

Xerox and Adobe® Technologies Empower Towers Perrin Document Management System

Towers Perrin

- Global management consulting firm, specializing in HR delivery solutions
- Employees: 9,000
- Location: 78 offices in 23 countries
www.towers.com

Industry

Management Consulting

Solution

Print Production

Products Used

- Adobe Acrobat® Distiller® Server
- Adobe PostScript®
- Xerox DocuTech 6155s
- Xerox DocuTech 90
- Xerox DocuColor 6060
- Xerox DigiPath Production Software
- Xerox VIPP IDE
- Xerox VIPP Thin Printer

Situation

Towers Perrin is one of the largest human resource (HR) consulting and administration firms, with a client list that includes three quarters of the world's 500 largest companies. Helping organizations manage investments in people to achieve measurable performance improvements, Towers Perrin focuses on HR strategy and service delivery, benefit and compensation design and implementation, employee and organizational communication, HR technology, and outsourced HR administration services.

Benefit administration activities put an enormous strain on employers' internal resources, diverting attention from their core businesses. Towers Perrin Administration Solutions (TPAS) is in business to relieve employers of this burden, delivering higher quality, more cost-effective benefit administration services than employers can typically provide for themselves and allowing companies to turn their attention to more strategic matters.

Because more organizations are outsourcing the administration of their employee benefit and other HR programs, Towers Perrin's Administration Solutions group is a key growth engine for the firm. Today, Towers Perrin maintains four service centers in North America, as well as centers in Australia, Germany, and the U.K, administering retirement and health and welfare plans with more than 6 million members. TPAS maintains records on employees and their dependents, processes benefit transactions, answers questions from clients' employees, and fulfills their requests for brochures, retirement kits, and other materials.

Towers Perrin's administration business grew rapidly from its inception in the early 1990s. One of its challenges was creating a production environment that could efficiently support such a broad range of services. The challenge was compounded by a wide variety of data input and output formats. Inbound files came from mainframe systems, DOS-based applications, and Windows® applications, to name a few. More than 100 different print streams were in operation utilizing an assortment of protocols ranging from word processing documents to Printer Command Language (PCL) to Metacode. The firm's central fulfillment site, located in Chesapeake, Virginia, ran 24 hours per day, printing to many types of hardware, with peak volumes that could be two or three times the daily average.



Insight

Instead of focusing on the inefficiencies of this multi-faceted document management system, Towers Perrin saw enormous potential for automation, quality improvement, and business expansion. The company hired production experts Mark Little and Paul Howe, and posed the TPAS opportunity: streamline and automate the process, reduce costs, eliminate redundancies, increase overall capacity, leverage existing infrastructure, improve physical space utilization, enhance call center effectiveness, and develop a standardized method for adding new clients.

Thankfully, innovators love a challenge. Little and Howe—together with Xerox analyst Daryl Brown—made a commitment to take the TPAS Print/Fulfillment Operation to the next level.

“To be the best, you must be innovative and build partnerships with other experts,” explains Mark Little, senior manager, TPAS Central Services at Towers Perrin. “We looked to Xerox and Adobe Systems because they’ve developed advanced systems to automate document creation, output, delivery, and management, and consistently provided outstanding tools and support at all levels.”

Innovation

Little and Howe were tasked with finding ways to standardize processes, while maintaining sufficient flexibility to offer varying degrees of customization. This delicate balance was found with the introduction of a centralized Document Management Group (DMG).

The first step was to transition the document creation process from a collection of module-based development applications to a Xerox VIPP (Variable-data Intelligent PostScript Printware) and Xerox VTP (VIPP Thin Printer) solution. An efficient document creation workflow would be essential to keeping a steady flow of data to a newly-acquired Xerox DocuTech 6155 print system, which could support up to 350,000 images per day. The Xerox VIPP is a high-speed data merge application that combines extensive data files with variable data documents for production printing. With Adobe PostScript at the core of the Xerox VIPP solution, Towers Perrin is assured seamless compatibility with existing systems, and the required reliability for a high volume production environment—all while maintaining the level of quality expected by their customer base.

