



Fox Valley Technical College Case Study.

Cutting lead times from
two weeks to two days.

For more information,
visit www.xerox.com/digitalprofit



Xerox digital workflow solutions help Fox Valley's print shop dramatically increase output and slash turnaround times—without adding equipment.

Fox Valley Technical College Graphic Arts & Printing Technologies Center

This facility is “unlike any other in the world,” says Gary Kilgas, Dean of Graphic Arts and Printing Technologies at Fox Valley Technical College. “It contains so many processes under one roof.”

Located in the D. J. Bordini Center at the college in Appleton, WI, it's a comprehensive lab dedicated to teaching commercial printing, package and label printing, digital technology, and desktop publishing to printing program students and business and industry customers. Covering more than 80,000 sq. ft., it employs 45 people and 10 faculty members.

The Printing Services function, which serves the needs of this large technical institution of 6,000 equivalent full-time students, has six staff members. Typical applications include booklets, curriculum materials such as course packs, flyers, stationery and business cards, cut vinyl signage, large format posters and four-color banners.

A decade-long partnership with Xerox includes the very first installation of an iGen3® Digital Production Press at a college in 2005. It also led to the creation of the unique Fox Facility, a 2,000-square-foot showroom adjacent to the Printing Services department that features 10 to 12 Xerox devices. According to Kilgas, this “gives students exposure to new technology first—Web, workflow, database—and keeps us on the cutting edge.”

“Xerox has been so helpful in providing resources and helping us learn the software packages. It's the essence of a true partnership, a win-win: we share knowledge and move forward together.”

—Gary Kilgas,
Dean of Graphic Arts and Printing
Technologies,
Fox Valley Technical College

Challenge

At any time, Fox Valley's Printing Services department has roughly 150 jobs in the queue. A crushing backlog of print jobs had created unacceptable wait times and a decreasing level of customer confidence. This was exacerbated by the fact that since the college both educates students and trains professionals—even FBI agents, for example—it requires a high level of professionalism in their printed materials, and turnaround times are critical.

With demanding printing requirements such as these, clearly the time had come for the department to automate their internal processes, increase efficiency and streamline their workflow. “We knew we had to move forward rapidly to change our internal processes in order to improve turnaround times,” says Gary Kilgas, Dean of Graphic Arts and Printing Technologies. At the same time, they needed to enhance their capabilities to meet demand, raise the level of print quality and restore faith in the department among customers.

Solution

Sometimes, it doesn't take a significant investment to make a dramatic improvement. Shana Farrell, Manager, Printing & Business Services, said that when she joined the department, “we just weren't fully harnessing the capabilities of the resources we already had.”

What they had was a Xerox iGen3® Digital Production Press with Xerox FreeFlow® Makeready and Web Services software, plus a Xerox Nuvera® 120 Digital Production System and a Xerox DocuTech® 6115 Production Publisher. The key was to employ Xerox training to help them use their equipment and workflow solutions to their full potential—to help them plan ahead, eliminate manual setup and makeready, and increase output. Overall, Farrell wanted the department to undergo a significant shift from a copy center to a print-on-demand resource center.

Xerox representatives met with department staff to help identify the bottlenecks and offer solutions. They mapped out workflow and made recommendations on where efficiencies could be realized. “We worked as a team,” Farrell says. “It helped us take our process improvements to another level.”

The capabilities of the iGen3 allowed the department to accommodate the growing demand for printed color materials to support its more than 200 educational programs. “We saw the future of digital printing, especially variable data color printing with the iGen3,” Kilgas says. “While I don't see sheet-fed going away any time soon, digital is growing 10 to 20% a year. We knew we had to be part of that trend.”

At the same time, the department began to use more of the capabilities of its Xerox FreeFlow® Makeready and Web Services software as part of its campaign to dramatically streamline and improve internal processes. “Now we track every single thing we do, and gather the information we need to be more efficient,” Farrell says. For the future, the Printing Services department is looking to add FreeFlow Process Manager to further improve output and increase efficiency through automation.

Benefits

Xerox equipment and software solutions have helped dramatically increase output speed and volume. In just 18 months, turnaround times improved from two weeks to two days—without adding additional equipment. This has resulted in both tangible benefits (revenues have increased significantly) and intangible benefits (trust in Printing Services among customers has risen exponentially). “Even though we're an in-plant, we need to compete like we're on the outside,” Farrell asserts. “We've reinvented the department.”

Doing more jobs in less time. The iGen3 has helped dramatically improve the turnaround time for color jobs. Farrell says that the ability to run a job and finish without drying time, plus eliminating the plate-making step, saves both time and money.

The iGen3 has also enhanced quality and appearance of seminar materials dramatically—from stapled black-and-white copies to full-color, spiral-bound booklets with the cover and insides printed in the same pass. This has raised the perceived value of these materials among seminar participants and increased customer satisfaction significantly. “I believe the quality of the printed materials is what sets our work apart,” Farrell says.

In addition, Xerox FreeFlow Makeready and Web Services have vastly improved the order entry process and turnaround times.

More efficient and more responsive to its customers. The ability to print on different sizes and types of media and combine them into a single piece has enhanced the department's ability to meet the needs of their customers. Printing Services has become more of a partner and consultant rather than just a vendor. “We ask questions, make suggestions and add value,” Farrell says. “It's saying to the customer, ‘How can we make you look good? How can we save you money?’”

FreeFlow Makeready has helped the department become more fluid and flexible, so possible scheduling conflicts are addressed upfront and emergencies are averted. “We began batching differently, splitting runs—getting creative to keep jobs moving,” Farrell says. She adds that the department is working with customers to create a digital library for reprints, “so we can just grab the file and run with it.”

Automated order processing drives improvements. Previously, the department had used a cumbersome manual process for order fulfillment. Thanks to FreeFlow Web Services, it now has 350 order templates set up, all automated in real time. This has not only increased efficiency immeasurably, it allows department staff to gather intelligence on every order, and get measurements they simply could not before. Customers receive automatic order confirmation and status reports, and a three-month billing process has been reduced to two weeks after month's end. Farrell says that this access to information has also allowed the department to work more as a team.

The department has also employed its own innovations, such as projecting FreeFlow Web Services screens on a large wall so all employees can view all jobs in real time. Staffers have worked to streamline internal processes, employing Six Sigma methods.

What's next? When asked what he sees in the future for Fox Valley Technical College's Printing Services department, Kilgas points to another benefit of digital printing: “Color is taking over,” he says. “Now with the iGen3, Printing Services is able to charge less than half, sometimes one-third, of what outside sources would charge for color printing jobs.”

Farrell is working with Xerox representatives on offering volume pricing to their customers—running more borderline offset jobs on the iGen3. “It's just another way we're looking to use our resources to their full capability,” she says. “The iGen3 is capable of so much more.”

Kilgas adds that Fox Valley is one of the leading colleges in using variable data, one-to-one marketing processes to help the college's recruitment, student support, and fundraising efforts. “We look for opportunities to do on-demand, targeted, and personalized materials to add value for our customers,” he says. “It's a significant part of our future.”

In the meantime, Farrell says that Xerox training updates will “help our staff understand the latest and greatest in technology, and make us more flexible and adaptable.” And clearly, the first phase of this adaptation has been a rousing success.

