



BULK MAIL COMPANY IMPROVES PRODUCTION BY 20% WITH NEW BAR CODE SYSTEM

NORTH AMERICAN COMMUNICATIONS, INC.

DUNCANVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA



industry

SERVICES – BULK MAIL DISTRIBUTION

applications

WORK-IN-PROCESS

situation

North American Communications, Inc. (NAC) specializes in manufacturing and distributing bulk mailings for a variety of customers, including credit card companies. NAC provides a full suite of services: 1) printing all the brochures, letters and inserts required for a bulk mail solicitation; 2) stuffing the literature into appropriate envelopes; and 3) making sure the address and bulk mail labels satisfy all postal regulations before delivering them to the U.S. Postal Service. As a result, NAC can handle a mailing with as many as 1.5 million pieces in one day. The Duncansville, Pennsylvania, location employs 450, while facilities in San Diego and Tijuana, Mexico employ another 300 people altogether.

critical issue

NAC was spending too much time making adjustments to machinery prior to running new print jobs. For example, a particular printing machine might be dedicated to printing and cutting 100,000 letters for a given mailing. Once the run of 100,000 was complete, workers needed approximately 30 minutes to prepare the machine for the next order (perhaps a run of 50,000 mini brochures) — but only if the appropriate papers were ready and waiting at the machine when the first run was finished. Otherwise, workers would have to find the appropriate printing materials and bring them to the machine, which resulted in delays of 30 to 60 minutes on each changeover. Such delays multiplied again and again throughout the course of a year which limited NAC's production efficiency.

reasons

From 1993 to 1996, NAC's business had tripled in size. While the company welcomed the new revenue, it suffered growing pains since the company's existing systems had difficulty accommodating the rapid expansion. When volumes were lower, there was enough slack in production capacity to make delays in job starts only a minor hindrance.

vision & capabilities

NAC's managers wanted a data collection system that would take job information entered on the shop floor, and send it to two Compaq Pentium host PC's running Wonderware Intouch software. This information, in turn, would be relayed to personnel who would know what materials to bring to the next available machine, as well as when the completed printing run would be ready.

intermec solution

Intermec installed eleven MODEL 9560 Industrial Transaction Managers and a MODEL 9154 CROSS-BAR® Controller to track the status of all work orders. Employee bar code badges are entered into the data collection system, along with information on bar code labels attached to paper reams used on different jobs. The 9560 interfaces with the printing and paper folding machines so that job status can be accessed by employees at any time.

benefits

Management estimates a 20% gain in overall production efficiency, mainly because they have a clearer picture of machine availability and pending machine changeovers. The Intermec system was projected to pay for itself in less than six months, while NAC was able to quantify a 50% increase in job accounting accuracy due to the elimination of keypunching information on the shop floor.

Intermec