

Straub Druck + Medien AG increases profitability with HP SmartStream Production Center and phases out traditional offset workflow



At a glance

Industry: General Commercial Printing

Business name: Straub Druck + Medien AG

Headquarters: Schramberg, Germany

Website: straub-druck.de



Challenge

- Growth in business with volumes more than doubling, exceeding offset workflow ceiling of 5,000 jobs, is a major barrier to growth and productivity.
- Eliminate challenges arising from complexity of two parallel legacy offset workflows.
- Manually managing short run, high-growth web-to-print portals using legacy, closed architecture offset workflow is inflexible and overly complex to scale to changing demands.

Solution

- HP SmartStream Production Center to manage digital and offset press production and finishing equipment.
- The HP Indigo complimentary Software Development Kits (SDKs) enables bi-directional Job Definition Format (JDF), and Job Messaging Format (JMF), connectivity allowing customisation and availability of third-party modules.

Results

- HP SmartStream Production Center represents best investment in the last five years by delivering immediate 13 per cent cost savings and increased production capacity from greater productivity.
- Added another three presses to produce 70 per cent more output without up-scaling our organisation.
- Instant job reprioritisation increases SLA achievement for high-growth, web-to-print – and legacy jobs alike currently managing 10,000 jobs per week and eliminated legacy offset workflow ceiling of 5,000 jobs per week.
- Phasing out complex and problematic legacy offset workflow by 2015.
- Scalable workflow solution with open architecture offers flexible and customisable workflow that smoothly integrates production and finishing equipment as needed, from HP Indigo and non-indigo alike.

“I didn’t realise HP SmartStream Production Center would be our best investment in the last five years, the impact on productivity was immediate.”

– Francisco Martínez, managing director at Straub Druck + Medien AG



Innovation is a core value at Straub Druck + Medien AG. It couldn’t be any other way for a printing business that has survived and thrived for over 135 years. Originally a local newspaper printer found in 1876, and a pioneer of offset in the early days of the technology, Straub Druck + Medien AG, based in Schramberg, Germany, has successfully evolved and grown, embracing the advances in printing technologies throughout the company’s distinguished history.

In 2006 Straub Druck replaced its nearly-new digital printers with two HP Indigo 5000 Digital Presses to exploit their higher output quality, and to maximise the company’s capacity to satisfy fast-growing business through its web-to-print portals. In just three years, revenue from the company’s B2C and B2B web-to-print portals has grown to represent 16 and 25 per cent of overall turnover respectively, with demand in each increasing 60 and 10 per cent annually, compared to less than two per cent growth in Straub Druck’s traditional offset market. B2B web-to-print customers demand books, instruction manuals, direct mails, and printed office material in general, whereas B2C customers typically request business cards, calendars and event-related products.

With growth in its digital printing market getting stronger all the time, in 2011 Straub Druck + Medien AG downsized its traditional offset press set up by half, and doubled the size of its digital department as business shifted towards shorter runs. And with the company’s strategic restructuring plan implemented in 2012 and 2013, Straub Druck has continued to innovate to exploit advances in printing press technologies to maximise gains from its growing business.

Productivity gained delivers 13 per cent cost savings

“I didn’t realise HP SmartStream Production Center would be our best investment in the last five years the impact on productivity was immediate. On one web-to-print portal, productivity improved by over five per cent after activation in February. It automatically receives requests and instantly submits them to the corresponding production department with all the information to prioritise the job and move it forward instantly. The presses are running 24 hours six days a week. In March we fine-tuned some settings and achieved an 11 per cent increase in productivity. Currently we are at over 13 per cent. With a portal that generates €1.5 million a year, that’s a saving of around €130,000,” Francisco Martínez, managing director at Straub Druck + Medien AG.

“HP SmartStream Production Center keeps our various departments constantly informed so that we can instantly set job priorities. Its greatest feature is the ease with which you can automate processes and integrate new processes and products, or even departments, into a single workflow. This is essential in the high-growth internet age,” Martínez says.

“That precious time gained allows us to manage an even higher number of jobs in a shorter time than we could have with our traditional Prinect offset workflow. Runs are getting shorter but the number of jobs is increasing. Our existing presses cannot produce more output than they already do. Thanks to the HP SmartStream Production Center we are able to add another three presses to produce 70 per cent more output without up-scaling our organisation. Our profitability increases as demand grows because now we can handle it,” Martínez explains.

Revolutionary switch from offset-based workflow to HP SmartStream Production Center

“The HP SmartStream Production Center is channelling all the orders from four web-to-print portals to four presses and processing 10,000 jobs per week instantly,” explains Martínez. The switch from its traditional Prinect offset workflow to the HP SmartStream Production Center was part of the company’s strategic restructuring plan.

“We are about to launch our fifth portal and add three more presses. This is revolutionary with respect to our legacy offset workflow that struggled beyond 5,000 jobs,” Martínez says. HP SmartStream submission solutions make it easy to capture and process jobs from the web and other cross-media data. “Our traditional workflow couldn’t handle our volumes efficiently, especially with our growth in web-to-print. When demand reached 7,000 jobs, we were obliged to operate two parallel offset workflows; it became overly complex and problematic to manage. It would have been impossible in our offset workflow to receive, produce, and deliver the volume of jobs we are now enjoying.

“We introduced HP SmartStream Production Center in April 2012, starting with 500 jobs a week. 12 months later it was 2,500, and in December 2013 we passed the 10,000 mark. If HP SmartStream Production Center had arrived six months later it would have been total chaos,” Martínez explains.

Open architecture for complete, tailored integration

“One of the challenges in managing the workflow with our legacy system was that the code that communicates with the presses is not open, so that limited our ability to optimise our complex workflow for our production setup,” says Martínez, describing the complexity of channelling production through a setup that includes a B2 traditional offset press, three HP Indigo digital presses, three presses for black and white only output, one press dedicated to envelopes and labels, and one book-printing press. “The HP SmartStream Production Center system’s open architecture means that we can modify and customise the codes according to our needs, adding and managing equipment as our needs change, and even integrating our traditional offset press into our new workflow,” Martínez adds.

Straub Druck + Medien AG plan to integrate all its presses into the HP SmartStream workflow by 2015. The HP Indigo complimentary Software Development Kits (SDKs) enables bi-directional JDF and JMF connectivity. There are more than 80 different partner offerings that can be integrated with HP.

Martínez highlights that HP prequalified HP SmartStream Production Center based on Straub Druck + Medien AG business requirements and workflow, defining all the requirements to ensure successful integration of the system within the company’s existing setup.

“With digital presses and web-to-print, the race in the press printing business is no longer a marathon, it’s a sprint. The window has opened for digital printing and it is closing on offset. I expect traditional offset will no longer exist in 10 years’ time. It’s no longer a question of what we will be able to do with the HP SmartStream Production Center, it is more a question of how would we survive without it!” Martínez concludes.

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