

Case Study

education

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Blue Valley Schools

Sharing a Vision of Customer Satisfaction — and Expectations — with a Progressive K-12 School District

"We have a finite amount of time to connect with our students. We don't want to spend it trying to figure out what's wrong with our output devices. With Ricoh, we don't have to — they resolve problems before we even know about them."

— Jason Gillam
Director of Business Operations
Blue Valley Schools
Overland Park, KS



ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

Students arrive at school in the Blue Valley School District ready to learn. They're not the only ones. District decision-makers strive every day to learn more in hopes of improving the school day experience for students and staff.

With more than 3,000 teachers and staff and more than 22,000 students in the district, the typical school day buzzes with activity — in and out of the classroom. Blue Valley staff from 34 different schools, 3 program buildings and 4 support buildings print thousands of pages of documents every day, including workbooks, handouts, notes and other documents.

The district's robust print network helped staff produce the information they needed quickly and economically. But educators wanted to spend even more time with students and less time producing paperwork. As a result, district officials gathered valuable feedback, studied workflows and researched new ways to simplify printing.

Customer satisfaction surveys revealed that less than half of the respondents were "satisfied" with customer service when they encountered a print problem related to the district's digital multifunction printers (MFPs). With the lease for the existing fleet of MFPs set to expire, district officials revamped print workflows and developed a new service model. But they had to choose a new print partner with the expertise and technology to implement it quickly, economically and reliably.

CHALLENGE

- Diminishing customer satisfaction with existing fleet
- Provide staff more time for classroom preparation and instruction
- Enhance service model to improve performance indicators
- Improve an already well-performing print shop

SOLUTION

- Deploy on-site technicians to manage requests and preventive care tasks
- Use common interface on devices
- Install card readers to improve security and simplify reporting
- Add five new production printers for more throughput and inline finishing capabilities

RESULTS

- Nearly doubled user satisfaction approval ratings
- Faster service response times
- Resolved technical issues in first attempt 32 percent more often
- Produced up to 20 percent more print shop jobs in less time

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The district was confident that by choosing the right partner, they could improve the speed and efficiency of copy and print tasks; reduce downtime; minimize time-consuming manual tasks; and enhance security controls for tracking users and devices more accurately.

CHALLENGE

With an aging fleet of MFPs that was about five years old, maintenance issues became more common. Staff members handled these problems in multiple ways — with mixed results.

Many staff members reported maintenance problems to a key operator. In doing so, they helped the next person who needed to print. But what about the print job they needed? They had to find another MFP to use, which compromised their time spent with students.

Even after the issue was reported via the service request line, it was largely unknown how long it would take before a technician was found and the MFP was fixed. As a result, only 38 percent of the staff were “satisfied” with the service request line experience.

Some staff tried to identify or repair the MFP issue themselves. But without the proper training to perform maintenance tasks, their attempts were often futile. Meanwhile, they weren’t able to complete other office or classroom tasks or interact with students.

“The staff have enough responsibilities, and most of them didn’t want to add technician to the list.” said Jason Gillam, Director of Business Operations. “When they encountered a problem, many simply ignored it and moved on to the next task without reporting it. Unfortunately, we couldn’t fix the problem if we didn’t know it existed.”

A single malfunctioning device could prevent multiple users from printing lesson plans, notebooks, test booklets and more. It also created bottlenecks when too many users tried to print simultaneously from a smaller fleet of operable devices.

Staff spread out across 41 different buildings created unique problems, too. Because of the wide range of types of devices at each of the schools, performing the same task at one MFP was different than at the next. Many devices had unique user interfaces, so users struggled with projects that required workflows more complicated than what the default settings allowed. In addition, users had to manually log in every time. The extra steps caused delays and led to more errors.

“Educators constantly seek new ways to reach students,” said Gillam. “They change the curriculum, sign up for seminars and search for new ideas, all so they can improve the learning experience. It’s no surprise then that learning every detail about the MFP down the hallway isn’t a top priority for them.”

For years, staff was encouraged to funnel more projects to the print shop to speed delivery, so they’d have more time to interact with students and prepare lessons. The print shop managed nearly all of those jobs with relative ease — certainly faster than if staff tried to create lesson plans and other booklets with collating and binding themselves. But district leaders wanted to take on more jobs with even faster turnaround at the print shop.

Educators thrive in front of the classroom, not in front of an MFP. The district searched for a new print partner to simplify workflows and improve maintenance so staff could concentrate on core tasks.

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SOLUTION

Sometimes, the most important thing to know is who to call for help. Without a clear chain-of-command for expediting maintenance issues, small problems can lead to huge delays. Ricoh was selected as the new print partner because district leaders believed it was most capable of implementing the new strategic service model.

