

End-to-end, integrated workflow creates new opportunities at TruColor

In 2011, TruColor recruited Cliff Hollingsworth to come on as the company's general manager. He had worked for Consolidated Graphics for many years, so he had the print industry background the company's leaders were looking for. At the same time, the company's digital press was aging, which also gave the TruColor team the unique opportunity to take a hard look at their equipment and platform and make some decisions about where they wanted to go in the future.

"When I first came here, one of the sales reps told me, 'To understand TruColor, understand this — we are a commercial printer with quick printer roots,'" Hollingsworth says. "And that's how they approach everything; they were born as a quick printer and evolved to a \$3 million commercial printer with a full bindery, etcetera. It is very rare to not be able to pull off miracles for our customers. Some of the things we do, previous companies I worked for wouldn't even consider taking on."

And in terms of taking on a broader range of services, the company's ambitions went beyond just having new digital presses. Adding a new, more advanced EFI™ MIS workflow — complete with web-to-print and an integrated connection to an EFI Fiery® digital front end (DFE) — was part of the growth plan.

"In the past, the file would come in, someone would download it, review it, estimate the costs, route it to prepress — the normal, traditional way to manage what I call 'pile printing,'" Hollingsworth explains. "The pile moves from one department to another."

Taking a big step with web-to-print

The prospect of having web-to-print as an integral part of a company-wide MIS workflow seemed like it would be a big step away from "pile printing" for TruColor.



Challenge:

"I don't think the industry as a whole has adopted web-to-print and digital the way they should have. It is still very transactional in nature."

CLIFF HOLLINGSWORTH, GENERAL MANAGER,
TRUCOLOR



Founded in 1980 by J. Ray Truluck, Jr., TruColor was originally a franchise operation, serving the community as part of the PIP Printing network. Truluck had no previous print industry experience, but he did have a strong drive to make his business succeed. The company has grown over the years with a strong commitment to a few core tenets: every job will be of exceptional quality and will be provided with top-level service that cannot be matched.

TruColor was among the first shops in South Carolina to implement high-end digital print technology when, in 2009, it installed its first iGen3. Today, TruColor is still a local leader in digital print with a focus on staying ahead of the technology curve and constantly bringing new ideas and methods to its clients.

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Hollingsworth had seen the EFI PrintSmith™ MIS software platform demonstrated 10 years previously at a trade show, and when he joined TruColor, he didn't even consider going with anyone else. He knew immediately that it was finally time to implement that solution with an upgrade from EFI PrintSmith Classic, adding EFI Digital StoreFront® web-to-print software and Fiery DFE integration.

"I knew about EFI Digital StoreFront and Fiery integration, but my first experience with PrintSmith Classic was here. I knew when we upgraded with StoreFront and Fiery that also upgrading to Vision was mandatory — the circle wouldn't be closed without it."

PrintSmith Vision is the core MIS technology in EFI's Quick Print Suite. It is a flexible, feature-rich print MIS platform offering powerful estimating, point-of-sale, account management, production management, receivables, and sales analysis tools within a single, easy-to-use cloud-based application. The Suite's full business reporting capabilities provide real-time analytics, which allows users to track and identify job costs and productivity. Plus, real-time updates allow for full visibility across users' production floors.

The proven, effective end-to-end integration with Digital StoreFront and Fiery DFEs has collectively saved printing companies millions of dollars over the years, based on its ability to eliminate manual touchpoints and reduce errors. Plus, it reduces turnaround times, making companies like TruColor much more competitive.

Solution:

"We didn't want to spend a lot of money on Web services or find guys to write code and worry about keeping it up. And we don't have to now."

CLIFF HOLLINGSWORTH, GENERAL MANAGER,
TRUCOLOR



The significant changes using EFI technology have practically made a night-and-day difference for TruColor, with a faster, automated workflow that makes “pulling off miracles” easier than ever before.

“With our EFI integration, we get the order, print out a job ticket, and hand it to the digital operator,” according to Hollingsworth. “There is no admin time, basically.”

The goal is to try and get humans out of the process as much as possible to streamline the entire operation. With EFI’s technology workflow at TruColor, a customer can go online at any time of the day or night to place the order, and it is automatically routed through the system with a work order generated and sent to be processed. The file has already been checked for errors, and when it is time for operators to run their jobs, they can move forward without needing to worry about problems.

“For us, the driver behind this workflow was the seamless integration,” says Hollingsworth. “We didn’t want to spend a lot of money on Web services or find guys to write code and worry about keeping it up. And we don’t have to now.”

“Anything less would have been disappointing”

Today, TruColor is reaping the benefits with near-lights-out processing for many jobs. No one on staff has to process and check the files because the system does it automatically, speeding up the time to get jobs done and reducing the number of errors and problems on press. “That was the expectation,” Hollingsworth says. “Anything less would have been disappointing.”

The system went live in early 2016, and it took about a month to get customers acclimated to the online StoreFront the company set up. Today, TruColor is focused on continuing to refine and improve

Result:

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internal processes, getting even more efficiency out of the system as they find new ways to streamline.

"Now I've got web-to-print integrated with MIS, and all our print files go to a Fiery controller — we're EFI on the whole backend," Hollingsworth notes. "And that was the plan. When I knew I had to buy a new digital press, I knew I wanted a Fiery controller and I knew I wanted to go this route."

The company is in the process of implementing credit card capabilities through Digital StoreFront, which makes the ordering process even easier. Even more importantly, it puts TruColor in the position to service additional customers. "We just got a new client where credit cards are a must. And this will be a good thing."

Buying in to the future with streamlined productivity

"I don't think the industry as a whole has adopted web-to-print and digital the way they should have," Hollingsworth notes. "It is still very transactional in nature, and there is still very little variable data at regular commercial shops. Commercial printers are still where they were 10 to 12 years ago — sales hasn't adopted it, leadership hasn't adopted it, and the one rule is, if senior leadership doesn't back it, it will never work. The industry is in interesting times."

Fortunately, TruColor isn't in that situation. With web-to-print, an upgraded MIS workflow, and automated digital print to get submitted jobs on-press quickly, the company has a competitive advantage over businesses where management hasn't bought in to the concept of workflow automation.

"This workflow opens a lot of doors sales-wise," Hollingsworth says. "There are types of conversations we can have now that we just couldn't approach before. And with the integration done, all the admin pain and suffering goes away."

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