

Paper Free Purchase Ordering with the FaxPress: A Case Study

Mercury Plastics' Success with the FaxPress

*FaxPress' ability to integrate easily with Mercury Plastics' existing system
has transformed the way the purchasing department does business.*

The FaxPress Customer Profile

Custom profile thermoplastics extruder, Mercury Plastics Inc., supplies products to manufacturers in the appliance, automotive, plumbing, sporting goods, toys, manufactured houses and recreational vehicle industries. The Mercury Plastics purchasing department, located at company headquarters in Middlefield, Ohio, is responsible for ordering all materials that drive this highly successful plastics fabricator.

The Project

The Mercury Plastics purchasing department's purchase order process was long overdue for an overhaul. Before the advent of faxing, Mercury Plastics buyer Rose Renovich used to first place each order by phone, and then confirm the order by mailing a hard copy to the supplier, who often held off filing the order until the hard copy was received. The initial introduction of an office fax machine sped up the process by removing the mail delay; a signed, printed copy of the order was in the hands of the supplier right away.

The original fax based purchase order process was, however, both time-consuming for Rose and costly to the company. Rose sends on average 30 to 40 faxes per day. The company does not email purchase orders because of past problems providing the purchase order in a form suppliers can read, and also because the suppliers' email capabilities vary. So, using a noisy dot-matrix printer, Rose used to first print each purchase order on a three-part form, then separate the forms and stand in queue at the fax machine to fax the order, and, finally, wait for the fax confirmation. If the transmission failed, the fax had to be resent.

Two years ago, Mercury Plastics asked their preferred technical service provider, ComDoc Inc., to find a way to improve this labor-intensive purchasing process. As a result, ComDoc recommended Mercury Plastics try Castelle's FaxPress network fax solution, and exchange their current manual faxing process for an automatic one that would reside on a centralized server.

The FaxPress Solution: Implementation

ComDoc helped Mercury Plastics install the FaxPress system and reported that both installation and training went very smoothly. "My manager is happy with our time and cost savings," noted Shirley Berends, Mercury Plastics Systems Administrator.

Implementing the FaxPress would ultimately allow Rose Renovich to fax electronic versions of purchase orders directly from her desktop, drastically reducing the amount of paper involved in the process. "Lilly Software's Visual Enterprise database handles all of our manufacturing and accounting records," says Berends. "The key to the success of the automated fax system is our ability to provide electronic purchase orders that can be faxed directly from the Visual system." Berends made that possible by using Lilly Software's report builder to create a custom report from plain, white paper that included all of the fields from the original multipart purchase order plus the company logo.

The FaxPress Solution: Results

The labor, money, and time saved are making the FaxPress a hit with the Mercury Plastics staff. "FaxPress saves me an immense amount of time, and it saves the company the cost of ordering customized forms and postage," says Rose Renovich.. "It's become my main way of communicating with vendors. It also gives the vendor sufficient time to put a response and confirmation together. As a result, Mercury Plastics gets better commitments, and has a documented track of transactions and confirmations."

"Furthermore," Renovich adds, "FaxPress keeps me at my desk. All I have to do is direct the fax report to the FaxPress print driver and hit print. The *biggest* feature of FaxPress is that it integrates directly with our system."

The FaxPress' ability to integrate with the company's existing system means the purchasing department is not the only one to benefit from the FaxPress implementation. Other departments, including Accounting, Customer Service and Sales, use the automated fax features of FaxPress to fax documents such as invoices and packing slips directly from the Visual system. Berends, the sysadmin, is able to maintain extensive phone lists on the FaxPress system by importing delimited phone directories from other applications.

For the Mercury Plastics staff, the FaxPress is quickly becoming indispensable. "The Castelle FaxPress system is now considered mission critical," added Berends. "When it's up and running, which is normal, I hear absolutely nothing. But if anything happens like having servers go down, I immediately hear about it because Rose Renovich, our self-proclaimed 'fax queen', is knocking down my door. Fortunately for me FaxPress has proven to be extremely reliable."

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