

DRIVING BUSINESS EXPANSION



The John Roberts Company accelerates turnaround and reduces errors with KODAK UNIFIED WORKFLOW Solutions



For over 60 years, the John Roberts Company has served the Midwest's print and communication needs. From their facility near Minneapolis, a team of 280 provides innovative printing and cross-platform marketing services.

According to Kurt Kroening, the company's Vice President of Operations, their automated Kodak Unified Workflow Solutions are key to their success in today's challenging markets. "We've had KODAK PRINERGY Workflow for years now," he says. "Over this last year, we've focused on streamlining our workflow and applying automation in new ways, with KODAK INSITE Prepress Portal, PRINERGY Rules-Based Automation (RBA) and a suite of third-party products. It seems that every day we're finding new ways to apply RBA to save time and costs to increase our profitability and reduce turn time."

Five minutes of automation saves 30 hours of operator and planner time

Dave Eisert, the company's prepress manager, says his team has written over 100 different RBA rules. "It's very, very simple to build

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The John Roberts Company

complex programs. It can take ten minutes to create an RBA rule that saves you hours. It can even be a one-off rule and it's still worth it."

One of their RBA rules creates multi-form, multi-piece layouts. Explains Eisert, "The typical job might be 30 different forms, spread out over 110 print pieces, with different trim sizes, sheet sizes, in some cases different color configurations. We have the RBA programmed so when the design files arrive, they're automatically converted and renamed to their part numbers. Then they're taken through a number of steps to verify that the job guidelines are set up correctly, then they're automatically refined." These layouts used to take 20 or more hours of desktop operator time and ten hours of planner's time. The RBA rule runs a job in 4 to 5 minutes. This type of full automation can be applied to more than 60% of their work; taking the simple work out of prep operators' hands and letting them focus on projects that need higher skilled attention.

QUICKFACTS

The Business

- Based in Minneapolis area, Minnesota
- Established in 1951
- 280 employees

Markets Served

- Corporate, retail, financial, healthcare, automotive, entertainment



Automating complex re-runs to prevent errors

They created another RBA rule after a client requested a series of reruns of previously printed jobs. Says Eisert, "It was going to be tedious. We'd have to locate each of the old job files and every associated image or other component. With all the components, there was a real risk of error." To automate the process, they created a library of the client's jobs and components. Now whenever the client requests a re-print order, the system creates a new job type and a new job ticket, and the automation retrieves the files from the library and brings them into the new job. For Eisert, the speed advantage is a secondary benefit: he appreciates the virtual elimination of the risk that the wrong images or other components will be used.

Workflow automation eliminates peak-job bottlenecks

The automated workflow has simplified job scheduling. With automation in place, they're able to schedule a job with confidence, knowing that they can deliver on that commitment to the customer. "In today's market, business can be quiet one day and the next you're swamped. Staffing and scheduling for those fluctuations is tough. So now automation is critical to making that effective. With RBA, you can set it so the files don't hit the system all at the same time, so you don't have prepress bottlenecks and you can manage your resources more efficiently. The jobs run on their own, in the background." "Really," he concludes, "some of the benefits of RBA are pretty incredible."

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Staff and customers embrace InSite's ease and convenience

The John Roberts Company is now working on an initiative to increase their customer adoption of INSITE Prepress Portal, and the sales department is actively promoting it among their clients. Eisert says, "INSITE Prepress Portal is limitless in terms of what you can set up for your client. They can upload their files and proof and approve their jobs on screen—whatever they need, you can usually provide it. And we can use it to trigger automation, so the files automatically start to process as soon as they are received, which creates faster turn-around times, fewer errors, and reduced costs. Our goal is always to build customer loyalty, and INSITE is a great tool for retaining customers, and being more efficient and profitable with them."

For John Roberts, their future is secure with PRINERGY Workflow

PRINERGY Workflow is the center of a large automated system that communicates seamlessly with a third-party MIS system and other workflow tools. "The fact that the other technologies work well with PRINERGY, is a big deal. The whole system all together is a major benefit to our plant," says Eisert. They regularly use MIS events to trigger RBA rules within PRINERGY Workflow.

Adds Kroening, the John Roberts team is just getting started with automation. He says, with a laugh, "Check back with us in six months, you'll be shocked at how far we've gone!"

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