

Excellus BlueCross BlueShield streamlines production workflow and gains enterprise-wide efficiencies using QDirect and M.I.S. Print from Rochester Software Associates.

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

It's not uncommon to hear references about organizations striving for a "paperless work environment." But the people in the print department at Excellus BlueCross BlueShield (BCBS) simply aren't buying it. In their world, the concept of a totally "paperless" environment is a long, long way off since their vital end products 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."

With such a large monthly print volume, developing and maintaining a productive workflow is essential. Until recently, however, processes were manual, time consuming, and labor intensive. To complete a production-volume job, operators would log into the mainframe to view the job's attributes. They would then look at the jobs already in each printer's queue to determine where the new job should be sent. If the chosen printer did not have the right stock loaded, the job would halt and the operator would receive an alert to load the right stock and continue the job. In many cases, operators would send an incoming job to a printer they knew already had the right stock loaded, which contributed to an un-optimized workflow. For example, it was not uncommon for one printer, which was loaded with ID card stock, to have multiple ID card jobs in its queue while two other printers remained idle.

There were additional areas to improve upon Excellus BlueCross BlueShield's previous workflow:

- *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.*
- *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.*

Actively seeking change

In an ongoing effort to seek out solutions that eliminate manual tasks, streamline work processes, and improve the bottom line across all three print centers, Excellus BCBS initiated a partnership with Rochester Software Associates (RSA) and Xerox Corporation.

Together, they implemented a customized, end-to-end print solution for the Rochester print center that includes:

- *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 manager used to control workflow, route jobs, and manage print queues.*
- *A fully redundant server housing both QDirect and M.I.S. Print.*



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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:

RSA's M.I.S. Print converts LCDS and Metacode jobs from the mainframe to PostScript. M.I.S. Print also generates a Xerox "stock call" that tells the printer which paper should be used for which pages. The job and the stock call are routed to QDirect, which reads the job's attributes and automatically sends the job to the first available printer capable of handling the print requirements. 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.*
- *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. If operators want to override the automated system, they can 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.*

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*Phil Rose, Excellus BCBS
Production Manager*

- *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, and there is server redundancy, ensuring business continuity and disaster recovery.*

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, paper-intensive 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, a DocuPrint180 and three 4635s were dedicated to mainframe printing while three DocuTech 6180 Production Publishers were dedicated to publishing. Now, Excellus BCBS has been able to consolidate devices down to four networked DocuTech 6180 Production Publishers and two networked DocuPrint 180 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.