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Kirklees Metropolitan Council Repro & Print Unit is responsible for the repro & printing requirements of the Council's 19,000 employees. With current print volumes of around 24 million sheets per year, it seems that any increase in volume would be a near impossible task. However, this is not the case and Oliver Renshaw is excited about the new developments taking place.

Migration, internalisation and redistribution of work at Kirklees Metropolitan Council are currently taking place to allow each department to focus on its main role. The complexity of variable data printing means that to date, all print work containing variable data has been supported by the IT Department or outsourced due to size. This is now changing.



"The variable data element that we produce as a Council is currently handled by another department - our IT Department and we've got a project ongoing to migrate that across. That will increase our volumes by about another 10 million sheets a year. The main jobs that that would involve is the council tax billing runs and all the elections' work - some of which is currently outsourced due to the limitations of the current systems."

To help ensure that the Repro & Print Unit could maintain standards, manage variable data and the anticipated increase in print volume, the Council started investigating software solutions that would meet its variable data requirements.

"We replaced all our hardware and output engines about 18 months ago and at the time we were looking specifically at an engine and software solution to meet the current demands and the future requirements of the Council with regard to variable data. Variable data printing can be made very, very simple with PlanetPress."

Having investigated a number of possible solutions, Oliver and his team found most to be either too restrictive or too complicated, until they came across PlanetPress Suite from Objectif Lune.

"We chose Objectif Lune and PlanetPress because we liked the way that the PlanetPress software has a very familiar desktop look to it, so that you don't have to be a rocket scientist to programme it and get it out - you can be doing variable jobs very, very quickly - within a day of installation you would be getting work out."

The ease of use and fast set-up has enabled the Repro and Print Unit to start managing and delivering the variable print requirements of the Council and it appears that improved efficiency and turnaround are not the only benefits. The Unit have already been able to internalise very complex print requirements.

"We've also migrated some of our existing forms work, which we printed litho; over to the system. The main one of these is the purchase order books that we produce for the Council. With a couple of hundred departments, every one has different information on purchase order books. Traditionally, printing them was a nightmare because we printed them, then we collated them, then we perforated them, then we numbered them. The whole process could've taken anywhere in the region of a week."

"Now it takes a day and the way it is generated is very clever indeed. We use one line of excel to generate as many order books as we need and within that there are four variants with variable logos, all the addressing information and there's the sequential numbering of the purchase orders. That all comes out of the back of the digital press ready to bind."

However, it does not stop there. PlanetPress Suite has enabled the Unit to enhance the Purchase Order process to help improve efficiency still further. Multiple Purchase Order books are sent to each department at one time and with support from Objectif Lune, the Repro & Print Unit have been able to automate printing of a reminder sheet 10 pages from the end of the very last book in each batch, for each department. This is an enhancement that Oliver believes would not have been easy without PlanetPress.

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Kirklees Metropolitan Council

"I think it would've been extremely difficult - looking at the other software solutions - to be able to produce it. It's quite a complicated job and we did actually speak to Objectif Lune when we were in the process of doing it, because we had to do a little bit of additional coding to get it to work, but again, we had the job up and running within a couple of days and I'd had no programming experience. Objectif Lune just talked me through it and it worked - it's brilliant."



Oliver Renshaw
Repro & Print Unit
Kirklees Metropolitan Council

The increase in print volumes resulting from the migration of managing variable data requirements to the Repro & Print Unit may seem very ambitious, but Oliver is continuing to internalise the print carried out by the Unit still further through the use of PlanetPress. As well as accepting the task of printing pay slips for 19,000 employees every 4 weeks, the Unit is also starting to bring previously outsourced work back in to the Department.

"Our elections work is currently done outside the authority - and very well it's being done too - but we are looking at putting together a solution for our Elections Department, which is a small reminder letter for people that have not registered to vote. It's 14,000 variable letters and it's got variable barcodes for security information, dynamic images depending on the data stream and we expect to be able to turn that round within about an hour and a half. Hopefully it should be the first of many to come in from our Elections."

PlanetPress is enabling the Repro & Print Unit to carry out increased amounts of work in less time. One way in which this is being achieved is through the load balancing functionality of PlanetPress.

"One of the other good things about the PlanetPress Suite of software is the ability to load balance across the output engines, which I've not seen in any other software. We can do a load balancing job, where it will send three equal sized parts to each of our output engines and they should all finish around about the same time. So we're not just sending work to one machine and clogging it up for a long time, we can programme the functionality within elements of the software to be able to send it to whichever machine's free - depending on a set of priorities. It can prioritise automatically and that's something that we are very, very keen on doing."

The Repro & Print Unit are already experiencing savings in terms of time and money. The Council anticipate a saving of around a five figure sum by migrating variable data print work to the Repro & Print Unit and bringing outsourced printing back in-house. This would not have been as simple without PlanetPress and it is not only on the output they are experiencing time savings. PlanetPress is enabling Oliver and his team to continue delivery of complex variable data requirements, previously conducted by the IT department, without the same technical IT skills and within shorter time frames.

"It's a great bit of software - you are up and running within a day. Tony and I, one of my colleagues, went for training at Objectif Lune. Tony had never seen any variable data software in his life. By the end of the day, he was doing variable data work - quite complicated variable data work. We've got a forms bank of about 150 forms and Tony managed to set them up in about a day and a half."

Variable data printing can be made very, very simple with PlanetPress and the functionality that the basic programme or the PlanetPress software suite gives you will do the majority of what you want to do very, very quickly and very, very easily. If you want to get into really complicated things, Objectif Lune are at the end of a phone and it's not too difficult to do some really quite complicated things."

PlanetPress is breaking down barriers and for Oliver Renshaw and his team, the sky really is the limit.

The Kirklees Metropolitan Council PlanetPress Suite Solution:



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Process and distribution automation



PlanetPress Image for
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