## **AMERICAN RIVER COLLEGE DOES MORE IN A SMALL SPACE**

The on-campus print shop at American River College in California knows how to do big things in a tiny space. With just 900 square feet to work with, the college's inplant services the school's faculty and staff. And while the in-plant has had online tools for job submission for nearly a decade, their version of it wasn't allowing them to work at peak performance.

Don Reid, Supervisor of Printing Services, explains: "We started building our website in 2004, and it had a digital submission platform that we created ourselves. It wasn't perfect, but other options were really expensive – a digital storefront would run us \$40,000, plus a \$20,000 server and the IT staff to go along with it."

So the department worked with their homegrown solution for those few years. Don explains that they were only able to process around 100 jobs per day, because everything came in from their job submission tool as single html pages. When a customer filled out the form, a Perl script turned into a JDF (Job Definition Format) document, which produced a PDF and sent it to the in-plant's email.

The department quickly became overwhelmed by demand and outgrew the system. An operator in the plant had to open each file, read the ticket, figure out what file format that file came in as, and then open it (and hope it wasn't corrupted due to the customer sending as a Word file that didn't convert properly). Finally, the operator would print the document. This created a big bottleneck, especially during the school's peak times.

With jobs stacking up and delays growing longer, the school's faculty banded together and asked the vice president to consider a better solution. In 2008, the inplant finally received a full digital storefront. The effect, according to Don, was immediate: "Once we got the digital storefront set up and plugged into our new JDF workflow, we took 100 jobs in one click and hit 'print.' It was a new chapter in the life of our department." The operator's job shifted from trying to keep up with 100 print jobs to error checking and quality control.

Don's in-plant finally had a job submission solution that could keep up with demand; now they just needed to make sure their equipment could do the same. Their two Canon imagePRESS mono production printers were one piece of that puzzle...but Don says that space was still a big concern. With seven people trying to work in 900 square feet, they didn't have room to add another machine when demand overwhelmed them again. The in-plant has to process more than 2 million clicks in peak months, and they quickly outgrew those two printers. Reluctantly, Don started sending customers off-campus to get their printing done in time.

Then the in-plant's technology partner, Ray Morgan Company, suggested a new solution: a machine produced by Canon (specifically, the former Ocè company) that was rated at 8 million clicks per month and 300 pages per minute. Canon helped Don's department integrate the printers with a JDF workflow. The solution eliminates the department's need for a leased MicroPress. Don notes that the school's fall 2015 semester will be the first time the in-plant's equipment will match printing demand.

His best advice for other in-plants: "Take baby steps. Do your research and see if a solution will fit before you jump in (like we did with our homegrown job submission tool). New technology is a significant investment – but it's only expensive if you're not able to fully leverage it."

He says that, for in-plants dealing with error-ridden, inefficient processes, an update can make all the difference. And that difference may be between remaining viable as a department...or fading away in the face of outsourcing.

## **GEEK NOTE:**

This case study originally appeared in the book *Business Transformation: A Path to Profit for In-Plant Facilities* by John Foley, Jr. I rewrote this book for a new market Mr. Foley's company, InterlinkONE, wanted to engage with; all case studies in this book were new pieces I wrote.