



## Simplicity in a Diverse World

Propex Operating Company, LLC

An effective solution for merging diverse IT infrastructures that print, copy, send, and fax at Propex Operating Company, LLC

## uniFLOW CASE STUDY

## CANON SOLUTIONS

### Canon imageRUNNER® ADVANCE systems and uniFLOW

#### GENERAL OVERVIEW

For more than one hundred years, Propex Operating Company, LLC has been an innovator in the creation of materials with which millions of people interact every day. Propex is a global manufacturer of a wide variety of products that range from residential building materials to large-scale earth stabilization solutions used to preserve the natural beauty of landscapes, while also helping to prevent devastation from natural disasters. In addition, the company produces integral components that reinforce materials in packaging and concrete to promote their durability.

Propex has grown dramatically over the past two decades, both in market share and by acquisition. Based in Chattanooga, Tennessee, it now operates from six locations throughout the United States and four others around the world.





## CUSTOMER ISSUES

Merging businesses is never an easy proposition. For many companies, integrating diverse workforces and technology poses a challenge that requires as much finesse as it does fortitude—and Propex faced the same challenge. From its IT department’s perspective, this meant integrating an outdated fleet of copiers, printers, scanners, and fax machines that were produced by many different vendors across disparate locations. While the existing devices worked from a practical perspective, it presented a tremendous strain on the IT department to support them. It was also difficult for staff to use these devices productively.

Propex’s IT department was charged with not only overseeing the entire technology infrastructure of the organization, but also bearing the fiscal burden for all document output costs. As expenses spiraled out of control in maintaining an outdated and oversized fleet of devices, so did the budget. Since there was no way to charge costs back to a particular department or individual, allocating expenses was virtually impossible. Adding to this dilemma was the myriad of service contract obligations and other vendor billings that complicated spending and exacerbated unnecessary expenditures.

“Bearing the entire cost of support and document output operations had reached critical mass upon the IT department,” said Mr. Cris Beagle, Sr. Systems Engineer for Propex. “With so many devices and users to support 24/7 around the world, we needed a solution that would meet our goals to reallocate costs where they belonged, make document output more intuitive, and provide flexibility to grow into the future.”

From an end-user perspective, employees were often challenged in determining which device to use based on a particular workflow. From printing and copying to faxing and sending, staff would need to understand the unique characteristics of each printer driver and the capabilities of each device and its physical control panel to be able to use it efficiently. If the desired device was out of service or busy performing another colleague’s job, the shuffle to locate another suitable device only served to further reduce productivity.

Within the IT department, rapidly coming up to speed on the usage and maintenance requirements of such diverse equipment had become overwhelming. IT staff members were expected to become experts virtually overnight in supporting each device so that they could address end-user issues and maintain uptime. Adding to that the burden was the expense of maintaining an existing inventory of incompatible consumables.

After lengthy internal discussions, it became apparent that an overhaul to the corporate-wide document output infrastructure was imperative to improved workflow efficiency and the overall health of the organization. Propex also had an existing and underutilized technology investment that it wanted to leverage within its deployed devices. However, this couldn’t be realized due to device limitations or the inability to justify the expense.



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*Mr. Cris Beagle, Sr. Systems Engineer for Propex*





## CANON SOLUTION OVERVIEW AND COMPONENTS

Propex performed a preliminary assessment of solutions from a number of different vendors for a new document output infrastructure that would meet its needs. While it initially found various devices that could meet some needs, it still required additional solutions from other vendors. This raised a number of concerns, such as shifting the existing burden on IT rather than alleviating it, increasing acquisition costs, managing a greater number of intricate systems, and ultimately reducing or eliminating any ROI on the project.

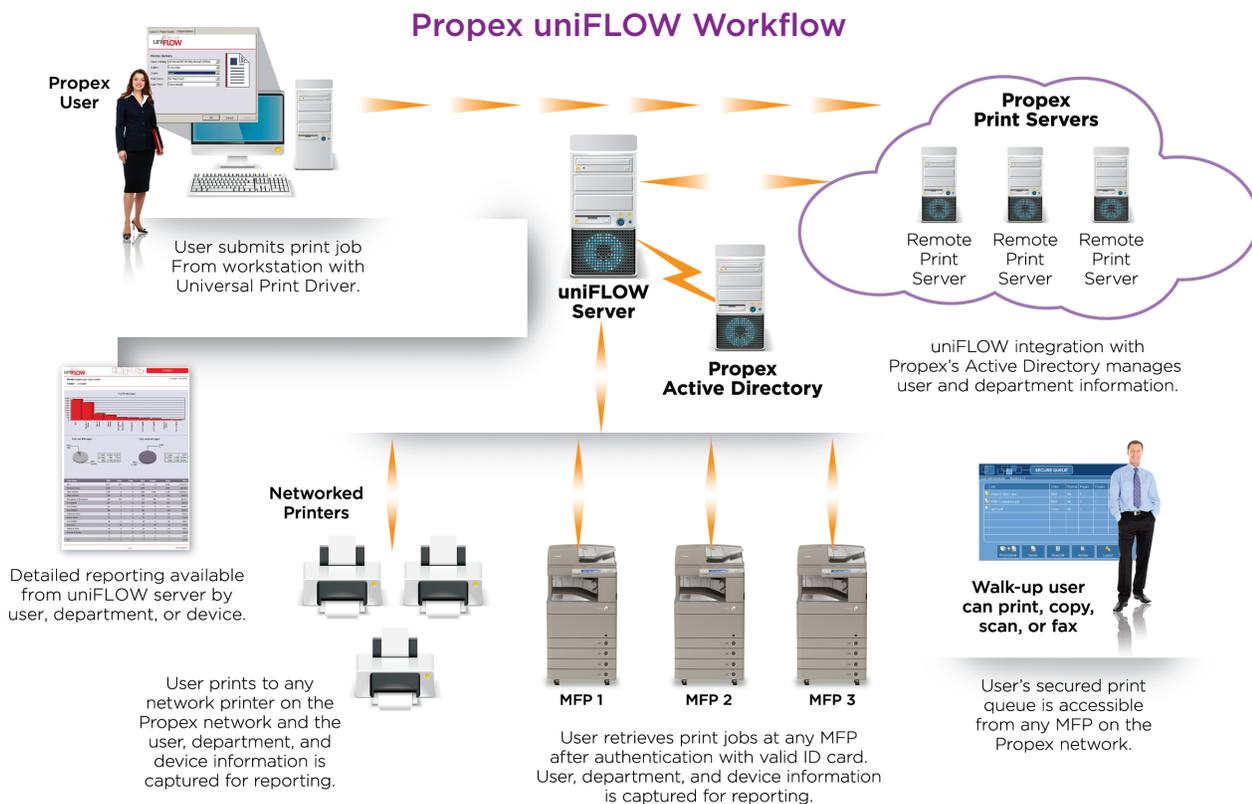
After commencing discussions with Canon, Propex discovered that its goals were not as far-fetched, expensive, or difficult to implement as initially thought. Canon determined that the number of devices could be reduced by as much as 33% using its leading imageRUNNER ADVANCE Series of systems, while actually delivering major gains in productivity, quality, and reliability. imageRUNNER ADVANCE systems provide out-of-the-box configuration options that can be customized to match most customers' needs. And, for companies like Propex that need to accomplish more sophisticated integration, Canon also offers its comprehensive uniFLOW output management and cost control solutions.

