CASE STORY

BFC MEETS STRICT CUSTOMER SLAS WITH WORKFLOW AND DIGITAL PRINTING

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Written for Canon U.S.A., Inc.

Canon

CANON U.S.A., INC.
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**Introduction**

BFC (Batavia, IL) is a family-owned, 40-year-old print and fulfillment company with expertise in managing and delivering business communications. Its mission is to build smart solutions by combining world-class technologies with expertise in data-driven printing and fulfillment. Focusing on the financial services and insurance industries, BFC has zeroed in on effectively servicing its clients via efficient processes and quality printing. After identifying its clients’ specific needs, the company provides custom workflows to streamline the entire process from job submission through printing and fulfillment, all within very strict service-level agreements (SLAs) that often require same-day turnarounds.

**A Digital Printing Pioneer**

BFC’s evolution into a producer of digital print began decades ago when clients in the insurance industry began requiring short-run printed communications with fast turnaround. At first, most of the work was short runs of non-personalized, versioned letters that BFC produced using offset printed shells and black & white digital imprinting. It wasn’t long before customers wanted to produce short run, full-color versioned documents that could be delivered the next day. Next-day service became a critical customer demand, resulting in the shift toward digital technology. Matt Novak, Vice President of the company and one of three second-generation Novak brothers, explains, “We started out with one machine printing black & white, but now we have 13 Canon digital presses. Almost everything we print today is personalized in some way, whether it’s a simple phone number on a versioned document or complete contracts with every word being different.”

![Figure 1: BFC (Batavia, IL)](image)

The company currently drops roughly 100,000 pieces of mail into the postal stream each day, generating about 300,000 impressions per day with multiple-page documents being inserted into a single envelope. To meet the requirements of its SLAs, BFC relies on its arsenal of Canon presses—including two recently-added imagePRESS C10000VP digital devices—to produce fully variable, fast turnaround, quality print output.
Opportunities for Digital

There is a large and growing opportunity for production color digital printing in the United States. In 2015, U.S. cut-sheet production color digital print volume was about 105 billion impressions. According to InfoTrends’ U.S. Production Printing & Copying Market Forecast, this volume is expected to demonstrate a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.9% over the forecast period, surpassing 147 billion impressions by 2020.

![Figure 2: U.S. Cut-Sheet Production Color Digital Print Volume](image)


Moving volume from offset to digital printing requires cost-effective and reliable products with best-in-class print output. The arsenal of Canon production machines at BFC is run by three operators and includes two Canon imagePRESS C10000VP digital color presses, one Canon imagePRESS C7011VP digital color press, one Canon imagePRESS C6010VP digital color press, two Océ VarioPrint 6160 digital black & white presses with Océ BLM 550 Pro Stitchers, one Canon imagePRESS 1135+ digital monochrome press, and three Canon imagePRESS 1125 monochrome presses. According to Matt Novak, BFC is now able to confidently produce high-volume work on digital presses, and much of this output has been shifted from the company’s offset presses to its imagePRESS C10000VP presses. “The quality produced by the C10000VP is so impressive that BFC’s lead press operator—a former offset operator—couldn’t believe the quality that was coming from the digital technology,” Novak notes. “These presses print with a level of quality that was once only achievable in the offset world.”

Consistent with industry trends, BFC is beginning to experience a resurgence in print purchasing volume from long-term clients. Novak states, “Some of our clients that didn’t completely abandon print but reduced its use are now coming back.” For example, the company has a direct mail customer that used to print massive runs of a single-version piece. Today, BFC prints 500 different versions of that piece for the customer, and these pieces now include some very specialized content. Overall, BFC has determined that the
“sweet spot” for its production printing environment is highly customized, high-volume, short run, fast-turnaround jobs. The company is quite excited about the new markets that it can now penetrate because of its new presses. Lori Nelson, VP of Marketing and Business Development, states, “Our new Canon digital presses enable us to produce high-end marketing pieces on-demand and in shorter quantities.”

