Established in 2006, Cauliflower Cards is a small family run business based in Hampshire, UK. During the last six years they have grown their business from a marketing idea to a highly successful company that operates 24 hours a day during peak periods. The Christmas card printing service they provide to 25,000 UK primary schools is quite distinctive and involves a very sophisticated process. Their workflow set-up, combined with unique scanning capabilities, allows them to handle many types of artwork and capture all of the artistic elements that children want represented on their cards.

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UK Company Turns Children's Colourful Artwork into High-Quality Greeting Cards Using a Fiery Driven™ Xerox® Press

Xerox EX Print Server, Powered by Fiery,® and Xerox® iGen4™ Press produce large volumes of imaginative and artistic children's personalised Christmas cards over a six-week rush period.

Challenge:

Cauliflower Cards needed to produce personalized Christmas cards for thousands of primary school children in a very short time frame. This pre-Christmas rush production period meant running 24 hours a day for six weeks to make sure customers had their cards in time for the holidays.

High Efficiency Workflow

The Managing Director, Hugh Speirs, believes that one of the things that set them apart from their competition is giving the children creative freedom when submitting their original card artwork. This includes designs with collage, straw, mosaics, silver and gold glitter and all kinds of drawing and writing materials. It would not be possible to process such creative, often three-dimensional, glitter covered artwork using a standard on-line ordering/artwork receiving system. Their approach allows for lots of flexibility and captures maximum detail in the children's drawings.

Solution:

The Fiery Driven Xerox iGen4 Press enabled them to efficiently run a three-shift production schedule over an intensive six-week period with minimum downtime. After testing several combinations of colour servers and digital presses, co-owner and managing director Hugh Speirs decided on EFI and Xerox.

"After trying other competitive RIPs, we became a bit wiser as to exactly what we need in an engine and server during the last few years, and we are very pleased with the iGen4 and Fiery server."

— Hugh Speirs
Joint Owner and Managing Director
Cauliflower Cards Ltd

Although colour accuracy is important, the children care more about the spelling of names and special messages. The artwork is received from the school and scanned using a vertical based scanning system to make sure the glitter and other special materials used do not fall off or get brushed away as it would using a flatbed. The name, message, and other information are added into the data collection system and then the artwork and data files are merged and a PDF is produced. Cauliflower Cards receive Christmas card orders *(packs)* that range from four to one thousand cards per order. Each order is made into a single PDF. Because the Fiery system supports a native end-to-end PDF workflow, Cauliflower Cards has the flexibility they need to process files in an expedient manner using a process that helps them print quickly and profitably.

Fiery Command Workstation® 5 Shortens Learning Curve

Receiving artwork for approximately 2,500 orders and delivering them in six weeks requires a tried and tested operation with as much automation and system up time as possible. Over the last five years Cauliflower Cards has continued to perfect this complex process to the point where they are running close to maximum capacity. During this time, they print approximately one million SRA3 *(oversize tabloid)* duplex colour and black and white pages. To support this workload, their employees increase from five to forty, requiring an easy-to-follow production process. In order to do this, Cauliflower Cards relies heavily on the Fiery Command WorkStation® 5 *(CWS 5)*, an intuitive user interface that adapts to all operators' skill levels. This helps them reduce errors and gives the operators control over queue management with a visual document preparation capability.

The Fiery CWS is one of the reasons Cauliflower Cards likes the Fiery server. Although the layout of the Fiery Command WorkStation 5 can be customized, the standard layout has been tried and tested by millions of operators, and is easy to learn, understand, and operate. It also offers a WYSIWYG display throughout the pre-press process. In addition, Fiery users can keep up to date with the latest technology and productivity enhancements by downloading new CWS releases from the EFI website.

Fiery SeeQuence Suite Simplifies Job Set Up

The productivity, power and flexibility of the Fiery server play a critical role in enabling the card packs to be printed as quickly and efficiently as possible. Any printing errors are caught early and only the necessary card packs rather than the complete PDF set are reprinted. Speirs said, "The Fiery server shows us the page number, which really is an advantage over the competition if there is something wrong with a page and you need to just reprint that page or card. Before we had the Fiery server, we had to go back to the PDF and extract the specific page or pages that needed to be reprinted. When you have the deadlines we do and operate a first-in first-out workflow, you can't afford the time to do that."

