

CASE STUDY

Accelerated deliveries and reduced costs

CLIENT PROFILE

One of the largest global publishers of books, journals, and reference works ranging from scientific, technical, and medical to social sciences, business management, and computer applications

CHALLENGE

Faster deliveries at reduced cost

In an increasingly competitive environment, the publisher was under pressure to increase both speed to market and cost-efficiency, and needed first proofs turned around in a third of the time at reduced cost.

SOLUTION

Superior production planning and process innovation

MPS adopted a dual approach to this requirement: optimizing production queues and reducing “touch time” —the time when files are “works in progress” (WIP)—to achieve faster deliveries and higher productivity.

Optimization of production queues

The first step was to identify the behavior of production queues ahead of every operating function and to establish the targeted throughput needed for the bottlenecks, or phases of production where work sat effectively untouched. The Theory of Constraints along with simulation models were applied to get a thorough understanding of this as well as the productivity needed for each step in the process.

With the greatly reduced turnaround time, the WIP needed a closer watch; thus, production managers were trained to understand this relationship between growing WIP, “floating bottlenecks,” and schedule adherence. Visual dashboards were developed to support the constraint-based production planning techniques, which in turn helped to predict possible delays with greater reliability. These tools also helped managers to take timely action so that the growing stack of WIP remained in control, permitting MPS to provide on time and consistent service.

“Touch time” reduction

In order to eliminate any non-value-added activities and focus on maximizing automation for all tasks and sub-tasks Lean Management and Six Sigma, two techniques used in the automotive and electronics industries, were used to reduce the amount of time an article was actually being worked upon. In essence, the technology teams and the functional experts collaborated to automate further the editing and composition tools, simplify the artwork-processing tasks, and improve the codes that support “mistake proofing” to reduce rework cycles. This implementation led to a more consistent quality of deliveries, offered a refined process supported by freshly designed tools, and significantly reduced the “touch time” of every article.

A large global publisher was faced with the twin challenges of needing to increase speed to market and rationalizing the costs of its journal production processes. MPS adopted a two-pronged approach, optimizing production queues and reducing touch time, in order to reduce the time from login to proofing by one-third at the same time as increasing the team's productivity.



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MPS