

A Financial Services Company Streamlines Production and Increases Profits

IFS Success Story



Summary

Crawford Technologies Inc. was recently called on by a medium-sized financial services company to help them with capacity and productivity problems associated with job control in the firm's production printing and mailing operations. After reviewing and assessing their current workflows, CrawfordTech recommended that IFS implement PRO Production Manager, a cost effective workflow management solution. In the firm's evaluation, PRO Production Manager stood out due to its unique combination of features and functions, including the ability to automate the initiation of processes such as document re-engineering and presort. Other features, such as the Production Dashboard and chargeback accounting capability, provided the full job control tools the firm needed.

Company Profile

IFS* is the US-based financial services arm of a multi-national insurance company. IFS has grown by acquisition, which is both a key to its success and a cause of some document management problems. As a result of the acquisitions, the company operates multiple data centers with thousands of legacy applications. These feed two production print / finishing centers which together produce roughly 1,200,000 documents per month, totally more than 60 million pages annually.

IFS financial products are distributed through independent agents located across the United States. The company is executing a strategic initiative to improve and expand its portfolio of agent services. Services are provided for a variety of reasons – some pass through the agent to provide increased value to the IFS client base; some are 'added-value' agent services with no fees. The key ones are 'for fee' services marketed to the agents.

The Problem

At IFS, the print/finishing centers and IT organizations are part of a Shared Services unit where there is significant ongoing pressure to do more with less.

Due to its history, IFS implemented separate workflows for AFP and Xerox Metacode / LCDS formatted documents. For optimum scheduling flexibility, the two print centers were expected to handle both formats on an intermixed basis which resulted in costly and time-consuming job setup and control issues.

Last year, IT performed an internal analysis which determined that there was no business case justification for reprogramming the legacy applications – there were simply too many and they were too deeply ingrained. They also decided that there was no business case to move all applications to a single standardized document composition engine, although it was observed that the lack of systematic job control processes created significant business problems.

Optimizing equipment utilization was impossible, as the thousands of jobs tied up the machines in unproductive job setup, job teardown and 'job jacket' data recording time. In addition, there was no effective way to detect and reconcile exceptions; every time something went wrong, production ground to a halt.

There was also a perception that the print centers were capacity-constrained, and faced the possibility of a significant outlay for additional resources to handle the growing document workload. However, IFS did not have the tools to enable its management to accurately gauge the problem.

* The name of the company and identifying details have been changed at the request of our customer.

Over time, a portion of the production printing and mailing operations job portfolio had been outsourced to two different vendors. Some of this work included new jobs developed for agents that was outsourced when they realized that there was no internal system to track and chargeback the production costs as fees to the agents.

These problems in the production printing and mailing operations environment were impeding the ability of IFS to execute its growth strategy of delivering new, competitively priced offerings to its agents.

The Solution – PRO Production Manager

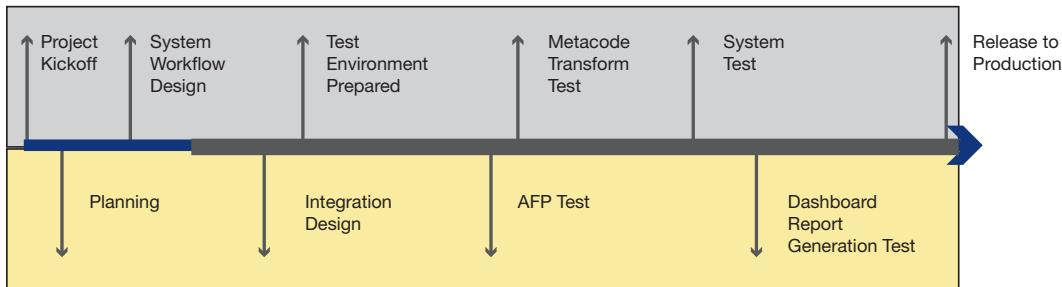
To solve these problems, IFS selected PRO Production Manager (PPM) from Crawford Technologies Inc. The decision was based on the firm’s need for an end-to-end workflow management system that would deliver cost effective results with the least possible impact on scarce programming resources and with no change to existing user processes.

