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APPLICATION STUDY

Great American Insurance Group Ensures a Successful Print Center with WebCRD

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Great American Insurance Group's Print Center produces over 12,000,000 impressions per year.

The satellite image of a farmer's field depicting crops and roads, barns and houses is rendered to paper, laminated and hung on the wall.

These impressive three-by-four foot, full-color images, which Great American Insurance Group presents to insured's in its crop division, have come a long way from the generic calendars handed out to farmers by most insurance companies.

The production of these unique posters is highly automated, printed on demand at the insurance company's in-plant print shop in Florence, Kentucky.

The beautiful posters are perhaps the most visually compelling among the thousands of documents that Great American's Central Distribution Center (CDC) produces each year. These jobs are driven by the capabilities of WebCRD, Rochester Software Associates, Inc.'s award-winning Portal to the Print Center.

The Transformation Imperative

Donna Wagner, CDC Print Production Manager, and an employee of Great American for over two decades, has spent the past few years transforming the entire production workflow for nearly every type of document that Great American generates.

Wagner's group produces over one million pages a month on a variety of offset and digital equipment, including a wide format ink jet printer as well as a laminator.

Great American's output is a complex mix of black-and-white and full color documents including presentations, reports, presentations, manuals, marketing and training materials. These jobs often require duplex printing of both pages and tabbed dividers.

"When I took on this role six years ago, virtually all of our workflow was managed manually,," recalls Wagner. "As a result, it was difficult to track or manage the costs and processes for printing. It also meant some work went to outside suppliers, which was more expensive for us."

Wagner also wanted to improve scheduling, automate production, and track inventory levels. She created a series of spreadsheets to quote and track jobs, identifying costs for charge-backs, and establishing a scheduling program and inventory management process. Despite this, she knew that a much higher level of integration was possible.

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*Donna Wagner
Print Production Manager*

With a variety of color, monochrome, wide format and offset equipment, Wagner also wanted to ensure the PDF files sent to the various printers would print reliably. Yet to yield the best results, Wagner also had to improve her staff's computer skills. "They gained new skills and became much more efficient. But as we set out to do this, the goal was for them to become printing experts, not software experts. So we needed tools that helped them make that transition."

Ease of use

The new processes and improved recordkeeping brought a new level of control to Great American, but Wagner was looking for a level of automation that would work not only for her staff but also for people in Great American offices across the country, and ultimately even to agents.

"My team and I went to work," she recalls, "seeking opportunities to improve ease of use and eye appeal, as well as the overall functionality we needed to process a wide range of jobs." Recognizing the scope of the challenges, she turned to RSA.

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Wagner convinced her management team that WebCRD's ease of use would hasten adoption across the company, and she documented the estimated cost savings and productivity improvements. The WebCRD rollout began with a test group of about 70 employees, doing hands-on training. Over the course of a few months, that group increased to nearly 250 contacts within Great American's business operations. WebCRD was soon rolled out to the entire organization, and currently serves over 1,200 users.

Go Configure

One of WebCRD's greatest strengths is its flexibility to meet the needs of many types of customers in diverse environments. In most cases the customization and configuration required is done by RSA's Technical Analysts, based on customer needs. Although not trained as a programmer, Wagner took a different path, working closely with RSA and doing virtually all the fine tuning herself, based on the myriad of details she knew about Great American and the expectations of her internal customers.

"My team and I worked primarily with one RSA technician who helped us to leverage the technology in a way that best met our needs. This allowed us to take control of the design so we could ensure that our new solution would reflect everything our team offers our customers," relates Wagner.

Today, all print and fulfillment requests are processed using WebCRD. Customers can upload original documents, or order from an online catalog of print on-demand items as well as select from stocked pre-printed forms and supplies. This allows customers to see the product before placing the order, significantly reducing the chance for error. The AutoStock module manages the inventory level of finished goods and alerts Wagner's team when supplies drop below predetermined thresholds.

WebCRD also accommodates Great American's custom stationery needs including personalized letterhead, envelopes, and notepads. Data is collected as fields that can automatically populate WebCRD's variable data templates. Customers log in, select the documents they want, and add or change personalized data.

Once approved online, documents can be printed on the company's production equipment, the offset plate-making system, or the wide format printer. New documents, such as presentations or reports can be uploaded, converted to a printable file using SurePDF, RSA's genuine Adobe-based PDF print driver. The output is reviewed, edited and ticketed on screen. Print jobs are automatically routed to the appropriate printer based on job requirements, printer capabilities, and business requirements. Status updates are available by email and web, eliminating phone calls to the print center and allowing operators to focus on production.

Numbers Matter

Using WebCRD has given Great American employees across the country a one-stop-shop for improving their workflow while increasing the visibility of the CDC. With the successful implementation of this new technology, improved processes and a great staff, CDC is now able to process more jobs in one month than it did in an entire year in 2002.

"WebCRD has been a nice addition to our operation and has given our workflow the consistency we needed," notes Wagner. "We have increased the volume of work we produced and also expanded the range of services we offer to our internal customers."

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