

Columbus McKinnon Corporation

HP Output Management solution slashes helpdesk calls, streamlines document production, and reliably delivers business critical information



“The HP Output Management solution met our business requirements. HP Output Server is a flagship HP product with great support so we decided to move forward with it.”

– Mark R. Paradowski, Director of Information Services,
Columbus McKinnon Corp.



Objective:

Gain business efficiencies and system reliability while replacing obsolete software.

Approach:

Columbus McKinnon Corporation chose a HP Output Management solution that included HP Output Server, standard software support, and training on the solution.

IT improvements:

- Reduced helpdesk calls from 20 per day to one weekly
- Redeployed IT staff to higher-value functions.
- Gained ability to fax, e-mail or direct-print customer facing documents such as quotes and invoices worldwide.

Business benefits:

- Eliminated business downtime from printer shutdowns.
- Faster global communications via electronic transmission of PDF then print locally.
- Transmission of PDF documents eliminates manual intervention and reduces mailing costs.
- Established platform for multilingual printing.

HP customer case study: HP Output Management improves global business processes with cost-effective printing network

Industry: Material handling



Needing to replace outdated system software a few years back at Columbus McKinnon Corporation, Mark Paradowski was not content just to recreate the old functionality in a newer package. He wanted bottom-line improvements in IT efficiency and business operations. “Since a change was necessary, we also wanted to be able to fax and e-mail directly from our ERP system and deliver customer-facing documents such as quotes and invoices in PDF format so they could be printed anywhere in the world,” Paradowski says. His choice was HP Output Management—a solution that not only improved printing efficiency, but enabled Columbus McKinnon to cut costs by eliminating manual intervention in document delivery enterprise wide and reducing mailing costs.

“The HP team was always pointing me in good directions. It was an outstanding group to work with.”

Mark R. Paradowski, Director of Information Services, Columbus McKinnon Corp.



Seeking reliability and efficiency

Columbus McKinnon Corporation, based in Amherst, New York, is a 130-year-old designer and manufacturer of material handling products. Known worldwide for its hoists, cranes, chains and forged attachments, the company has expanded globally into Europe, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, and China. Paradowski manages a printer fleet where the equipment might be located anywhere from upstate New York to Santiago, Mexico.

Now Director of Information Services, Paradowski during the implementation was a technical manager responsible for overseeing the system upgrade. His immediate challenge was to replace a print spooler that not only was out of date, but also problematic. Printers would stop mid-job, resulting in up to 20 calls a day to the IT helpdesk. Even worse, every so often the entire printing environment would crash, grinding company operations to a halt for up to an half an hour.

“There’s nothing worse than when your helpdesk closes at 5 p.m. and people still at work in the shipping department can’t print their pick lists because the printer queue stopped,” he says.

Paradowski wanted greater reliability to eliminate such problems. At the same time, he also wanted to streamline business processes. Distributed among dozens of offices worldwide, Columbus McKinnon uses

more than 300 laser printers, multifunction devices, and barcode printers. With these devices, the company produces a wide range of documents—sales analysis reports, purchase orders, invoices, acknowledgements, credit memos, quotes, pick lists, work orders, serial number tags, and more.

Paradowski wanted Columbus McKinnon staff to be able to transform these documents from their original PostScript® or standard text formats into PDF files. And, he wanted people to be able to fax or e-mail documents directly from Columbus McKinnon’s ERP system to anywhere in the company’s global network.

“We were able to take advantage of HP Output Server’s added functionality in transforming documents to PDF which allowed us to email them anywhere in the world, cutting costs and streamlining business processes throughout our global network.”

Mark R. Paradowski, Director of Information Services, Columbus McKinnon Corp.

The obvious choice: HP Output Management solution Supportability was a key concern, and that spurred Paradowski to seek an HP solution. He selected the HP Output Management solution with its core software, HP Output Server, backed by the HP Extended Support Package for 24X7 coverage with two-hour remote and four-hour onsite response.



Implementation was a carefully orchestrated process. Paradowski planned the changeover to occur over a weekend, as a non-event for end users. Columbus McKinnon IT staff took HP training and performed the implementation in-house. Through an HP support contract, IT staff received any help they needed with troubleshooting. To avoid any business disruption at Columbus McKinnon, the changeover had to occur seamlessly. To that end, the IT team launched pilot migrations and conducted extensive testing.

“Users want the same-size fonts, the same borders—and if it looks different, they’ll ask why,” he says. “We wanted everything to look the same, and we wanted to make the enterprise switch during a weekend to avoid business downtime. We did a lot of upfront testing to make sure things would go smoothly.”

Ultimately the switch to HP Output Server was in fact accomplished over a single weekend, without a hitch. “The end users didn’t even know it happened,” Paradowski says.

For this success, Paradowski credits his IT staff along with HP support that was ever ready for quick-response assistance.

“The HP team was always pointing me in good directions,” he says. “It was an outstanding group to work with.”

A payoff of global reach

The first consequence of the changeover to HP Output Server was a sudden drop in helpdesk calls—to

perhaps one a week. IT staff are now free to do more value added activities.

“Our support calls virtually vanished, which for us was significant,” Paradowski says. “Instead of fielding 20 calls a day to do mundane five-minute restarts, my team now spends its time delivering more enhanced services.”

Another IT benefit is that Paradowski now can make printer changes immediately, whereas the old system required a database rebuild process that would take network printing offline for several minutes at a time.

“It’s more dynamic,” he says. “We can make printer changes on the fly—add printers, remove printers—and we don’t have to wait until the next day to do it.”

But perhaps the greatest benefits to Columbus McKinnon come from business process improvements. Company personnel can now convert documents such as quotes, invoices, and order acknowledgements into PDF format and e-mail them directly to end users. They can also fax directly from their desktops.

“As we expand our global reach, the ease of transmitting documents is very important. We no longer need a printer located at the location. Now we can transform the document to PDF format and email anywhere in the world where it can be printed on any printer. We didn’t have to go out and buy another product to do those things,” Paradowski says. “It’s just part of the solution that we received.”

Customer solution at a glance

Primary application

Proprietary ERP application running on HP-UX operating system

Primary software

- HP Output Server

HP Services

- HP Extended Support Package (24X7)
- HP Output Server System Administration Training

All of this translates into lower print costs, more efficient use of staff time, faster business processes, and better customer service. And Paradowski never has to go home at night wondering whether a system glitch after business hours will leave trucks stranded at the dock waiting for documents to print.

Next steps: To China and beyond

As Columbus McKinnon grows, so does its demand for enterprise output management capabilities. The company today is looking at HP Web Delivery and—as China grows into a significant source of business—HP International Printing for HP Output Server.

“Right now, we work mostly in English. But we’re starting to look more into our European and Chinese facilities,” Paradowski says. “Eventually, we’ll need to expand our language capabilities to include new character sets. And HP already has a solution for that.”



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