The new service model includes an on-site help desk for 131 new Ricoh MFPs installed throughout the district. A dedicated Ricoh technician manages supplies, user training, service follow-up calls, billing, reporting and preventive maintenance. To give staff assurance that service support is truly local, the on-site technician can be reached via a local district telephone number, not a remote 1-800 number. Staff knows they're reaching a knowledgeable technician who's accessible and able to reach the scene in moments when necessary.

"Responding quickly to problems is great, but preventing them is even better," said Gillam. "Ricoh checks every device in the fleet to ensure it's operating properly. Working proactively in the field has enabled Ricoh to earn high praise and gain confidence from the staff."

With preventive maintenance visits, the Ricoh technician can gather more information about the users. This information can be used to plan for maintenance, answer questions, assess quality and resources to encourage more effective output.

"Responding quickly to problems is great, but preventing them is even better," said Gillam

With common interfaces on every device, Ricoh has simplified the user experience for more than 3,000 employees. Staff can learn quickly where all essential print, copy and scan controls are located on every device with minimal training. They can perform tasks faster with less guesswork and rework. In fact, they can set shortcuts for specific tasks directly on the control panel, so they can finish jobs and get back to their desk or classroom quickly.

Every device includes a proximity card reader, so users can control functions quickly. The district and Ricoh deployed Nuance® Equitrac™ print management software, and integrated it with LDAP directory information, so users simply scan their school ID badge for authentication without pausing to key in usernames and passwords at the control panel.

The print management software also allows print jobs to "follow" the user, so staff can choose where they want to print projects. Jobs are held in queue until the authorized user releases it from the MFP of their choice, whether it's the device down the hall or at another school.

Confidential information, including staff evaluations, identification information and other details, are released only to the authorized user. Print jobs don't sit in output trays, where they can be moved, discarded or misplaced before the user is ready to pick them up. Plus, the district can track usage for every user, including contract workers, and even issue chargebacks when necessary.

"We wanted to make things easier for individual users. And we're doing that with the new MFPs and service support" said Gillam. "But in many instances, making things easier means that they should let us do all the work. That's why we encourage educators to use the print shop more often and it's making an impact on our bottom line."

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Over the past few years, the print shop has offered highly customized workbooks, so educators can pick-and-choose or even add material they want to use. With the placement of five new production devices, print operators can add throughput and churn through more jobs quickly with a wider range of inline finishing options and media types. Print shop staff and Ricoh customized the new production printers to work seamlessly with existing front-end workflow software to expedite output.

About 70 percent of the orders received are fully automated, so the print shop can deliver most jobs in a single day. Multiple files on the same job can be handled with ease, too. Each is parsed and a new ticket is created, so users can receive smaller projects when they're finished printing instead of waiting for the entire job to be completed.

RESULTS

According to customer satisfaction surveys, the district made the right decision in selecting Ricoh. Six months into the engagement, user surveys indicate that 92 percent of the staff is either "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with Ricoh's customer service. This is nearly double the rate of the previous print provider during its first six months. Satisfaction with the service desk is even more startling, with an approval jump from 38 percent to 100 percent.

"The help desk has been incredibly beneficial for the staff," said Gillam. "Now, we know exactly who to call any time there's an issue. Plus, the technicians know our print environment so well from all the preventive checkups, so we're confident they have the information they need to resolve virtually any problem quickly."

Ricoh technicians have reduced response times and have resolved maintenance issues on the first visit nearly 97 percent of the time.

Gillam cited Ricoh's in-depth knowledge of the print environment as a reason that technicians have been able to resolve problems on the first visit nearly 97 percent of the time — which is a 32 percent jump from the previous vendor during its first six months.

"Ricoh has been faster to respond, and when they get there, they've been more likely to fix the problem the first time," said Gillam.

Ricoh has contributed to the already well-performing print shop operations as well. Print run sizes have remained steady, but the print shop is managing more of them with more capable production printers and seamless integration with the district's front-end print workflow software. In fact, the print shop averages more than 800 orders per day with varying levels of complexity and customization, and has a single-day record of more than 1,700 orders during the peak time at the start of the school year. Nearly 70 percent of the jobs have been delivered by the next day.

With more jobs being processed through the print shop, the district is using its most cost-effective devices to produce output for less money. As a result, staff is printing less on their own and spending more time with students.

"We wanted a partner that recognized our need to improve customer satisfaction, free up time for staff and reduce overall print costs," said Gillam. "Ricoh understood our vision and worked hard to deliver on our shared expectations. We have proof that it's working."

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