



Case In Point

SERVER & CONTROLLER SOLUTIONS

EFI Digital Solutions Deliver Quick Payback and Big Gains to Carswell



Company Profile

Carswell is Canada's leading provider of specialized information and electronic research solutions. A division of The Thomson Corporation – the global leader in providing integrated information solutions – Carswell works with legal, financial and human resources sectors, providing integrated information in formats including books, loose-leaf services, journals and newsletters, CD-ROMs and online. Based in Toronto, Carswell employs 600 people and supports offices in Montreal, Calgary and Vancouver.

Challenge

Carswell replaced traditional offset presses with digital black-and-white print systems. However, outsourcing color cover production for perfect bound, case bound books and marketing materials resulted in costly delays. Meanwhile, Carswell's marketing department had yet to exploit opportunities provided by variable data printing (VDP). Carswell required an easy-to-use, cost-effective digital color print solution with the power and reliability to perform in a high-volume environment and with easy, flexible VDP capabilities.

Solution

Carswell migrated its color production in-house with EFI's Fiery® EXP6000 server – a powerful variable data printing platform – and Xerox® DocuColor® 6060 Digital Color Press; it added Atlas PrintShop Mail™ – Fiery Version software.

Results

Carswell experienced greater control, increased productivity, faster job turnaround and significant savings. Elimination of outsourcing margins and waste gave the company an "incredibly fast payback" of less than a year. Easy entry into the VDP market provided increased marketing options and more effective communication.



Out with offset; in with digital

It was a major undertaking in 1996 when Carswell's print manufacturing center sold its fleet of offset presses and embraced digital production. The company began by printing black-and-white text content while outsourcing production of its full-color covers for casebound and perfect bound books. "That left us with a problem," says Jim MacLachlan, general manager of Carswell's manufacturing facility. "It would take, on average, seven days to source an offset job yet we had the capability to print the body text overnight."

MacLachlan could see the advantages of bringing color work in-house – not just covers, but also marketing materials – flyers, brochures and letters – used to promote Carswell's full line of information products. He was eager to introduce the company to the benefits of variable data printing. Eventually he convinced the company's director, and subsequently the president, by promising fast payback on an investment in digital color production.

MacLachlan, with the help of solutions from EFI, made good on his promise.

The right solution

MacLachlan chose EFI's Fiery EXP6000 server and Xerox DocuColor 6060 Digital Color Press. EFI's powerful server, designed for the graphic arts professional and high-end production printing environments, brings breakthrough RIPping power and speed to the DocuColor.

What sold MacLachlan on the Fiery/DocuColor? Ease of use, especially from the Command WorkStation®. "For me, it was the intuitive front end; it was logical. The whole interface on the Fiery was absolutely brilliant. The calibration was logical

and it had the link to Adobe® Acrobat®, which is just a natural. The ease of use of sending a file and producing a print run on this system is absolutely superb."

The Fiery/DocuColor system was installed in July of 2002. It integrated "flawlessly" into Carswell's print production operation and training time was "minimal."

MacLachlan, who calls himself "a 1959 letterpress guy," was impressed with the color quality. "As far as I'm concerned, digital color had arrived with the Fiery and the DocuColor. And the color management is absolutely excellent. Again, that's thanks to the EFI software on the front end."

The Fiery EXP6000 incorporates EFI ColorWise® color management software, which helps operators with all levels of color knowledge produce brilliant documents in record time. "We took two operators with no color experience and very quickly trained them to produce sellable color with an occasional check with the production office," MacLachlan says. "The solution also enables seasoned professionals to appreciate the easy-to-use color capabilities of the Fiery."

In-house color print production provided remarkable savings. "We recovered our investment in less than a year – 11 1/2 months, and that was primarily printing perfect bound covers."

Speed, convenience and savings

Savings were realized in many areas – from faster job turnaround, reduced labor costs and elimination of outsourcing margins, redundancy and waste. "It gave Carswell, for the first time, the true ability to print on demand," MacLachlan says.

“We’ve seen more than a 30 percent increase in productivity simply because we have total control, which we did not have before.”

— Jim MacLachlan, General Manager,
Manufacturing Carswell,
a division of The Thomson Corporation



“To fill a print order, the ISBN number is entered into the digital asset management system, the text and cover files are retrieved, the cover downloaded to the Fiery, and the text sent to the black-and-white printers. True print-on-demand.”

