without increasing staff, he needed to make an investment in technology. But how could he justify a capital expenditure such as that in a climate where school budgets are being slashed at historic levels?

Solution

The key to this solution was the capabilities of the Xerox iGen3® Digital Production Press with a Xerox FreeFlow® Print Server. With the iGen3, Northshore School District was able to become the four-color printing hub for a consortium of school districts that share work and consolidate resources to save money. This allowed Katz to justify the initial investment in hardware by increasing the volume of work—not only within Northshore and other school districts, but eventually outside the organization as well.

The versatile digital printing capabilities of the iGen3 also allowed the print shop to eliminate the four-color offset presses and other older equipment, increase efficiency, and reduce maintenance costs.

Benefits

The investment in the iGen3 has paid off for Katz and the Northshore School District in more ways than one. First, it has helped him meet his department's goal to be more efficient and expend less manual labor. "The two extra paper drawers are really helpful," he says. "On very long jobs, we can just fill them and walk away." In this manner, operators are able to easily produce 25,000 copies of a 60-page, 11" x 17" booklet—collated, stapled, and face-trimmed, all inline. The upgrade in equipment and capabilities has also allowed the print shop to bring a district calendar and transportation guide back in-house, jobs that were previously outsourced for finishing.

The other benefit has been a steady stream of work for local non-profit agencies. In fact, 70% of the work that Katz's team produces on the iGen3 is for customers who are outside the district operations. And remarkably, that figure is based solely on word-of-mouth recommendations, as the print shop does not advertise or promote its services beyond its open houses for teachers and PTA members.

Clearly, it's the quality of the color materials that's doing the sell job for the print shop. "The quality has met all of our expectations," says Katz. "Our customers are thrilled to get their jobs in color at a decent price." In fact, one of his customers remarked that the quality of a yearbook insert that Katz's staff had produced on the iGen3 exceeded that of the offset-printed yearbook itself—which is the kind of impression you have to make to turn a challenge into an opportunity.

