High-speed, black-and-white, digital printing solutions

IBM

Creative Automation gets a Good Response from InfoPrint.

Creative Automation. It's rare that a company's name directly describes its operations and objective. The "Automation" part is easy to figure out; the volume of work handled by this company demands the most efficient use of technology. The "Creative" part describes the way the company went about implementing this technology.

Founded in 1968, Creative Automation is one of the largest privately owned computer service and direct mail production companies in the direct marketing industry. With clientele ranging from software publishers, catalog marketers and nonprofit organizations to financial institutions, marketing agencies and retailers, Creative Automation can print literally millions of direct mail documents—including credit card promotions, sweepstakes offers and solicitation mailers—in one day.

It Just Makes Sense
Such a heavy workload demands a system that can keep pace. So, when Creative Automation looked to upgrade its printing capabilities, they turned to IBM's InfoPrint solutions. In fact, Creative Automation was IBM Printing Systems Company's first customer to buy multiple InfoPrint 4000 Direct Mail printers at one time.

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Creative Automation

Application	Offset-quality, black and white digital printing of direct mail documents
Software	IBM® MICR check printing application
Hardware	IBM InfoPrint® 4000, RISC System/6000® (RS/6000™)
Services	Maintenance and Support

Today, Creative Automation's customers demand improved print quality at more than 240 dots per inch (dpi) resolution. Prior to 1997, Creative Automation relied on Océ's printing technology, but, according to Abe Zayed, senior vice president of Creative Automation, the expense involved to upgrade the Océ printers to 300 dpi was not as economically attractive as a selectable 240 or 300 dpi IBM solution.

For Creative Automation, the decision to choose another printing solution was based on more than just price alone; it was an overall "economic business strategy," says Zayed. "Our biggest cost is maintenance. With our previous solution from Océ, approximately 30 percent of our revenues went to the manufacturer each month in usage charges. From a business perspective, that was not a sensible allocation of dollars." Creative Automation prefers to use the money to improve their bottom line and pass on the savings to their clients.

With the IBM InfoPrint 4000 printing solution, Creative Automation can print millions of direct mail pieces in one day.

More of a Good Thing

In mid 1997, Zayed received a referral from a friend about IBM's InfoPrint 4000 printing system, a high-volume, high-speed, continuous-forms digital print solution, and gladly investigated. Soon after, Creative Automation installed their first InfoPrint 4000 240/300 dpi, duplex printing system. During the ensuing months, Creative Automation noted the InfoPrint 4000's ability to print even the most complex jobs at rated speed. In addition, difficult-to-print forms, such as tip-in cards, feed through the printers with ease and output with high

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print quality. The company was so pleased with the output quality and function of the IBM duplex printing system that they ordered three more duplex InfoPrint 4000s and two simplex InfoPrint 4000s.

One Step Further

After the installations, Creative Automation turned to IBM for help in addressing other business concerns. Like many direct mail production companies, Creative Automation relied heavily on a mainframe to store and access documents. Although this type of environment provides many benefits, it also creates a number of ongoing monthly costs, including thousands of dollars in software licensing and supporting hardware.

When Creative Automation made the decision to move its mainframe-based system to a server-based one, IBM was there to help. An Ethernet connection was added to each printing system as well as two RS/6000 servers to support 10-12 IBM printers. This contrasts with other vendors who require one server per printer. "This is an example of another advantage IBM offers us. It's a more appropriate solution for our industrial environment," says Zayed. "The IBM InfoPrint 4000 installations provide a cost-effective solution that has enabled us to provide our customers with better quality and reliability."

Creative Automation continues to build on their success with IBM by exploring more of IBM's printing solutions. The company was chosen to beta test IBM's MICR printers and is currently using IBM's MICR technology to print checks, which are distributed by major credit card companies. In the end, Zayed says, "If we can't print it, we can't mail it. It's as simple as that. Direct mail never goes away, so we need printers that last."