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APPLICATION STUDY



School District of Manatee County Print Center Earns Accolades, One Page at a Time

Rochester Software Associates, Inc.

69 Cascade Drive
Rochester, New York
14614

Main 585.262.2690
Fax 585.262.4808
E-mail RSainfo@rocsoft.com
Web www.rocsoft.com



Other school districts have visited Manatee to see how they achieved success with their automated Web and Scan to Print Center. The solution is called Accolade, which stands for Accessible Client Copy Opportunity Link for Advanced Document Enhancement!



Executive Summary

To outsource or not to outsource? That was the question facing the School District of Manatee County. An internal audit determined that print jobs were leaking to third party providers or being printed on low-quality printers, using expensive ink cartridges. Teachers were wasting time making their own copies. The jobs that were indeed being produced in-house required manual accounting which led to reporting delays of weeks or months.

Something had to be done. The very future of the in-plant was at stake and unless it could become an efficient, automated print center, it was doomed.

Rochester Software Associates, Inc. along with Xerox delivered the right tools and perhaps more importantly, the right people, to turn the School District's in-plant into a streamlined high-volume production facility. Volume has increased significantly, without any increase in staff and all jobs are automatically accounted for. The program has earned accolades from administrators and teachers as well as the attention of visiting school districts. There is even a waiting list for schools to join the program named, appropriately, "Accolade"!

The Challenge

With 43,000 students and fifty schools spread over several towns, producing the volumes of printed materials required was a budgetary black hole for administrators and a major time sink for teachers. With the constant financial pressures found in any school district, taking a new approach was both a strategic imperative and a significant challenge. But another word for challenge is opportunity.

Manatee's challenge lay in two areas. First, there were manual processes for creation and production of classroom materials such as handouts, exams, and worksheets. The average teacher spent two hours each week at the copier duplicating class materials, or using costly-to-operate ink jet printers.

Hardcopy documents were sent via courier to a centralized print center, but the paper ticket ordering system was prone to inaccuracies and made accounting a manual process.

Hardcopy jobs had to be ready for the courier or be delayed a full day. An order could take up to a week to be produced and returned to a teacher. It was not uncommon for frustrated teachers to spend their own money at an outside print shop to ensure they would have the materials completed in time for class.

"To stand in front of the copier is not helping teachers plan or get ready for their school day. So this project is going to provide teachers more time in the day to plan."

Tim McGonegal,
Assistant Superintendent
Of Business Services

Untrackable Costs

Second, individual schools had both the authority and responsibility to acquire copiers or printers for their school. The aggregate effect was to create a structure of untrackable and escalating costs. Because the machines used were inevitably from different manufacturers and had varying capabilities and were not networked, there were no economies of scale. Service and reliability was always in question and the actual cost of copying and printing was virtually impossible to measure.

"We just didn't have a good handle on copying costs," relates Bob Gehle, Program Administrator for Media Services. "We knew how many copiers we had at each school, but we really didn't know beyond the monthly invoice what those copiers were costing us."

"We also felt we could do a better job in getting materials to and from the central print shop," adds Dr. Pat Lucas, the Assistant Superintendent at the time. "Using a courier to get work back and forth worked well enough, but we believed there was a better solution that would let us increase our teachers' productivity by freeing them from the clerical work of making copies."

The Opportunity

The district turned to Xerox, who performed a Xerox Office Productivity Advisor (XOPA) audit. With longtime Xerox partner, Rochester Software Associates, Inc., they proposed a district-wide job submission system to deliver the productivity for teachers, administrators, and the print center.



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The End-to-End Solution

Today, teachers and staff use Accolade for virtually all production of instructional materials. They use RSA's QDirect.SCAN to electronically scan, ticket, and submit hardcopy jobs. Additionally, they create new materials on their computers which are turned into PDF files using RSA's SurePDF, based on Adobe PDF JobReady. The approved PDFs are uploaded automatically to the print center using RSA's WebCRD, which provides complete and accurate job ticketing and accounting.

"At first I was very hesitant, but once I started, I fell in love with the program."
Cynthia Blenker
Bayshore High Teacher

When submitting a job, teachers see how much it will cost, and can modify the specs—such as changing the number of copies or finishing desired—to help manage their budget. When the job is sent, they get an electronic confirmation that the job has been received. Jobs submitted by 4pm can typically be delivered the next morning. No longer are teachers at the mercy of when the courier comes to pickup new jobs.

All Accounted For

100% of the district's print jobs can now be accounted for, thanks to QDirect, RSA's Enterprise Output Manager. QDirect works seamlessly with the district's accounting system so the old way of entering data, a manual process which could take weeks, is a thing of the past.

Instead of each school buying and maintaining their own copiers, the Accolade program budget includes the software and all of the Xerox copiers installed in each school. A local Xerox DocuCare representative is always available for maintenance, technical support and training on all the equipment as well as the RSA software. This has lowered costs at the schools, but more importantly it has given teachers back their two hours per week to use for educational tasks.

A Change for the Better

"Accolade did require a certain amount of social change," notes Gehle. "Teachers had to change their habits, how they plan their work, and the timeliness of what they put on paper for their students. But the end result has been very positive."

"At first I was very hesitant, but once I started, I fell in love with the program," recalls Cynthia Blenker, a teacher at Bayshore High School. As a Special Education teacher, she leverages the Internet for materials to use as handouts. "I can print directly from the source to Accolade. I can even do it from home. It has saved me several hours a week! Before, I'd have to come in early or stay late to use the copier and there was always a line, but with Accolade I avoid that. The print quality is much better, too. That makes me look more professional and makes it easier for the kids to understand."

"To stand in front of the copier is not helping teachers plan or get ready for their school day", notes Tim McGonegal, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services. "So this project is going to provide teachers more time in the day to plan."

Approximately 4,000 jobs per month are coming in to the Print Center, with 75% coming in via RSA's WebCRD and the remaining 25% via RSA's QDirect.SCAN. Accolade has also increased the print center's efficiency and productivity. "It has given us more operator time," says Pete Langdon, Print Center Manager. "With jobs coming in electronically, we don't have to scan hardcopies anymore, so we have more time for folding, cutting, finishing, and other work, and we can produce more jobs in less time without increasing staff or adding overtime."

A Team Approach

The Accolade program is spreading rapidly throughout the School District, with an anxious waiting list of individual schools. Bob Gehle notes that the key to success has been the partnership between the School District of Manatee County, RSA and Xerox. "What RSA and Xerox were able to bring to the table was a real collaborative willingness to help us succeed. They helped us develop a document strategy plan. We couldn't have done this without the partnership we have with RSA and Xerox. We wanted something that would work from the get-go, and that's what we have."

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Individual schools are literally lined up to join the waiting list for the Accolade program!