As its first step, IFS wanted to consolidate to a single print format. Since most of its core financial applications produced AFP output, the firm decided to standardize on AFP to maximize the use of existing IT components. CrawfordTech’s PRO Meta to AFP transform solution was selected to handle the conversion of Xerox formatted documents to the AFP standard based on the criteria of fidelity and productivity.

Low Impact Solution Installation

Figure 1 shows the timeline for the four month project. The team was lean with one full time implementation resource supported by one part-time IFS project management resource; other technical resources were called in as needed.

I.F.S Installation Timeline
One month



The PRO Production Manager (PPM) solution employs an open systems architecture and uses non-proprietary integration methods. This meant that a small, part-time team of IFS resources, combined with CrawfordTech’s expert technical assistance, was able to implement the solution in only four months, and did not require expensive equipment upgrades to inserters or other equipment. The resulting PPM system deployment diagram is shown in Figure 2.

Results

The CrawfordTech PRO Production Manager installation at IFS was completed on schedule, providing end-to-end workflow management and job control. The hard dollar savings realized by IFS have exceeded their original expectations. These include higher equipment utilization due to significantly shorter job setup times, less down time due to exception handling, and cost savings from jobs pulled back from the outsource vendors.

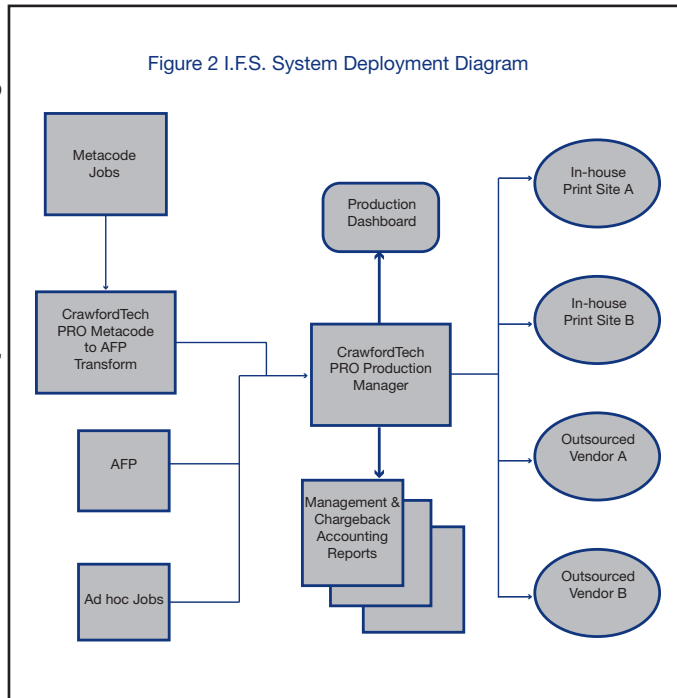
The standardization on AFP has realized several benefits. For example, it has simplified the operators' setup tasks, as there is now a standard tray configuration across virtually all jobs. Significant savings have been realized by merging or combining smaller jobs, which is achievable now due to standardization.

There are other sources of savings as well. The management reporting tools, with visibility via the Production Dashboard, gives management a tool to manage load balancing across the two print sites. Previously when there had been a question about capacity, the response had been to send jobs outside; now the response is to query the PRO Production Manager reports to examine, and then utilize available internal capacity. With significant reductions in job setup times, capacity is no longer the issue that it used to be.

Additionally, the dashboard is checked for exception status indications, and the PRO Production Manager reports are used to reconcile issues without stopping production. A unique feature of the PRO Production Manager dashboard is that it provides a wealth of information about the status of pre-print steps that other ADF tools don't have.

Reprints are more routinely automated now using PRO Production Manager. One of the key differences is that previously reprints had been run on the same printer the original job was run on, resulting in excessive setup times and spoilage for the reprint job. Now that reprint jobs can be automatically converted to desktop format and then tracked and validated via PRO Production Manager, they are printed on cut sheet printers which have much lower setup times and less spoilage.

