

Largest European CD manufacturer digitally prints short runs with EFI Fiery JobFlow automated workflows

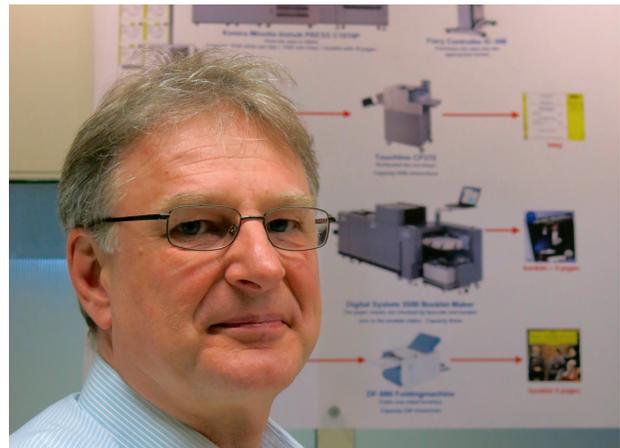
The Entertainment Distribution Company GmbH (EDC) in Langenhagen, Germany, produces up to a million CDs, DVDs and Blu-ray discs a day, inserting the printed silver discs into plastic cases along with offset-printed inlay cards or booklets. Since 2015, all inlay-card and booklet jobs totalling fewer than 300 copies have been digitally printed using an automated workflow built with EFI™ Fiery® JobFlow™.

Offset too costly for short runs

To make the offset printing of the small, four-color CD inlay cards and booklets as cost-efficient as possible, the 12cm x 12cm images are gang printed. The offset printing process requires not only four printing plates, but also numerous start-up sheets before the first usable sheet is produced. That means offset printers must charge a minimum run of 300 CD print items, even if EDC actually only needs 50. "The printing cost per CD for inlay cards and booklets is much too high as a result. And with the many short runs we have, it adds up to a considerable sum," explains Michael Beer, Head of Technical Support in CD Production.

In search of a solution, he looked into the possibility of having short runs produced at lower cost by digital print service providers, such as copy shops. But, while the prints were cheaper, there would have been no overall cost savings because of the added cost of shipping to Langenhagen and the difficulties of integrating the print products into high-volume CD production. Beer realised that he needed to have digital printing and CD duplication in one room in order to use both cost-efficiently.

He paid visits to major digital press manufacturers, until the staff at Konica Minolta's European headquarters, right next door in Langenhagen, finally proposed a



Challenge:

"The inlay cards and booklets for our CDs are offset-printed. But the shortest possible run with this printing method is 300 copies, making color prints in shorter runs much too expensive."

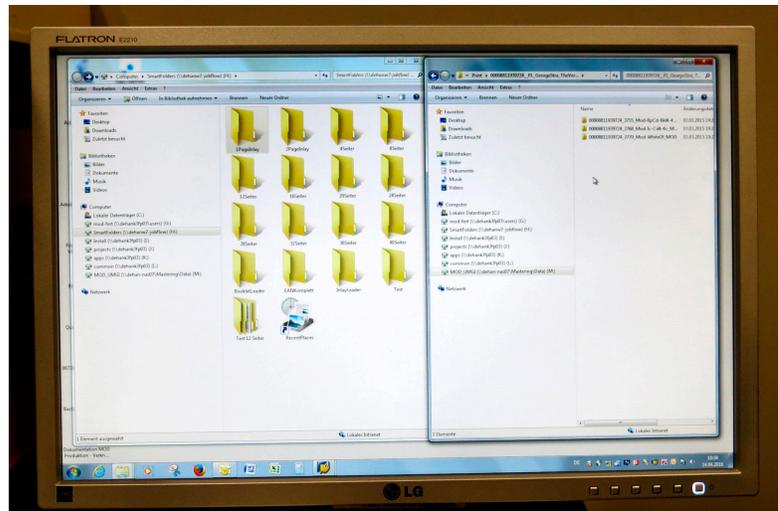
MICHAEL BEER, DISC PRODUCTION TECHNICAL SUPPORT LEAD, EDC



The Entertainment Distribution Company GmbH, based in Langenhagen, Germany, is the biggest integrated manufacturing and distribution center for CDs, DVDs and Blu-ray discs in Europe. With over 100 years of history, the company is a business steeped in tradition, and one that has produced a variety of innovations. These include: the long-playing record or "LP" in 1951, the cassette in 1965, and the first mass-produced CD in 1982.

