

Distilled Water Specialist Automates Vital Invoicing Process with HP Total Print Management solution



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Fergus Lang

O&M Specialist, Watsons Water

Background

Watsons Water is a wholly owned subsidiary of AS Watson Group (HK) Ltd and has been serving pure distilled water to the people of Hong Kong since 1903. Today its production plants are located in Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou, and the company's products are consumed across the Asia-Pacific region, including Singapore, Malaysia and Taiwan. Watsons Water's aim is to continue to improve its products and systems, so that it can supply its many valued customers with the healthiest and purest drinking water possible.

Situation

As the market leader in the bottled water industry, Watsons Water has a high volume of around 300,000 pages of invoices printed in an average month. Previously, Watsons Water's delivery invoices were generated by a legacy host computer for the following day's water orders including address and contacts, printed on five heavy duty dot-matrix line printers. The invoices would then be distributed to drivers every evening, to be used for the following day's deliveries.

Says Lang of Watsons Water, "We used to print separately in different batches throughout the day, leading to delays because around 50 drivers had to stay late to sort out the delivery invoices per delivery locations the night before, often staying until 9:00 p.m."

As Watsons Water uses over seven different invoice formats, an administrative staff had to manually load specific preprinted sheets, print out the whole group of invoices, and then load another. This was repeated during each batch printing session every day.

"If there are cancelled orders or any changes, which averages 100 per day, an Invoice Amendment Report must be printed, and our administrative assistant must manually deliver it to the drivers so that they can match it up with the subject invoice."

Tasked with the mission of automating invoices and work order printing, Watsons Water's project team set out to engage a solution partner that could fit the bill.

He adds, "We required a new printing solution that could consolidate and print our invoices and work orders, using correct page formats, and already sorted in batches once off the printer. The system must be flexible enough that any changes can be made in the system before the invoices are printed, saving time and effort."

HP's cluster printing solution fits the bill perfectly, allowing a pool of load-balanced, high production printers that can print 160 pages per minute, hence sharply reducing the print run time and enabling Watsons Water to save labor time and cost. In the event of a printer failure, the print job is easily diverted to other printers in the array, dramatically reducing risk by eliminating any single point of failure. Together with HP's year-round, 24x7 hardware services support, Watsons Water is assured of high continuity in its printing solution.



Solution

After an exhaustive tender process, Watsons Water eventually chose a HP Total Print Management solution that combined software, hardware, services, and financing.

The HP products include four fully configured LaserJet 9000DN printers and two LaserJet 8150DN printers located in Tai Po, and one LaserJet 9000DN printer in Kwun Tong. The company also invested in four HP ProLiant ML350 servers as the platform for e-form printing as well as clustered printing.

HP LaserJet printers deliver unparalleled reliability to Watsons Water in this mission-critical bill printing application. The crisp and professional output quality brings a new experience to customers that further enhances its image of a premium-quality water manufacturer.

Watsons Water adopted HP's Pay per use service, paying a fixed fee every month that covers consumables such as ink cartridges, 24x7 service with a guaranteed technician on-site response of four hours, and overall project management by a dedicated HP service team.

The HP Pay per use service gives Watsons Water peace of mind in managing and supporting its daily operations, so it can focus more on its core business. The fixed monthly payment also gives the company a clear total cost for the system, making it easier to budget for print-related expenses because there are no hidden costs.

Lang added, "We chose HP because of their personal and responsive service, cutting-edge technology, and for their proven performance, a fact that came to light during the intense selection period."

It took Watsons Water two months for implementation of the project, beginning with a smooth pilot run. According to Lang the project was implemented within a very efficient time frame, meeting all deadlines.

"HP sales and service representatives was a team of strong commitment in their dealings with us, lending us a level of comfort knowing that they had our best interests at heart."

"We also trust HP to support our future development roadmap," says Lang. "Technology, as well as our business operations, is always evolving. Our technology partners must provide us with the quality of service and product enhancements that we need to continually improve our products and systems."

"The best thing is, HP is our single point of contact for all print-related issues, so we don't have to play the finger-pointing game whenever issues arise. This greatly streamlines the daily administration work in handling consumables ordering, fulfillment, services call placement, problems escalation, and much more."

Benefits

Lang says Watsons Water's successful implementation of the new printing system clearly affirms the reliability and superior price performance benefits of HP products, which complement its strong back-end support.

Says Lang, "HP gives us a reliable set-up for both printers and servers with redundant back-up units to ensure non-stop service support. The integration with dynamic e-form designers and user-friendly tools makes the system highly configurable, enabling us to create different invoice templates."

HP's high performance production printers replaced existing line printers, giving Watsons Water more efficient operation and greater printing speed. The clustered printing solution re-distributes printing load among a group of clustered printers, ensuring efficiency and speed, and reliability with no single point for failure.

Instead of specific forms with hard-printed grid lines or boxes, the new system used pre-printed paper with just the logo and the standard terms and conditions, the paper can therefore be printed with contents that are not restricted by grid lines or boxes. The result is greater printing flexibility, and a reduction in the inventory of pre-printed forms, avoiding obsolescence or paper quality deterioration as time goes by. The fully digital printing solution offers greater agility to change the look-and-feel to accommodate changing business needs.

"It used to take two to three hours to print 10,000 pages of invoices every day. Now we can print in two batches instead of three or four batches."

According to Lang, there are plans for a future application to have unique barcodes on each invoice so that deliveries can be confirmed electronically with a scanner by the finance department, after drivers return the invoices at the end of the day.

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"Using our investment in HP, we will continue to innovate and develop platforms for the benefit of our fast expanding company, and the excellent service that HP offers will let us deploy and replicate same solutions in other offices."

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