

EFI PrintStream/Pace Workflow Boosts World-class Digital Print Fulfillment Operations at Gilson Graphics

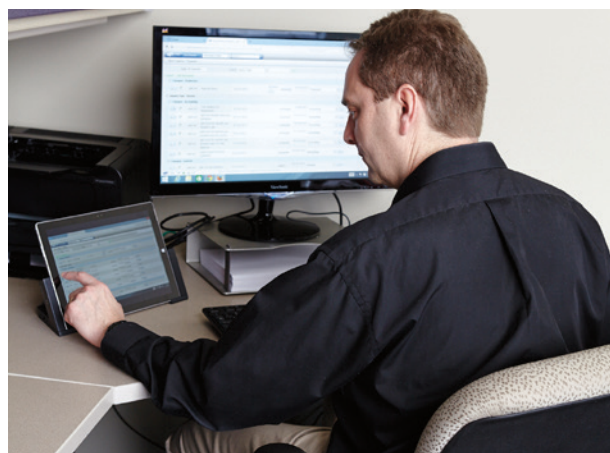
Challenge:

Gilson Graphics took another massive leap forward as a full-service integrated marketing solutions provider a few years ago when it moved straight to the front of digital printing's leading edge, installing the nation's first Fuji high-end, cut-sheet digital inkjet press. Another innovation soon followed: the first Fuji high-end, web-fed inkjet press in the world.

The potential for marketing service enhancements was tremendous since Gilson could now offer customers even more dynamic options for campaign collateral. First, the presses' print-on-demand digital capabilities freed customers from using (or recycling) outdated print materials stored in Gilson's warehousing fulfillment center. The equipment also made larger runs of variable data more practical, accommodated an increased footprint, and opened the door to short-run projects of high-end, multiple-page materials.

With the presses up and running, the company sought out a back-end workflow to help the print-on-demand transformation reach its fullest potential.

"In a lot of ways, our digital printing operations are just as much an extension of fulfillment as they are an extension of our offset production offering," said Jeff Palmitier, Executive Vice President of Gilson Graphics. "We needed workflows to tie together traditional pick-and-pack fulfillment, print-on-demand and customized products produced on our digital presses."



Company Controller Jim Vosburgh is able to manage Gilson Graphics' financials in EFI Pace MIS software using real-time production, shipping and accounting data.

"EFI PrintStream and Pace allow us to look at our fulfillment programs, plan in advance and operate as efficiently as possible with little administrative overhead. As a result, we were able to eliminate printed inventories completely for one of our major clients by moving them to print-on-demand fulfillment."

SALLY GILBERT, PROJECT MANAGER
GILSON GRAPHICS

GILSON

GILSON

Gilson Graphics is a full-service provider of integrated marketing solutions, committed to doing great work at a competitive price while delivering results that are beyond expectations. The company assists customers with the marketing strategy, branding, design and development of a wide variety of collateral materials, signage, and marketing programs, and delivers those elements in the most effective medium for the job. Offering everything from digital/web-based delivery, state-of-the-art digital printing, and traditional sheet-fed offset printing with complete finishing capabilities, Gilson defines true product and service integration.

The company serves clients in the retail, manufacturing, education, professional services, hospitality, publishing, entertainment and healthcare industries, providing a full range of solutions through nine company divisions covering everything from creative design to web development, printing and mailing.

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Solution:

Gilson Graphics was a long-time user of EFI™ MIS software and the company's managers had a good relationship with their EFI sales rep, who helped assemble a system of workflow technologies from several vendors, starting with an upgrade from EFI's PSI software to the EFI Pace™ MIS.

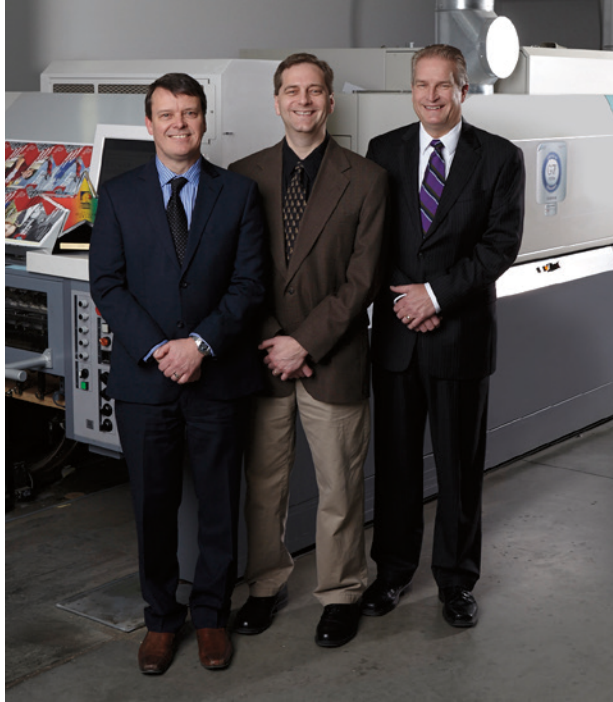
But even with Pace selected, "The big focus was hitting our need for warehousing," according to Sally Gilbert, Project Manager for Gilson Graphics. "When we looked at all the fulfillment systems, PrintStream came out on top—and that was around the same time EFI acquired the PrintStream product."