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The jobs on the right have to be dragged to the correct Fiery JobFlow workflow folder.

vable, low-cost solution. The inlay cards or booklets could be printed 3- or 6-up on both sides in SRA3 format, separated by a cutter, and the booklets created in a booklet maker – a combined stapling, folding, and cropping machine.

No printing experience required

This solution, however, posed two problems. First, no one at EDC had any printing experience. Second, the incoming PDF files would have had to go through several time-consuming and error-prone preparation steps.

Thanks to a partnership between EFI and Konica Minolta, Konica Minolta was able to guarantee offset-like image quality that even employees with minimal training could achieve – by combining EFI's IC-308 Fiery server with its own bizhub PRESS C1070P.

Solution:

“The solution was to move short-run jobs into a new manufacturing-on-demand department. This allows us to simultaneously duplicate CDs, print the labels, and digitally print the inlay cards and booklets using Fiery JobFlow.”

MICHAEL BEER, DISC PRODUCTION TECHNICAL SUPPORT LEAD, EDC



Renate Zengerling is starting a new print job on the Konica Minolta bizhub PRESS C1070P.



CD stack with printed labels.

Automated workflow for hassle-free inlay print

For the problem of data input, Konica Minolta had recently introduced the latest version of EFI Fiery JobFlow, a workflow solution that provides powerful automation functionality for job preparation steps. With Fiery JobFlow you can build workflows that automatically preflight incoming PDF files, improve the image quality using the image enhancement feature, and impose the document in the desired layout using Fiery Impose templates. Using Fiery FreeForm™, EAN codes can be added to control the automated binding system. All these manual steps can be streamlined in a single workflow for flyers or any other print product. All the operator has to do is drag the file to be printed into the designated workflow hot folder, and all the remaining steps are completed automatically. If any errors are detected, they are displayed and can be corrected, either automatically or by the operator.

New short-run department

EDC decided to move short-run CD production to a new manufacturing-on-demand (MoD) department.

Customer data is stored on a networked file server using a PC with a Windows operating system that acts as the EFI Fiery JobFlow server. The CD duplicator retrieves the master and label data from the network. Print data is pulled into the hot folder, verified automatically, and sent to the Fiery server that controls the digital press.

Today CDs are produced on three Rimage duplicators with four burners each, which can turn out 30 CDs each hour, and print the labels on the front using thermal transfer technology. Jobs are entered on the Rimage station by the operator, and then processed in the order they were entered.

Result:

“Thanks to Fiery JobFlow, we avoid input errors, save time, and can concentrate on monitoring the CD duplicator and digital printing. If we had digitally printed all the short-run jobs we’ve had in recent years using the automated workflow of Fiery JobFlow, we could have saved a significant amount of money.”

MICHAEL BEER, DISC PRODUCTION
TECHNICAL SUPPORT LEAD, EDC

Why EDC picked Fiery JobFlow

One component of Fiery JobFlow is Enfocus PitStop, the most sophisticated preflight workflow in the printing industry. EDC wanted JobFlow so they could integrate PitStop preflight and action lists with Fiery features such as document imposition and FreeForm VDP templates. They also saw the advantage of having a completely automated workflow.

The only remaining challenge was EDC's lack of experience in generating workflows. Thomas Persch, Sales Development Manager at EFI Electronics For Imaging GmbH, was able to help EDC develop JobFlow automated processes adapted to their specific needs — right down to the last detail. "Printers working with Enfocus PitStop have no difficulty creating a workflow, especially with the tight integration Fiery JobFlow offers," says Persch, who has since installed Fiery JobFlow for five other customers in Germany.

Total satisfaction

Michael Beer was very reassured to know he could rely on support from EFI and Konica Minolta. This high-quality support is also reflected in the positive attitude of the two employees working in the department, who have no difficulty managing the entire production process on their own. "We're preparing to expand production with additional duplicators to better exploit the investments we've made to date," says Beer, adding that his company could probably use Fiery JobFlow to good effect in mass production as well.

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