

Matrix helps fuel growth at  
**Belk Printing Technologies**

FOR MORE THAN 40 YEARS, BELK PRINTING TECHNOLOGIES HAS BUILT ITS SUCCESS ON A PHILOSOPHY OF CUSTOMER-CENTRIC SOLUTIONS PAIRED WITH SOPHISTICATED TECHNOLOGIES.

Today, with 70 employees and annual sales of \$14 million, the print solutions provider has enjoyed a period of accelerated growth, achieved through a careful balance of expanded service offerings and increased workflow efficiency.

“Adding Metrix to our planning and prepress workflow made a huge impact on our efficiency and accuracy. Instead of a planning process that required 1 to 2 hours, Metrix created the best project layout in 30 seconds.”



DAVE MCGAHA, PROJECT ENGINEER AND JOB PLANNER FOR BELK PRINTING TECHNOLOGIES

McGaha's department was transformed from the bottleneck to the fast lane. Prior to using Metrix, the planning department needed four people to prevent it from slowing production efforts. Using Metrix, combined with other software and workflow automation efforts, the department was trimmed to one person – McGaha – who is now able to handle that load – and more than 15% annual growth. **With the help of Metrix, Belk significantly grew their volume while reducing the required resources.** McGaha's former colleagues were reassigned to more productive roles in the estimating and marketing departments.

## The Vision

Belk Printing sought a solution to streamline its planning, prepress and production processes. With Metrix, they achieved that goal – and much more.

# 1



Belk Printing Technologies produces a wide variety of products for retail clients, ranging from business cards, sales books and brochures, to posters and point-of-purchase displays. For these jobs, there was an opportunity to combine the various products onto a single “combo” layout that optimized the press sheets. Yet, the company's old method of job planning was manual and too time-consuming to achieve this – often resulting in wasted paper and press time.

As a Job Planner, Dave McGaha would sometimes spend one to two hours manually drawing book project layouts. Upon completion of this tedious task, he sent the drawings to the prepress department, where they were manually re-entered into Preps. This fractured and inefficient process was labor intensive and prone to human error.

For a company dedicated to growth and innovation, this process was unacceptable. Chris Reynolds, Vice President of Manufacturing, became aware of LithoTechnics' Metrix in 2006, and implemented the solution in 2007. The benefits of Metrix would not only address the company's workflow inefficiencies, but bring value far greater than expected.

## The Implementation

From the start, Metrix-supported projects yielded significant time savings and waste reduction.

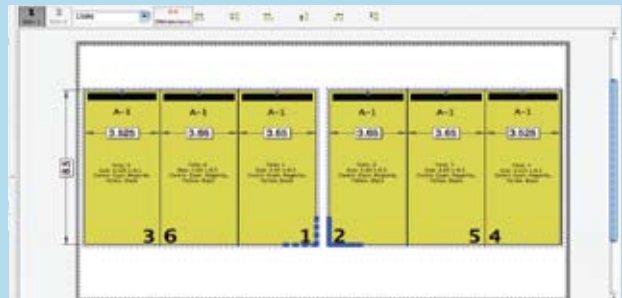
# 2



## The Impact

Using Metrix created a ripple effect that prompted further end-to-end workflow automation decisions.

# 3



During the first week Metrix was introduced at Belk, Dave McGaha utilized the Metrix Auto Layout feature to determine the optimum “combo” print run project plan. **“Instead of a planning process that required 1 to 2 hours, Metrix created the best project layout in 30 seconds. Then on press on the very first job, we saved 4,000 sheets of 12 point board,”** explains McGaha. **“Metrix was really, really easy to use, and the savings were incredible.”**

With more time and training, Belk reaped even greater time- and cost-savings from unique Metrix features like Intelligent Drag and Drop, and the use of “standards” – an artificial intelligence tool that matches saved standard layouts with incoming jobs, automatically applying the standard layout geometry to similar projects.

Job accuracy also improved with the addition of Metrix. **“By eliminating the need to re-key the project plans into Preps, the human error factor was reduced to zero,”** explains McGaha. The newfound efficiency and accuracy translated into faster project turnaround and increased client satisfaction. In a highly competitive industry, these are key factors in winning repeat business and building long-lasting, lucrative business relationships.

Belk Printing Technologies purchased Metrix as a way to automate and integrate their workflow process across prepress, planning and production. Now, with those benefits firmly in hand, owning Metrix has created a “ripple effect” where each department is seeking new ways to add efficiency to the entire workflow. Purchasing and strategic decisions, like when to upgrade their Rampage software, how to integrate JDF with the MIS system, or which new equipment to select for the bindery, will all be made with respect to how the solutions are optimized by Metrix.

McGaha concluded **“Once we realized the possibilities Metrix was offering us, it prompted further automation decisions throughout the company. Metrix has not only made us more efficient, it has made us more competitive.”**

The benefits of using Metrix were noticed by Belk’s sales department, as well. Sales representatives began asking for Metrix print outs to supply their designer clients. This was especially useful for projects involving folded brochures, since Metrix automatically calculates fold panel sizes based on the folding machine characteristics stored in the Metrix database. The ability to offer clients these Metrix guidelines adds a new level of technical sophistication and professionalism to the client relationship, providing Belk a new way to differentiate itself from the competition and extend the efficiency of its end-to-end workflow.

“Metrix reduced the human error factor to zero”





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