

Case Study: European Printing Company Integrates Optimus MIS & Imp Software

Overview

A European printing company, employing around 80 people with an annual turnover of €15 million, specialised in both general commercial printing and label production. The production was evenly split between these two areas, with all products printed on sheet-fed offset presses. To remain competitive and efficient, the company invested in Optimus MIS, which was integrated with Imp Software to automate production processes.

Challenges

The company produced wet labels primarily for the food and drink industry, ranging from labels for food cans to luxury bottle labels. These labels were printed in CMYK plus up to four spot colours on various substrates, including aluminium-coated paper, and received either aqueous or UV coating.

With up to 50 different job items ordered daily, each with varying colours, coatings, substrates, and quantities, the manual process was time-consuming and labour-intensive. Multiple employees were required to manage each stage of production. Although customers often reordered the same products, the combinations of product and quantity rarely came in the same configuration.

Previous Workflow: Inefficiencies and Manual Processes

In the previous workflow, customer service representatives (CSRs) manually collected product information, such as label size and colours, and grouped orders by size, substrate, and colour. An internally developed Excel document was used to calculate how different labels could be combined on a sheet to balance order quantities.

After deciding on the combinations, a job order was created in the MIS for each combined sheet. The Excel sheet was used to enter product data into the MIS, and the prepress team re-entered the same data into the prepress system. This manual approach led to duplicated effort, increased errors, and longer lead times.

New Workflow: Automation with Optimus MIS & Imp Software

The company implemented a customised solution developed by Optimus MIS in collaboration with Imp Software to fully automate this process. The new system stored all product data – including substrate, size, colours, coating, finishing, and packaging requirements – in a central database.

Key Features of the New Workflow

- **Automatic Import:** Customer orders were imported via Excel or CSV files that contained only product numbers and quantities. Product data was then enriched with detailed information from the database.
- **Advanced Filtering:** The system filtered out labels that couldn't be combined on a sheet due to substrate or coating differences.
- **Optimised Layout Creation:** Using the Imp API, the system optimised label layouts by considering quantity, size, and colour. The most efficient sheet combinations were created, reducing material consumption and maximising production efficiency.
- **Automatic PDF Creation:** The system automatically generated PDFs by linking product information to source files. These PDFs, containing all necessary marks and colour control strips, were sent to the prepress system for proofing and plate-making.

Results and Benefits

The automated workflow significantly reduced the manual effort required in both the front office and prepress. Key benefits included:

- **Time Savings:** The company saved at least one hour per order on CSR tasks and an additional 30–40 minutes on layout preparation in prepress.
- **Elimination of Manual Processes:** CSRs no longer had to manually gather product data or sift through paperwork. Additionally, prepress no longer needed to re-enter data or prepare layouts manually.
- **Faster Turnaround Times:** With the new workflow, the time from receiving a customer order to creating a print-ready PDF for plate-making was reduced from hours to minutes.
- **Improved Accuracy:** By automating data entry and layout creation, errors were minimised, streamlining production and improving job accuracy and efficiency.

Conclusion

The company's investment in Optimus MIS and Imp Software resulted in a more efficient, reliable, and scalable production process, allowing it to meet customer demands faster and with fewer resources.