"We were already impressed by Canon's imageRUNNER ADVANCE systems. When coupled with uniFLOW, our expectations were met and exceeded," continued Mr. Beagle. "uniFLOW provided the ease of integration we demanded and delivered the user-friendly operation that would eliminate the barriers to productivity that existed for so long."

Propex already had an existing Active Directory domain that it used to manage network security credentials and proximity cards for facility access. With uniFLOW, the company now had a buildable platform to track usage back to individual departments and provide control over each device's features and access. When new employees are hired and issued a proximity card, they're able to instantly benefit from the new infrastructure as well.

Among staff, the systems were heralded for their intuitiveness and required little or no training to use. With a single driver, users could submit jobs to the device that's best suited to their needs and access each of its configured options for the right output the first time. From a desktop support perspective, this greatly streamlined the deployment and management of print drivers.

Testament to the scalability of Canon's imageRUNNER ADVANCE systems, Propex could effectively leverage its investment in a proprietary fax server application that could be easily integrated directly within the device's control panel. In the past, users had not been using the solution, despite efforts to eliminate stand-alone fax machines. As a result, Propex was able to significantly reduce its dedicated fax lines and cut costs further.





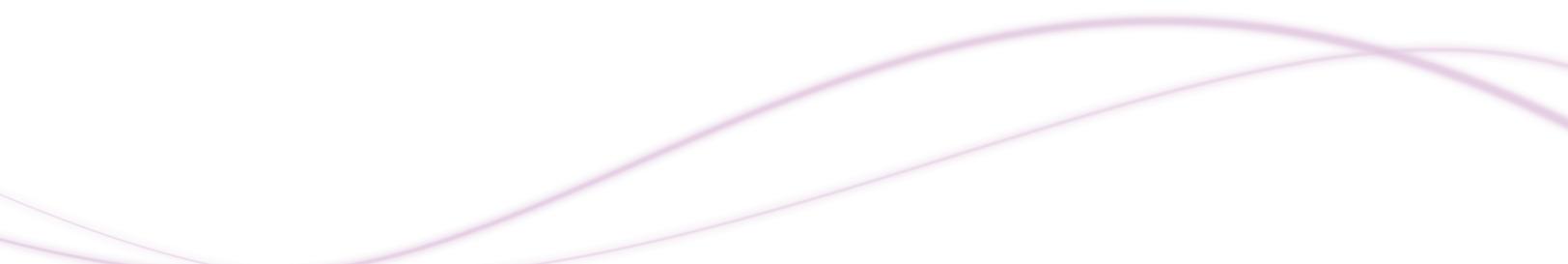
## SUMMARY

After the implementation of Canon's imageRUNNER ADVANCE systems and uniFLOW, the benefits were quickly realized company-wide. Staff could easily perform everyday walk-up operations, such as copying, scanning, sending, and faxing, with a swipe of their proximity card, without having to manually enter their log-in information each time. And, for the first time, the IT department was able to track usage in real time and attribute costs accurately and clearly.

"The control panel and end-user experience is the same across all of our imageRUNNER ADVANCE systems, and that makes our life in IT much easier," continued Mr. Beagle. "uniFLOW's features, functions, and seamless integration within our environment easily cost-justified the solution. We would have chosen uniFLOW even if it were more than we budgeted, because of its tremendous benefits."

The staff also appreciated the ease of use when performing print operations from the desktop as well as the ability to quickly release jobs for output on any available imageRUNNER ADVANCE system using uniFLOW's Follow-Me printing feature. This virtually eliminated unclaimed printouts, enhanced security, and reduced waste, because users must be authenticated at the device before output is released.

The imageRUNNER ADVANCE systems are also highly reliable and provide greater uptime with reduced maintenance. This relieved the IT department from having to address frequent user issues and provided time to focus on more strategic goals.



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