Figure 3 shows the financial results with a breakdown of both the cost elements and the savings elements. The low level of systems integration required due to the open architecture of the CrawfordTech software and the extensive reuse of existing applications kept the professional services costs moderate (less than 15% of the project costs). Project Mngt., at 6% of the total, includes all of the IFS non-hardware deployment resources.



The projected 176% ROI over one year demonstrates an extremely rapid payback period. Over 5 years, IFS projects savings of \$3.3 million. The savings are not confined to just one area and are based on contributions from all the sources noted above. The biggest single factor is job setup, which is split into print Job Setup and inserter job standardization on the chart for a combined 39%. After that, the next largest factor is Reprint at 19%. Productivity, Reconciliation, and Paper/Forms each contribute to the savings. The improvements in workflow and job control produce immediate, significant results with realized savings that will continue to accrue.

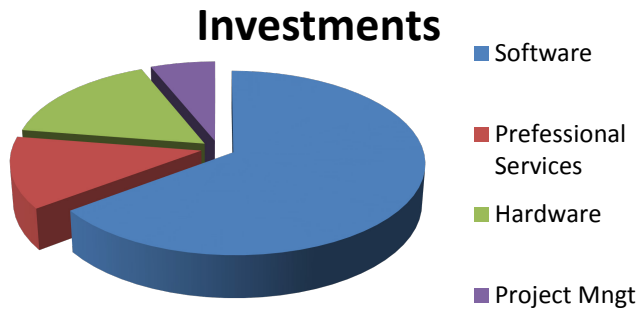
Next Steps

Based on the success of the PRO Production Manager project, several follow-on projects are being pursued that will provide additional savings and continued improved ROI.

IFS is using PRO Production Manager to collect baseline data in order to set Service Level Agreements (SLAs) based upon actual production statistics that PRO Production Manager captures. When the SLAs are available, IFS will use PRO Production Manager to manage their production printing and mailing operations against these delivery and quality control standards. Prior to deploying PRO Production Manager, the complexity of the environment and the lack of key tools were some of the barriers to implementation IFS faced..

Another pending project is a conversion to 'paperless' that will realize significant savings through the integration of another CrawfordTech technology development. PRO Channel Manager (PCM), with its Customer Preference Management capability, will be deployed to enable eDelivery of customer statements to agents. PCM can be added as a module to PPM, adding functionality that will eliminate the current practice of collating, manually boxing and shipping hard copy customer statements to the agents.

One of the unexpected benefits of the project is that the recaptured capacity (due to increased productivity) will be used to pull jobs back from the outsource vendors, lowering the cost structures for those jobs. Going forward, the ability to do chargeback accounting has empowered marketing to continue to develop revenue-generating offerings for agents that will further absorb this recaptured capacity.



Summary

Crawford Technologies streamlined the document management environment at IFS for their high value financial services clients. The deployment of PRO Production Manager solved several business problems without tying up scarce programming resources. Notably it:

- Realized a projected \$3.3 million savings over 5 years by delivering a broad spectrum of operational workflow savings.
- Eliminated unnecessary job setups while providing automated reprint and tracking of combined jobs.
- Increased printer / inserter utilization.
- Eliminated the costs associated with the usage of outsource vendors for certain jobs.
- Reduced downtime by managing exception handling more effectively with the Production Dashboard and log files.

IFS is now growing its business through more cost-effective and efficient customer communications management using workflows managed by PRO Production Manager.

CrawfordTech Solutions

Crawford Technologies develops software and solutions to help enterprises optimize and improve the secure and accessible delivery, storage and presentment of their customer communications.

With over 1,800 customers on six continents, CrawfordTech solutions and know-how enable the largest banks, insurers, healthcare providers, utilities and print services companies to use their existing technologies, documents and data in new ways. We help them navigate the challenges in leveraging legacy applications in the platforms and applications of the future.

CrawfordTech's products, services and domain expertise reside at the nexus of content, data, and output management and are essential components of our customers' digital transformation, output management and document accessibility strategies.

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