Workflow Efficiency
Currently employing about 100 people from client services to shipping and receiving, BFC runs one and a half shifts—down from three shifts five years ago. Matt Novak elaborates, “With digital technology, one person can run multiple presses. As a result, we no longer need so many shifts.” Beyond the increased productivity in the pressroom, BFC experiences much of its efficiencies through the custom production workflow solutions that are provided to customers. Although no two work orders are exactly alike, there are two core web-to-print products that are driving print production and fulfillment at BFC, namely the Resource Center and the Document Management Tool. Necessitated by strict SLAs and the high number of jobs that require a 24-hour turnaround time, each solution is built with a robust front end and supported by Canon’s reliable printing equipment to perform from start to finish without delays. According to Novak, “If we can’t deliver on the same day, we’ve built the wrong solution for our client. We need to build our solutions rock-solid so they always work without fail.”

Resource Center
The Resource Center is a BFC web application that enables clients to order a branded product that has been approved for print and distribution throughout a sales or franchisee network. With over 50 of these e-commerce stores in place, BFC handles about 30,000 transactions through those sites on an annual basis to help clients with supply chain management and brand consistencies. Some transactions include straight “pick and pack” off the shelf, but most are print on demand orders requiring fast turnaround, accurate color, and sometimes personalization.

Document Management Tool
The second and more robust offering from BFC is its document management tool. This solution integrates with the client’s data streams. Novak explains, “We receive raw data from our clients on a regular basis, usually in the middle of the night. We normalize that data, validate it, verify it, merge it into templates that we’ve created, and then produce output for the client and drop it into the mail stream.” Whether it is a notice, statement, or ID card, BFC combines its custom-built workflow solution with reliable digital printing to deliver secure, personalized communications with fast turnaround.
Robert Mulligan, President and CEO of Renaissance Life and Health Insurance Company of America and a BFC client, describes one of these custom-built solutions. Several years ago, Mulligan became concerned that his antiquated systems wouldn’t be able to meet the needs of his growing business. With an initial order requiring the onboarding of 50,000 new members, Mulligan turned to BFC to build a system that would support his current requirements while remaining flexible for future growth. He notes, “BFC took the time to listen to us, crafting a custom solution to help us meet our critical customer needs.” Reliability is a key differentiator, and the efficiency gained by working with BFC has been transformative for Renaissance Life and Health Insurance. Mulligan continues, “Our customers are very sensitive about getting their information quickly, and that really hinges on BFC being able to deliver. So far, they’ve done that perfectly for us.”

Figure 3: Sample Renaissance Life and Health Insurance Applications
The Bottom Line

Although BFC didn’t set out to become what it is today, the company has grown by listening to its customers’ needs and giving them exactly what they want. As the company grew and the need for customized print solutions expanded, BFC looked to Canon and Agfa Apogee as partners to navigate the integration processes. Over time, the company created a platform that permits seamless integration from prepress to print production and fulfillment, all while allowing the flexibility to integrate with any customer system. BFC takes pride in the fact that it provides tailored solutions to each and every one of its customers. Novak states, “Everyone is different, and everyone wants things done their way and their way only. Our differentiator is that we’re not afraid to change our processes or systems to match a customer’s workflow. We cater to our clients’ needs and circumstances rather than forcing them into our workflows.”

When the need for production reliability increased, BFC began a relationship with a local equipment dealer to expand its printing product line. Novak elaborates, “Although the product itself proved very reliable, we knew we had a great combination with our local dealer and Canon supporting it. We didn’t necessarily experience that with some of the other vendors out there, so we began a slow transition and ultimately changed all of our equipment over to Canon.”

As BFC’s partnerships with Canon and its equipment dealer have evolved, the commitment to BFC has also improved. Novak concludes, “Canon is always there when we need support, whether it’s an integration issue with one of our clients or integration with one of the systems we’ve built. Our partners have provided the resources that we need to accomplish all of our goals. Ultimately, we feel it’s a win-win situation when you have that sort of relationship with your vendors. We strive to form a trusted partnership with every one of our clients, and we believe that Canon is committed to maintaining that partnership with us. So far, this strategy is proving beneficial for all of the parties involved!”
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