The marketing department was initially reluctant to move from offset color to digital color; it delayed converting to digital for nine months. Speed, convenience and quality eventually won them over. “We have marketing files arriving at the end of the day and we now have the ability to deliver the jobs first thing the next morning. They are saying, ‘Wow! It’s not offset, but it’s pretty darn good and the service, fantastic!’ ”

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MacLachlan adds: “We’ve seen more than a 30 percent increase in productivity simply because we have total control, which we did not have before. That figure represents increased capacity and an ability to move products so much faster than before. We have color jobs coming out of the woodwork. Jobs that were going outside before.”

Carswell’s manufacturing plant tallied 300,000 digital color impressions in 2003 and MacLachlan is predicting a 20 percent growth in volume for 2004 – inclusive of marketing materials. MacLachlan is now working closely with the marketing department to exploit new marketing opportunities through the use of variable data printing.

Expanded opportunities with variable data

At the end of 2002, Carswell introduced Westlaw®eCARSWELL®, an on-line legal reference service, which was quickly recognized as Canada’s number one on-line product for lawyers. The company launched a number of marketing initiatives, exploiting the capabilities of EFI Fiery technology and VDP capabilities to produce striking, one-to-one marketing materials, including personalized certificates mailed to law students to affirm their proficiency with Westlaw®eCARSWELL® on-line resources. All of the materials are produced quickly and easily on the company’s Fiery EXP6000/DocuColor 6060 system.

At a recent trade show, Carswell photographed customers on a Harley-Davidson motorcycle. The digital images were uploaded then downloaded at the plant and printed in a Carswell poster-sized format – using digital technology over the Internet, through the Fiery to the DocuColor. The images were laminated and sent to customers before they returned from the trade show. “This is a whole other print stream from our regular printing,” MacLachlan notes. “Variable data printing is exciting because there are so many applications. It increases awareness of our on-line platform, our print program and our CD-ROM products.”

Before discovering the Fiery EXP6000, MacLachlan’s experiments with variable data had been unsuccessful. “We didn’t have the correct tools,” he says. He chose the EFI Fiery, in part, for its powerful easy-to-use variable data printing workflow tools.

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He began early in 2003 with authoring software Atlas PrintShop Mail – Fiery Version. With support from EFI staff, he began simple exercises, including production of a flyer for a fictitious golf tournament featuring inserted images of Carswell executives playing golf on one side and one manager’s address on the other. The piece quickly landed on the CEO’s desk. “He was impressed. You can talk and talk about VDP, but it’s not until you actually get a variable piece into someone’s hand that they can really see the quality, potential and the benefits of VDP.”

Reliable, robust VDP technology

The marketing department was skeptical at first. “They thought to do this you needed far more sophisticated and more expensive equipment. That was a barrier,” says MacLachlan. But with EFI’s Fiery FreeForm VDP solution, he was able to prove them wrong.

Fiery FreeForm is simple to deploy and its Fiery integration meant that Carswell staff did not need to learn a separate front-end application. “The Fiery with FreeForm is easy to use – intuitive. But it gives much more than entry-level performance. It’s way more sophisticated than what it appears to be.” Beyond using FreeForm, operators can also

take advantage of the extensive range of VDP languages supported by the Fiery, such as the industry standard PPML. With full integration of PrintShop Mail and Fiery FreeForm technology, operators can integrate design and database functionality by simply dragging and dropping database fields.

MacLachlan praises the training and support from both the EFI and PrintShop Mail staff. “I can’t say enough good things about them. They work so well together.”

And he has high praise for the software. “It’s a reliable and robust technology.” And fast. Operators can produce 7,000 postcards with variable elements in less than an hour by ganging them 9-up. Because the static data doesn’t need to be re-RIPped, the spooling time is greatly reduced; there’s no network congestion, allowing the DocuColor to run at, or near, rated speed. “We have absolutely no bottlenecks anywhere!” MacLachlan says.

After a year, Carswell has yet to exhaust the Fiery’s variable data capabilities, he says. “Fiery FreeForm is a superb solution and an excellent entry point for variable data printing and meaningful color production.”