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APPLICATION STUDY

Excellus BlueCross BlueShield continues to streamline their production—and gain enterprise-wide efficiencies.



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Control over ordering has increased, fulfillment has been accelerated, and inventory control has been simplified. WebCRD is secure, fast, easy to use—and RSA is extremely responsive."

Gail Holubinka
VP Business Development

"QDirect is our electronic traffic cop. It's an automated production Manager that knows the fastest route from job order to job delivery. Now, one operator can keep all six production printers running at full speed."

Phil Rose,
Production Manager

Paper is entrenched in business—because business is enveloped in paper

MedAmerica Insurance Company's long-term care insurance is distributed through independent agents located throughout all 50 states. To best serve their clients, these agents require printed support materials such as forms, information packets, and marketing collateral, as well as vital end products that include reimbursement checks for health care services rendered and benefits statements for members.

Phil Rose, Production Manager, Document Services for Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, Rochester Region, explains, "Each month, we print everything from reports and statements to ID cards and checks to EOBs and benefits booklets in our three print centers in Rochester, Syracuse, and Utica. In the Rochester print center alone, we image roughly 16 million impressions per month on six printers. It is safe to say that paper will be a large part of our business for the foreseeable future."

Some of the problems which contributed to the Rochester Print center's un-optimized workflow included:

- Page counts were not available for mainframe jobs, so operators were "blind" when directing jobs to printers. This contributed to under- or over-utilization of production devices.
- Some printers would sit idle while others were backed up with print jobs. This was due to the operators choice to send jobs to printers that had the desired paper already loaded to save them the hassle of changing the paper in the tray.
- One printer was dedicated to Syracuse jobs printed in Rochester, and was loaded with Syracuse dedicated resources (fonts, images, overlays, etc.). This left no backup capabilities for Syracuse resource jobs without re-loading resources on one of the other printers. Resources needed to be loaded to the printers using a not-so-modern sneaker-net and floppy disk methodology.
- To reprint a job, operators had to request a new run from the mainframe and wait for it to be processed
- Test jobs required that an on-line printer be cycled off-line, and temporarily loaded with the test resources.

- After the test cycle the production resources needed to be reloaded to the printer. This tied up valuable printing resources for up to three hours at a time, several times per month.
- Because of the large number of specialized resources, disaster recovery strategies were complicated and cumbersome.

Excellus BCBS initiated a partnership with Rochester Software Associates (RSA) in order to straighten out their production process.

Together they identified problems and implemented customized solutions to improve upon their current workflow system. The solution to the problem included:

- RSA's M.I.S. Print, software that converts mainframe and legacy information into industry-standard PostScript files that can be printed on a variety of print devices.
- RSA's QDirect, a robust enterprise print manger used to control workflow, route jobs, and manage print queues.
- A fully redundant server housing both QDirect and M.I.S. Print

New workflow, new benefits

With the RSA solution in place, the Excellus print workflow is automated, streamlined, and productive. Operators merely have to send a job to print, and RSA technology does the rest:

Phil Rose says, "QDirect is our electronic traffic cop. It's an automated production manager that knows the fastest route from job order to job delivery. Now, one operator can keep all six production printers running at full speed."

The new solution has provided Excellus BCBS with a number of tangible, repeatable benefits due to streamlined workflow, increased worker productivity, and improved cost-efficiency:

- QDirect provides consolidated, remote administration from the desktop, which enables enterprise-wide print management from a single workstation. A single pass-through of all mainframe jobs—regardless of destination—helps operators coordinate jobs and gain tight control over the entire production workflow.

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The RSA WebCRD solution has made a significant impact on all the parties involved. "MedAmerica agents, management, and fulfillment workers are all happy. Most importantly, MedAmerica's end customers are happy because they get the right information when they need it."

Phil Rose,
Production Manager

- Automatically routing jobs to the first available printer with the proper paper stock, managing print queues, and load balancing optimize the Excellus BCBS investment in document output technology. Operators can override the automated system to view job size, enabling more informed and more effective distribution of volume across printers.
- Each printer is loaded with a number of different stocks (e.g. Tray one has 8.5" x 11" paper, Tray two has ID card stock, Tray three has check stock, etc.), so operators do not have to keep loading and reloading stocks. They are only required to periodically replenish stocks when they are depleted.
- Print jobs are archived centrally, which speeds and simplifies reprints. There is no need to go back to the mainframe.
- RSA's Resource Replication feature eliminates the manual process of updating each printer with current resources. Resources are stored in a master repository so replication can be performed with the click of a button.
- The Multiple Resource Set feature allows Excellus BCBS to manage multiple test and production queues, enabling error-free document production on any printer without the need to change resources at each printer before running jobs. M.I.S. Print also adds a watermark to test jobs so they are not confused with production jobs.
- Backups are performed automatically, coupled with server redundancy to ensure business continuity.

Based on the success of the Rochester print center, Excellus BCBS is expanding the solution, thereby integrating all three print centers. All production jobs—no matter where they originate—will be routed through QDirect, which will orchestrate their automated, productive, and cost-efficient production.

"It's really been great for us," Rose states. "Through process automation, we've been able to free up our printing staff's time. In fact, we're able to redirect about four staffing hours per day toward quality control. So at the end of the day, the RSA solution helps us benefit from faster, more efficient production and higher quality documents—which are vital in our fast-paced, paperintensive environment."

Different configuration, lower costs...and better results

The new system is so efficient that Excellus BCBS was able to reduce its pool of printers in the Rochester print center from seven to six. In the original configuration, four printers were dedicated to mainframe printing while three were dedicated to publishing.

Now, Excellus BCBS has been able to consolidate devices down to four networked Production Publishers and two networked MICR printers.

In this new configuration, all printers are multi-function thanks to network connectivity and RSA's QDirect and M.I.S. Print. Together, they ensure that any job, regardless of where it originated, can be routed to any printer.

Actively seeking change

In an ongoing effort to seek out solutions that eliminate manual tasks, streamline work processes, and improve the bottom line across the Rochester print center, Phil Rose realized there were other aspects of their printing process that could be optimized. The way in which print requests were filled was the next problem to tackle.

They had relied on a system of forms and faxes to be evaluated by headquarters staff to determine if print jobs should be completed. Rose knew there was a better way. He says, "We were looking to implement a process that would automate steps, which would inevitably simplify and streamline order fulfillment, reduce human error, and ease the burden on our staff."

Some of the difficulties with the paper-based work process that could be overcome by implementing an electronic workflow included, employees using outdated forms, handwriting was at times illegible, and it took too long to fulfill orders.

Once again with the help of RSA, Rose was able to automate and simplify this process. The solution was WebCRD, a modular Web submission and print production system that streamlines job ordering and fulfillment.

They can now place orders anytime or day, they can keep sales-support material up to date, rules are established automatically eliminating the review process, and members of the staff can receive material in a timely manner.

Rose says, "RSA did an incredible job of customizing the software in a short time. They delivered what they promised... and then some." He goes on to explain that the RSA WebCRD solution has truly made a significant impact on all the parties involved in the process.

"MedAmerica agents are happy, MedAmerica management is happy, and fulfillment workers are happy. And most important, MedAmerica's end customers are happy because they are sure to get all the right information they need, right when they need it."