



University of Alabama at Birmingham Case Study.

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Xerox digital printing solutions help the University of Alabama at Birmingham reverse the outsourcing of jobs and achieve its best year ever.

University of Alabama at Birmingham Printing & Mailing

As the state of Alabama's largest employer, the University of Alabama at Birmingham has 18,800 employees and serves more than 17,000 students. The Printing and Mailing Department uses a Xerox iGen3® Digital Production Press as well as traditional offset presses to produce high-quality materials at a low cost to serve the university's enormous need for printed materials.

The department's iGen3 averages 120,000 color impressions per month and 25,000 black-and-white impressions. Typical applications include course books, direct mail, posters and banners, a wide variety of brochures and marketing materials, newsletters, flyers, and more. The print shop is the sole provider of letterhead, stationery, envelopes, and business cards for the university and its affiliates, and also produces variable data print materials and photo books. Rounding out its wide range of services, the print shop also offer decals, magnets, and other specialty applications.

The Printing and Mailing Department's experienced staff acts as a partner and information resource—not just a vendor—for its customers. The department's staff offers education and advice about what kind of paper to use, and how much to order; help in turning a design idea into reality; assistance in developing a project timeline; and ways to minimize mailing costs and work within tight budgets.

"Today's small customer can be tomorrow's large one. Give them good quality, a fair price, and quick turnaround, and you've got a satisfied customer. Xerox has helped us do that."

—Steve Murray,
Director, Business & Auxiliary Services,
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Challenge

A university as large as Alabama at Birmingham makes uncompromising demands on its print shop. And since customers are free to go outside the university for printing services, the copy center and print shop have to continuously work to stay competitive on price, speed, and quality.

Despite the heroic efforts of his staff, Steve Murray, director of Business and Auxiliary Services, admits there was a time not long ago when they were losing the battle. "We needed to make a major equipment upgrade," he says, "and work hard at stopping the outflow of jobs." For example, there was an increasing demand for short-run color work—but with only a six-color offset press, they had no affordable way to produce it. So they were missing opportunities to increase their volume, as well as their customer satisfaction.

In addition, Murray says that customer requirements have changed. It's no longer quality-speed-price, pick any two—now customers demand all three. "There's a trend toward having to have everything right away," he says. "For example, someone walking in this morning and needing 1,000 brochures by this afternoon." His operation needed a faster, more efficient way to do color work and meet this increasing need for speed.

Solution

The university's print shop made the decision to upgrade to a digital press—and quickly determined that the Xerox iGen3® Digital Production Press was the right choice to deliver the high-quality, short-run color work that customers were looking for. "Most projects now are smaller," Murray says. "So instead of one magazine on press for two or three days, we're running 10 jobs on the iGen3."

They also added a Xerox FreeFlow® Print Server and FreeFlow Makeready® workflow software. This made it easier for copy staff to execute jobs without sending them through prepress, saving time and money. It also allowed them to combine hard copy, disk, and scanned input to work more efficiently.

Using the iGen3 with an off-line stitcher and perfect binder, they were able to keep many jobs in-house, such as sports programs, athletic media guides, professors' books, pocket art books, med-school graduate books, literature review books, and all manner of university marketing materials.

Benefits

Initially, when Murray advanced the idea of adding digital equipment to his department's arsenal, many wondered why add digital equipment when you have offset? "They both complement each other beautifully," he says. "It allows us to look at a job and choose the best, most cost-efficient way possible to produce it."

For example, while the iGen3 is known for its color prowess, Murray says they're moving more and more black-and-white jobs there as well. "Things like pads, forms, and business cards actually run more cost efficiently on the iGen3," he claims. And it's not just black-and-white: their customers realize savings of 50% when compared to what they used to pay for offset printing of business cards with a four-color athletic logo.

Quality that exceeds expectations. UAB Medicine was working with the print shop on an offset-printed magazine, and when they needed next-day samples for a board meeting, the print shop ran them on the iGen3. They looked so good, the board members thought printing

was complete and asked when it would be mailing. Which illustrates why the iGen3 excels at short-run color printing. "It's silly to print 500 brochures offset when we can run it for half the cost or less on the iGen, and no one can tell the difference," Murray says.

One satisfied customer deserves another. Once the print shop raised the level of its performance, word of mouth spread quickly. In fact, it resulted in their best year ever in terms of revenue. "We've gotten a lot of business simply because we've taken care of people and made them happy," Murray says. "And there are always opportunities for new business—there are always new people coming to campus, people who don't know we're here."

It keeps you running. Of course, it helps to have equipment you can rely on. "I don't think we've had a single day that we were down," Murray says. "We take care of the equipment, so we can run it and run it." Along the way, Murray adds that he and his staff are still only scratching the surface using the capabilities of the iGen3. "We discover new things every day," he says, "like spot varnish and all kinds of fun things."

Variable data. Constant opportunity. The addition of the iGen3 also opened up new opportunities in variable data printing, which Murray says is "an excellent fit in an educational environment." Initially, the print shop has concentrated on simple jobs that involve mainly text. But one recent project that has taken it to the next level involves printing all parking tag permits for the campus (8,000 per year for students alone). They're being printed on Xerox polyester paper and die-cut with a foil security stamp. Each tag has a four-color photo with a bar code, permit number, and lot designation. Without the capabilities of the iGen3, this project would have been outsourced and might not have been financially feasible.

"The digital world is growing, and the iGen3 is helping us keep up with our customers," Murray says. "It's been a key differentiator." For the future, the print shop is considering adding another iGen3. "Our digital work is the part of the business that's growing," he says, "because it's helping people save on their printing."

"The iGen3 has brought us a lot of new customers," Murray says, "and opened up new markets."

