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Client: C.P. Bourg, Inc.
Date: August 4, 2008
Project: eDOC Communications BST-BDF Application Story – Final
Approx. Length: Body copy = 981 words

eDOC Communications' Finishes with Three Million Booklets and a Fast ROI with Bourg BST-BDF

A printer today wouldn't think of running their shop without digital technology, but it doesn't mean that every procedure should dance to a digital tune. At least, that's what suburban Chicago-based eDOC Communications discovered when it bound both of its booklet makers in-line to two digital presses.

The Mt. Prospect, Illinois-based firm – which specializes in producing CD and DVD booklets for mostly large companies including some *Fortune 500* clients – cites digital capabilities as its greatest strength and clear specialty. But over the years, after starting as an offset operation in the 1970s and transitioning to digital between 1999 and 2001, eDOC has found that applying the right production tool to the task sometimes means matching its digital capabilities with more conventional methods.

For example, the firm recently stopped outsourcing \$1 million worth of offset production annually by installing two 6-color Heidelberg presses to supplement its five digital Océ VP650s and two NEXPRESS machines. But with a print workload exceeding 500,000 pieces even during slow months, bringing offset in house put an even greater strain on the firm's already overburdened document finishing operation.

Keeping Jobs In-house

eDOC Communications employs about 70 people and operates three production shifts. The company's goal is to keep everything in house, except specialty work like custom die-cutting, all the way from print to the bindery and out for shipping. According to Phil Rokosz, who manages the digital side of the firm's production, "We can take care of any customer that needs print media through whatever method is best – whether that's digital, or offset or some combination of the two technologies."

eDOC's finishing operation had featured two in-line booklet makers as well as a perfect binder, folder, two cutters, gluing, padding, tab-cutting and shrink-wrap machinery. The in-line booklet makers were tied to the firm's Xerox DocuTech 6135 and 6180 printers, and used for stitching "live" work as well as "bypass" jobs from the shop's other print systems.

In fact, eDOC's print production business was going so well that both of the stitchers working full-tilt couldn't handle the increasing demand. Worse than that, any time either stitcher went down, it took much of eDOC's digital B&W production capability down with it, Rokosz recalled.

"In our business, missing a deadline isn't an option," he says. "The customer gives us an order, and we need to decide pretty quickly whether to keep the job in-house or send it out. Because of those in-line stitchers, we often were forced to send finishing work out that should have stayed inside."

Keeping it Simple, and Productive

Rokosz had a good experience with binding and finishing equipment from C.P. Bourg at his previous job at Wallace Printing, so he contacted Bourg dealer Dave Webb at Tompkins Printing Equipment Company. In July 2006, after considering all options, eDOC replaced both of the in-line stitchers with a 10-pocket Bourg BST-10d+ Suction Tower Collator connected to a Bourg TD-d Document Stacker out one side and to a Bourg BDF Document Finisher receiving collated sets out the other.

The Bourg BST features a user-friendly touch-screen interface and fully automated tool-less setup for easy job set-up, and innovative "vacuum belt" technology that accommodates a wide variety of paper types, weights and sizes without marking or skipping – crucial to eDOC's operation. The speed of both Bourg systems is also a plus, said Rokosz, noting they are able to route up to 4,200 collated sets per hour out the left side to the stacker for manual finishing, or out the right side to the BDF, which integrates stitch, fold and trim in a single compact cabinet.

"My goal always is to make things simple and improve procedures, and the Bourg system helps me do that," says Rokosz.

With the Bourg BST-BDF system running off-line, Phil Rokosz's group was able to handle the shop's growing digital and offset workload. The move saved eDOC enough time to turn the tide of outsourced jobs, while saving enough money to give eDOC a 100% return on its equipment investment in less than three months.

"Every month we get 30-item roll-outs from a client, with booklets from 8 to 32 pages that all have to be saddle-stitched," Rokosz explains. "It used to take us 30 to 40 minutes just to set up the fairly simple jobs we were able to keep in house, and a month to complete the roll-out. "Now we're done in two weeks – including packing the job out to different locations. The Bourg system makes it easy to set up each job, and it's really reliable, which lets us keep the system running until the job is done."

According to Rokosz, who keeps tight records to comply with eDOC's adherence to Six-Sigma system procedures, the Bourg collator and document finisher produced almost three million booklets for eDOC Communications in 24 months.

The new system is not only faster, but also much more flexible than the in-line stitchers, Rokosz explains, "We can run up to 20 sheets of 60-pound coated stock, use it to feed some jobs manually and mix digitally-printed bodies with offset-printed covers. We also can send some jobs to the Bourg TD-d stacker and others to the BDF to be stitched, folded and trimmed and shipped in short order. Our backlog now is minimal."

Rokosz figures the off-line system saves eDOC four or five steps on some jobs, while also reducing the amount of waste to less than one percent. For example, on a 1,000-book job using the old system, Rokosz says his group had to run 50 booklets over to ensure enough useable product. With the new system, they run an extra five.

"We use the Bourg system every day and we keep it running," says Rokosz.

"The only problem with the new system is that it's *too* efficient," he laughs. "I wanted a second BST-BDF, but I can't justify getting it because we keep meeting our goals with just one."

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