Xerox VIPP, VTP and Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF)

- In three years, cost per image decreased by 50%
- Xerox VTP document development reduced hourly costs by 42%
- Electronic creation and assembly of benefits kits reduced cost, improved turnaround times, and raised quality
- The Xerox and Adobe workflow allowed Towers Perrin to recapture fulfillment work that was previously routed to outside vendors, driving better quality and an incremental revenue stream of nearly \$1 million

“We worked with Xerox Analyst Daryl Brown to develop a standard data layout and a prototype VIPP application that emulated our legacy output,” says Little. The group chose Xerox DigiPath and VIPP to replace the existing letter-writing module. By placing all of the source document templates centrally on DigiPath, Towers Perrin was able to consolidate and streamline the transmission of variable data to the production environment.

The DMG realized cost and time-savings right away. “By implementing the DigiPath and VIPP merge application, we saw reduced RIP times at the physical printers compared to legacy merge programs,” says Little.

As the transition was made to Xerox VIPP processing, the team's desire was to maintain the flexibility that had been gained by working with Adobe PDF file functionality. With the VIPP solution, TPAS could send output to the entire family of Xerox printers, and print in black and white or full color from the same print run source.

The Xerox VTP served to integrate VIPP-based variable data applications with the Adobe Acrobat Distiller Server, creating Adobe PDF documents. With this solution in place, the TPAS team could design and move participant documents into production for both web and hardcopy delivery from a single development source. The VTP system also gave Towers Perrin the ability to customize base templates more easily, and more cost-effectively than was possible through web development. This was a significant competitive advantage in the high-end outsourcing market with respect to meeting customers' requirements.

"An additional advantage of centralizing the document creation function into one unit, was the freeing up of other groups to focus on their core competencies," adds Little. "Plus, documents that were output through VTP were more easily directed to web servers when appropriate, and much easier to archive."

This new workflow allowed Towers Perrin to push standard templates across clients, while still permitting a great deal of customization. The DMG also made it possible to design documents a single time, allowing the plan participant to choose a preferred delivery mechanism—a printed copy sent through the mail, or web-based document in Adobe PDF.

"Our original configuration called for converting most input files to Metacode so they would print effectively on the Xerox printers," says Little. "A by-product of that conversion process was the creation of an Adobe PDF file. That was a great benefit because we could make that document available to colleagues for review prior to printing to hard copy. We could also export the document to web servers and convert to TIFF files, which is the format for our long-term storage system. With this new configuration, we evolved from a fairly straight-forward print shop to an advanced document creation and management facility."

At about the same time, TPAS completed an Adobe Acrobat upgrade which allowed anyone within TPAS to print documents to the company network as Adobe PDF files. They could also integrate Adobe PDF files from multiple source systems into one document, then print and import the document to the TPAS image archival system simultaneously. "These tools had a huge impact on our efficiency at critical document creation and document handling process points," says Little.

The assembly and fulfillment of benefit kits was another area in need of improvement. Prior to implementing Adobe and Xerox technologies the TPAS team had to print and match personalized documents with static shelf-pulled materials. Now they assemble the complete kit electronically and print all required components sequentially. This has reduced cost, shortened turnaround time, and improved quality.

TPAS customers have also reaped new benefits. The updated electronic document management system has enhanced plan members' customer support experience, as they are now able to choose between having personalized documents mailed to them, or made available via the web. Additionally, notes Little, prospective TPAS clients have responded extremely well to the firm's organized, efficient and high-tech approach to disseminating critical information to plan members.

Little credits Brown and the Xerox Variable Information Solutions Services Group (VISSG) for their help envisioning and implementing the new TPAS production workflow, which fit the company's challenges today, and is scalable enough to meet future needs. "There was great teamwork and the training they provided prepared our development unit to maintain and customize it going forward," recalls Little.

The proof is in the numbers. Working with Xerox and Adobe, Little and Howe proudly report that in three years the new print center configuration has reduced cost per image by 50%. In addition, time and labor savings have allowed TPAS to take on additional business. They have recaptured fulfillment work that was previously routed to outside vendors, driving better quality, project management—and a revenue stream approaching seven figures.

Integrity

Faced with a difficult re-engineering challenge, Towers Perrin demonstrated the power of insight, innovation and integrity. Teaming with vendors who shared Towers Perrin's commitment to best-in-class services was key to successfully transforming the TPAS print workflow into a powerful electronic document creation and integration solution.

"We tell vendors that if they like a challenge, they'll enjoy working with us because we're never satisfied with the way things are today," concludes Little. "The dramatic expansion of available technology is useful only if you can deploy it in ways that make your business better. Adobe and Xerox technologies allow us to be more competitive and grow the business."

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