

Canon and eCopy Provide A Cost-Effective Solution for Communicating with Paper Electronically

An Avalanche of Faxes

From its birth as a small machine shop in 1906, Porter-Cable has grown to become one of the world's leading manufacturers of portable electric and cordless power tools; air nailers, staplers, and compressors; and related accessories for the professional woodworking, commercial/residential construction, plumbing, and electrical markets. With facilities in Jackson, TN and Steinheim, Germany, Porter-Cable sells through domestic retail and wholesale outlets, as well as a global network of distribution partners.

According to Director of Materials and Purchase Supply Management Gary Meeseman, Porter-Cable has traditionally used the fax machine as a key communications medium. "Every week we faxed more than 1,000 sheets of paper, including purchase orders and scheduling updates, both to internal staff and suppliers," he says. "We had 32 fax machines going, and the cost for our fax line, which included regular overseas faxing to our German plant, was about \$2,400 a month."

Porter-Cable wanted to find a less expensive way to handle all this information, but the most obvious answer — converting the operation to electronic files and EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) — wasn't an option because so many documents include hand markings. "Our suppliers need to see the pencil changes," he says. "They're used to us circling items and making notes to update the sheets — it's easy to spot the new information, so we had to maintain that visual aspect." For a solution that cut telecom costs, retained the ability to mark changes by hand, and simplified their information distribution, Porter-Cable turned to Canon and eCopy. "The solution more than pays for itself," says Meeseman. "Our \$2,400 monthly fax expense dropped to \$400 in the first month and it's dropping lower as we bring more suppliers into the new process."

eCopy Solution

The shift to making eCopies of paper documents rather than running to the fax machine actually began with upgrading Porter-Cable's photocopiers. "As the leases ran out on our analog copiers, we looked at several digital alternatives and settled on the Canon imageRUNNERS, which we purchased through the Canon Authorized Dealer," Meeseman explains. "The Canon machines have a scan capability, and when I described my faxing problem to the Canon rep, he showed me a demo of the eCopy system.

"This is a great idea and was a perfect fit for us. eCopy lets us use the digital copier to create electronic copies of paper documents — with all the pencil notes easy to see — and e-mail the eCopies right to our suppliers."

"Everyone is impressed with the image quality and the speed we gain by using the Internet for document distribution," he continues. "I worked with my buyers to make sure that making eCopies would be time-efficient and the change-over rolled through quickly. We did the eCopy quick training and even our veteran buyers, people with 20 to 30 years using the old systems, took only a day of hands-on to get it."

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Director of Materials and Purchase
Supply Management
Porter-Cable Corporation

“Send me an eCopy”

Making eCopies at Porter-Cable is as easy as running the photocopier. A small-format eCopy touch-screen is mounted on top of the digital copier and a user simply pushes an on-screen button and feeds a document through the copier, creating a digital version of the paper document. Then the user accesses the company's Microsoft Outlook address book on the touch screen, and sends the eCopy via e-mail directly to any number of people in the address book — including suppliers, other Porter-Cable staff, or back to the user's own desktop PC. The eCopies are sent via the corporate network or Internet for instant delivery, whether the recipients are in one of Porter-Cable's local buildings or around the world.

“We used to struggle with landscape forms with very small print that was tough to read, especially after they went through the fax,” Meeseman says. “It was particularly difficult to make out the numbers, but now, we have eCopies that are high-quality PDF files — there's really no comparison to the fax. For the most part, we don't even bother sending a cover note. You make the eCopy, pick a few e-mail addresses and it's gone in a couple seconds. We already had a T1 line going out of the building, so we're leveraging a lot of our existing IT infrastructure, in addition to optimizing our use of the imageRUNNER's capabilities.”

Meeseman notes that at present, the purchasing department is using eCopy on its imageRUNNER, already displacing a number of fax machines. Other departments, including credit and claims are interested, and Meeseman believes Porter-Cable will do much more eCopying as leases on analog copiers run out and the company converts to more of the digital copiers that are making eCopying the next big idea in business communications.

Company Profile

Porter-Cable Corporation (www.porter-cable.com), a subsidiary of Pentair, Inc. (NYSE - PNR), is a leading manufacturer of portable electric and cordless power tools; air nailers, staplers and compressors; and related accessories for the professional woodworking, commercial and residential construction, plumbing, and electrical markets. With its manufacturing operation centralized in Jackson, TN, Porter-Cable operates a second manufacturing facility in Steinheim, Germany, where its products are produced and sold throughout Europe under the FLEX brand name. Porter-Cable products are sold through industrial and building supply stores, home centers, lumber yards, hardware stores, plumbing and HVAC wholesalers, woodworking machinery dealers, and rental outlets.

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