

North American grocer: Thousands of labor hours saved every month

One system for shelf-edge signage handles both in-store and central printing for major operational savings.

Challenge

When operating over 1,600 locations, even small savings in labor multiplies to large reductions in costs. This grocer was taking a hard look at labor savings.

The retailer used the Lexmark Print and Digital Signage solution for printing materials in the store and a separate third-party printing company for centrally produced batches of signs. With two systems for producing shelf-edge signs, the work for updating or changing templates was doubled. It was time to reassess the shelf-edge sign strategy and start evaluating options.

The objective: build a sign-printing system that manages a high volume of sign production, handles both in-store and central printing, reduces labor costs and delivers great-looking signs.

Solution

The Lexmark Print and Digital Signage solution offers both in-store and central printing from the same system. Retailers can print signs in the store and send print-ready output to a third-party printer of its choice. Lexmark's signage solution seamlessly handles printing both individual signs and large volumes of signs, each one composed to be eye-catching and accurate. It's quality and quantity—all from one system.

For central printing, this grocer is using Central Publisher, a Webbased application for handling high-volume central printing. With Central Publisher, the grocer is no longer tied to one central printing service provider, but can choose the central print vendor based on cost and service. Batches of signs are sent to the central facility for production and delivered to stores in pre-sorted boxes, organized in perfect hanging order for each store location.

For in-store printing, this grocer relies on a custom solution that works within its LINUX environment. Stores sign on to the application and print tailored batches of signs or individual signs on an as-needed basis to ensure that all shelf-edge signs are up to date.

Organizational overview

As one of the largest grocery chains, currently operating over 1,600 locations throughout the United States and Canada, this grocer requires efficiency in every aspect of the business—including its shelf-edge signs and labels. With Lexmark's Print and Digital Signage solution, it has found just that: a comprehensive, end-to-end signage system that is the perfect amalgamation of old and new, tried and true.

To create sign designs and templates, this grocer uses Template Designer, a retail-oriented graphic design tool for authoring smart templates. By applying business rules to smart templates, visual elements on signs automatically adapt when data contains certain criteria—eliminating the need to make manual changes every time information changes.

Results

Saving thousands of labor hours each month

Centrally printed batches are produced and collated in in-aisle execution order that is unique for each store. This lets store employees work more efficiently by eliminating the time it takes to organize and sort signs prior to hanging them. Store associates need only open the box of signs and walk up and down the aisles to get signs to where they need to be.

One system for all shelf-edge signage

The Publishing Platform for Retail is a robust signage system built to handle both in-store and central printing. The greatest advantage being that all data assets, design files and business rules are managed centrally and used to operate both central and in-store printing. Every sign, regardless of the production method, looks the same.

Increase in control, decrease in costs

This grocer is in the driver's seat. Larger batches are sent to a central facility for high-speed, cost-efficient production, whereas individual signs or smaller batches may be printed in-store for immediate availability.

The ability to choose means this retailer doesn't have to compromise operations for cost. That level of control also means savings on print materials by producing only the signs that are needed. There's less waste, more control and confidence in knowing the shelf edge is always accurate and up to date.

Full-color printing or pre-printed sign stock?

Both. This grocer is using a mixture of full-color printing and preprinted sign stock. All centrally produced signs are printed in color on blank stock so that each batch is printed in the order it should be hung. Signs printed in the store are produced on pre-printed stock to fulfill the immediate need for replacement or ad-hoc signs. With Lexmark's retail signage solution, this grocer can select if a sign is printed with or without the template background enabled, using the same sign template for both methods of printing.

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