EFI was completely on-board with the assembled technologies working through Pace. In fact, Gilson Graphics' assembled solution mirrors EFI's own growth trajectory in business management workflow technologies. In addition to PrintStream fulfillment software, Gilson Graphics added impositioning software from Metrix and Process Shipper software from SmartLinc. Following a series of acquisitions, EFI now owns all those software technologies, which are now partially or fully integrated with the Pace MIS platform. For Gilson Graphics, that results in new, tighter linkages in workflow processes, with the promise of even better integration and faster, more efficient workflows to come.

The PrintStream integration with Pace at Gilson Graphics has had the greatest impact on the company's workflow. With the integration, the company has stayed ahead of the rapid analog-to-digital transition it witnessed as clients moved a growing volume of fulfillment work from warehoused offset print to low-inventory, print-on-demand collateral production.

"There are a lot of products we used to store on the shelves for customers that we now print as they are needed," explains Tony Maravolo, Customer Service Manager at Gilson Graphics. "The integration of PrintStream and Pace really helped us design a better print-on-demand workflow."





A streamlined management and fulfillment workflow has helped Gilson Graphics' Dave Oswald, Sr., Jim Vosburgh, and Jeff Palmitier get the most out of their high-end inkjet print-on-demand investments.

Results:

"There is a significant shift from offset to digital here," explains Gilson's Vice President of Operations, Dave Oswald, Sr. "Our total percentage of sales related to offset has dropped 20 percent in last few years and our digital print sales have increased by at least that much."

The shift to digital—with Gilson Graphics' two inkjet presses, as well as electrophotographic and large-format inkjet equipment—caters to important needs among the company's client base. Clients simply don't want their budgets tied up in long runs of warehoused materials. From a production standpoint, that means shorter runs and a greater number of jobs—which translates to more prep and administrative work to create and manage it all.

While Gilson Graphics' digital pressroom has the firepower to meet those demands, the Pace/PrintStream workflow was the missing piece to making it more efficient. Gilson has been able to increase the number of orders it takes by spending much less time managing each order, starting with job ticketing.

"Our system automatically generates a Pace job ticket, which has been a huge plus for our workflow," says Gilbert. "That is significant. From there we produce the job, it goes to Process Shipper for shipping, and Process Shipper updates the PrintStream and Pace software."

"With the Pace/PrintStream integration, our CSRs can get the automated-program work into production in a fraction of the time it used to require."

TONY MARAVOLO, CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER,
GILSON GRAPHICS

Now, even the smallest orders for items such as business cards, are easier to produce and more profitable. Customers enter their information in Gilson Graphics' proprietary MindWire® web-to-print tool and—thanks to a hot-folder interface with PrintStream—the job order data automatically goes through the plant.

"It took a little bit of time to set up our systems to do that, but the payoff is well worth it," says Maravolo. "Before, the customer's order would come to us and we would manually re-enter everything into our system. Now, with the PrintStream integration, we are able to take the needed data from those same web-to-print sites, and push it automatically without having to touch much of anything. The information exists across all our systems once the customer submits the order, and the system helps maintain accuracy since that type of job requires very little human intervention."

Gilson Graphics serves a number of companies in the retail industry, and its PrintStream/Pace fulfillment operations have helped the company maintain a competitive edge supporting its clients' national campaigns. Working in an environment where deadlines rule the day, the company uses its workflow to ensure that hundreds of customized kits of promotional collateral reach their clients' store locations simultaneously. Pace and PrintStream, integrated with EFI Process Shipper software, help Gilson Graphics work backwards from guaranteed delivery dates so everything gets printed and shipped according to schedule.

"A couple of years ago," notes Oswald, "the decisions about when and how to ship completed work would have been entirely up to the Shipping Department—and decided only after a job was printed. Now, all that data management has been moved up to the beginning of the project, which eliminates the need for the Shipping Department to make judgment calls in order to meet a deadline."

Gilson Graphics has always prided itself on accuracy and its EFI workflow ensures the company can thrive as a digital print provider, producing more jobs and shorter runs without missing a beat.

"We run at 99.1 or 99.2 percent accuracy," says Palmitier. "PrintStream has allowed us to maintain that level of accuracy—even though we have a higher volume of jobs—because of digital printing and shorter runs."

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