Cauliflower Cards create the PDFs in-house for each card pack. Because of the graphical nature of the cards, it is not always possible to tell which way the card's orientation should be printed, so checking the graphics on the card with the message becomes vital to make sure everything is set correctly. Speirs commented on their use of Fiery SeeQuence Impose for quick visual checks of imposition, "It is also very useful when doing imposition to be able to check if the pages are oriented correctly—sometimes it is difficult to tell which should be the correct way up as it is often not obvious from the artwork."

Automating Workflow with Fiery Hot Folders

Because of tight holiday card production schedule deadlines, Cauliflower Cards has focused heavily over the last six years on workflow automation. Fiery Hot Folders is a critical and vital tool that they use daily on the Fiery server, automating their workflow to eliminate simple and often repeated errors. With Fiery Hot Folders, users can produce finished jobs with just the drag and drop of a file, automating printing processes in any print environment, reducing human error and saving time. Speirs commented that they rely on this feature as an integral and efficient component of their production process to stay on track, "We extensively use Fiery Hot Folders—just about every job is printed via a Hot Folder. We really like the ability of the Hot Folders to handle imposition."
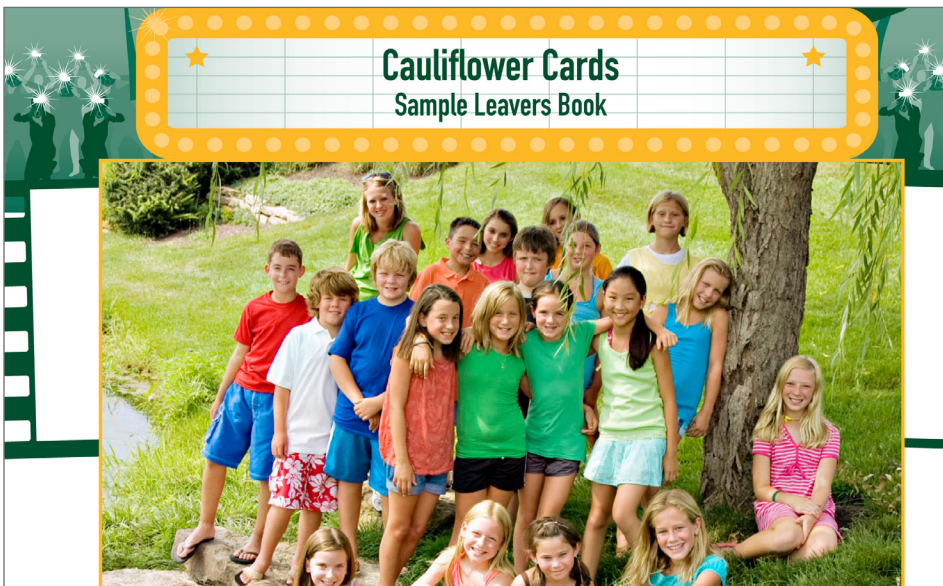
Future Growth

In the five years that Cauliflower Cards has been producing Christmas cards they have had three different digital presses and have continued to grow their business, which is now close to maximum capacity. Future growth is going to come from expanding their business outside of the Christmas card rush time with their existing customers. They are now focusing on adding yearbooks, photo books, school cookbooks and reward and incentive stickers to their portfolio of products.

Results:

"We are very pleased with the performance, reliability and speed of the iGen4 Press and Fiery server," says Hugh Speirs. The end-to-end Fiery/Xerox solution works in harmony with Cauliflower Card's workflow—printing and processing jobs at full press speeds. Quality, ease of use and EFI's workflow all add up to make the Fiery servers the right choice in the time-sensitive business of greeting card printing.

Beat the competition and profit with EFI's integrated Fiery®, VUTEk®, Jetrion®, Rastek™, Print MIS and Web-to-Print solutions. Visit www.efi.com to learn more.

Print to Win™ with EFI

EFI™ (www.efi.com) is a world leader in digital print servers and controllers, and print MIS, Web-to-print, superwide, wide-format and industrial inkjet solutions. EFI is dedicated to giving customers a competitive edge with award-winning, scalable products from creation to print that maximize productivity and increase profits.