Automated EFI Digital StoreFront and Fiery workflow boosts quality and service

**Challenge:**

The Arlington County, Va., Digital Production and Mail Center was looking for a way to streamline its operation and keep costs in line with local commercial printing companies. It was essential to the center’s continued success, as the county offices and schools it prints for can easily decide to send their work to the private sector. “We don’t have first right of refusal,” says Paul Sprow, the center’s manager. “So we benchmark our work to prices in the local area every three months. As our competition becomes more efficient, so must we.”

And Sprow knew just what was making his operation less efficient: “The configuration we had in place left too many automation gaps,” he says.

Ease-of-use and customer service were the first big steps in improving the operation. After speaking with his Xerox salesperson and attending a Xerox seminar on web-to-print technology, Sprow could see that EFI™ Digital StoreFront™ was the key to making his customers’ lives easier.

**Solution:**

The EFI web-to-print software exceeded their expectations: “Our customers have definitely expressed their satisfaction with how much easier it is for them to submit work to us,” says Sprow. “Not only do they like that they can view their documents through Digital StoreFront, they appreciate that they can obtain the cost of jobs up front.

“Digital StoreFront was the perfect solution to getting more work into our department,” Sprow adds. “It has increased our print volumes, and we are looking for even more growth.”
Once it substantially improved customer service with the web-to-print platform, the center, which also uses EFI PrintSmith™ business management software, sought out a fully integrated workflow that could use Job Definition Format (JDF) specifications for even more reliable, consistent production.

“We initially implemented Digital StoreFront to improve our job submission process and make it easier for end users to manage their own content,” Sprow says. “We quickly realized that to get the full benefit of this workflow, we needed JDF-compliant digital front ends for our digital presses, and EFI Fiery® servers were the logical choice.”

The center, which uses Xerox color and monochrome digital presses for nearly all of its work, added EFI Fiery digital front ends (DFEs) on all of its Xerox equipment. The center also adopted industry-leading digital print production workflow tools from the EFI Fiery Workflow Suite portfolio, including:

- Fiery Compose software for simple and quick document assembly.
- Fiery JobMaster, an advanced, PDF-based job-preparation product that combines late-stage editing with intuitive tab insertion and design, media assignment, page numbering and finishing management.
- Fiery Central, a PDF production solution that maximizes throughput and automates color and monochrome workflows.

Another Fiery Workflow Suite component the center uses, Fiery Impose, “is almost the greatest thing since sliced bread,” for county IT personnel who assist in the center’s print operations, says Sprow. That’s because Fiery Impose automates impositioning even on complex jobs, handling complex and time-consuming tasks in scenarios where it is all too easy to make a costly mistake.

With its complete Fiery Workflow Suite installation, the center now has an advanced, end-to-end JDF workflow that boosts quality and productivity. An added bonus is the fact that the center can outperform several local commercial print shops that do not have the same level of efficiency.

**Results:**

Before Sprow added Digital StoreFront, the center’s customers dropped files into a network folder for printing. This could often result in calls back and forth and/or misunderstandings about exactly what needed to be done. Now, when jobs are submitted, a complete job ticket accompanies them. A customer service representative reviews the job and then it goes straight to a press operator, or into a hot folder in the case of the center’s Xanté printers. “Our customers really like the new process,” Sprow says.

“Our JDF implementation with Digital StoreFront and Fiery was vital to our success,” he adds. Web-to-print had made it easier for customers to send work, but automated Digital StoreFront to Fiery integration through the entire workflow made it easier for center personnel to get jobs right the first time.
“Without automation, it is too easy to click a button and run 1,000 sheets before you realize that it was a two-sided job that should have only used 500 sheets,” according to Sprow. “While there is an investment cost to operating with Fiery and Digital StoreFront, it benefits you in the long run through cost savings and increased efficiency.”

The center produces a wide variety of work for departments in Arlington County and now that those departments are comfortable sending their work to the center, many of them have come to appreciate higher-quality options the center offers.

For example, the center’s Xerox Color 1000 Press has a clear dry ink option. “We have been able to make good use of that,” says Sprow, “because the Fiery DFE makes it easy to manage that clear dry ink layer using its real-time preview feature.

“We produce bookmarks for the county fair with DMV information,” he adds, “and the clear ink really makes them pop. We produce parking decals too, and we are looking at using clear ink as a security and anti-counterfeiting measure.”

The volume of color printing is increasing, all because of the better customer service and higher quality the center has been able to offer.

“With our Digital StoreFront software and Fiery DFEs working together in a JDF-based environment, we produce 25% more work with the same staff.”

PAUL SPROW, MANAGER, ARLINGTON COUNTY DIGITAL PRODUCTION AND MAIL CENTER
While the Digital StoreFront/Fiery configuration helps the center operate more efficiently and execute on new, high-quality projects, Sprow found that it also could make the staff nearly as productive on the road as they are in the shop. “Donny Smallwood, the center’s business analyst, and I were at EFI’s user group conference, Connect, when an emergency rush job came up,” Sprow explains. “We both have Fiery Command WorkStation on our laptops, and we were able to get the job prepared for production from our remote location in time to meet a 10:00 a.m. deadline.”