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APPLICATION STUDY

Manteca Unified School District Unifies their Copier/Printers with QDirect.SCAN

Mix two dozen school sites, 24,000 students, 2,500 staff, and 2.5 million printed pages per month and you have the ingredients for what could otherwise be an enormous and highly frustrating document management and production challenge. Or it could be a workflow that works seamlessly from the daily submission and delivery of some 300 jobs to cost control and management of every job produced.

Manteca Unified School District, 80 miles west of San Francisco in California's Central Valley was not pleased with the first scenario and chose the latter, saving money, increasing production efficiencies and improving staff utilization.

Centralized in the Central Valley

Today, the district has a centralized production print center, managed by a third party. This facility is networked to the copier/printers in all of their buildings and uses Rochester Software Associates, Inc.'s QDirect.SCAN software to orchestrate much of the daily flow of educational materials needed throughout the district.

Why wait?

"We had teachers and staff waiting in line to make copies of their lesson plans, course packs, handouts, exams and other materials," relates Michael Dodge, Assistant Superintendent of Business Services.

"At other times they would send documents out to a local printer for photocopying or printing. Neither was a good use of their time or district resources. In addition, school principals needed to have better control over how much copying and printing was being done."

Bringing it in-house

The district took the first steps to control printing and production by taking virtually all printing in house. A third party was contracted to manage all copying and printing under a facilities management agreement that included creation of a centralized production facility. This reduced some of the time teachers and staff spent copying class materials and added some measures of cost control.

But Dodge and district administrators soon realized that much greater efficiencies could still be gained.

Stand... or deliver

"We still had school staff standing in front of machines waiting for copies and we didn't have the accounting capabilities we really needed," explains Dodge.

"QDirect.SCAN from RSA automatically creates electronic job tickets for our production printers, eliminating operator intervention and potential errors. This automation makes it possible for us to process hundreds of jobs per day and have them on the teacher's desk by 7am the next morning."

*- Michael Dodge,
Assistant Superintendent
of Business Services*

Wise advice

"Our printer vendor recommended that we use QDirect.SCAN software from Rochester Software Associates to truly streamline the processes."

QDirect.SCAN automates sending hard copy originals, with electronic ticketing, to a central printshop for production. Hard copy documents are scanned at a multi-function printer and sent to RSA's QDirect server.

An electronic job ticket is also created using the touch screen at the MFP and is automatically transmitted to production, along with the job. An acknowledgement receipt is printed at the requestor's MFP and the job can be manually or automatically distributed to any printer in the centralized print facility, without operators re-entering job information.

Reliable and resourceful

In Manteca, the print center offers jobs submitted by 1pm will be delivered before school begins the next morning. This fast turnaround saved a lot of staff and teacher time and Dodge and the school district worked closely with RSA to customize QDirect.SCAN and make it even more powerful. Before long, Manteca found that QDirect.SCAN's ability to be customized was ultimately the greatest benefit of working with RSA.

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Documents scanned in one day are in the teachers' hands the next morning.

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Putting the network to work

All of the copier/printers in every school are on the network, so teachers can simply take a hard copy document to a local machine, log in, and scan it into the system. For example, a teacher can scan a 25-page job and key in that she needs 50 copies, on blue paper, double sided and stapled. The system "looks" at the job after it is scanned, calculates the pricing, creates thumbnails of the job to show that it has scanned correctly—that there are not accidentally rotated pages, for instance—and prints out a confirmation page showing the teacher's new account balance and the job specs that she has requested. Jobs can easily be cancelled and resubmitted if there are any errors.

"We would say we need to change this, or tweak that and then a day or so later it would be adjusted. They were very responsive, absolutely great to work with and it worked out very well for us. We're very pleased with RSA."

*- Michael Dodge,
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"RSA's QDirect.SCAN automatically creates electronic job tickets for our production printers, eliminating operator intervention and potential errors," notes Dodge. "This automation makes it possible for us to process hundreds of jobs per day and have them on the teacher's desk the next morning."

Hitting the thumbnail on the head

The ability to produce thumbnails is one capability that's been particularly beneficial to Manteca. "The scanners run very fast—about 100 pages per minute," says Dodge. "And it's always possible a page can double feed or be accidentally rotated. Before we used RSA's QDirect.SCAN, a document with a missing or rotated page could arrive in the production center but no one would know something was wrong. That resulted in frustration and in some cases re-running of jobs. With thumbnails, a teacher can review the job and if need be, correct it before it goes into production."

Keeping it under budget

With so many schools and customers using the system, the district also wanted to monitor and control costs. All teachers in the district have a printing budget that's set by the principal in their school. Under the old system, billing arrived only once a month and it was very difficult to accurately track usage and manage cost allocation. "We wanted to be able to calculate account balances on-the fly and debit the account so teachers could see how much each job costs and their remaining balance," explains Dodge. "At the same time, we wanted the principals to be able to monitor the costs for their schools."

Dodge and his colleagues worked with RSA to configure QDirect.SCAN to provide real-time knowledge of print production costs. "Teachers see the costs when they submit a job and the principals can use a browser-based interface to check each teacher's budget and total spend for their schools. They can even shut down an account if one seems to be out of line," explains Dodge.

Sharing the savings

To further manage costs, teachers have an incentive to use QDirect.SCAN and the district's production center. "We give them two copies at the print center for the same price as a single copy on one of the local machines. And since they have a clear understanding of their budget, they are quick to scan and submit jobs electronically. That not only controls costs, but instead of being lined up at copiers, teachers are using their time for more important activities, such as helping students, meeting with parents and preparing lesson plans."

Since the implementation of QDirect.SCAN was complete, overall print volume in the district has swelled from just under 1.5 million pages per month to 2.5 million. At the same time, costs per job have declined 10 percent and teachers and staff are more productive. In addition, hundreds of hours annually have been saved by automating cost accounting.

Customizing QDirect.SCAN was a complex task but Dodge looks back on it as very much a mutual effort. "RSA showed us what they were doing and we would give our input. We would say we need to change this, or tweak that and then a day or so later it would be adjusted. They were very responsive, absolutely great to work with and it worked out very well for us. We're very pleased with RSA."

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Ticketing is done electronically at the Multi-Function Printer. A confirmation page with job thumbnails is printed directly at the MFP, instilling confidence that the job will be produced correctly.