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Thinking Outside the Reprographics Box

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The benchmark for success for any business should be 6% to 8% annual growth. Expansion is the obvious factor in whether that goal is achieved or not.

However, with so many demands to increase revenue in what seems to be a diminishing market, achieving that growth may appear unrealistic. By re-evaluating a well-thought-out reprographics strategy, a retailer can take full advantage of time that was previously spent on "back-room" processing and focus on opening new stores.

If a small to medium in-line store in the mall expands by 100 locations with daily sales of \$5,000 at each location that equates to roughly \$500,000. Now, imagine if that same store was able to open each of the 100 locations a day earlier. The result would be an additional \$500,000 on top of the already projected store profits!

One simple way the aforementioned scenario can be realistic is to streamline the process between the retailer and its general contractors. Through technological advances, reprographics can be the centerpiece that leads to increased profits.

The general contractors bid are conditional to the amount of time he is provided due to the fact that the subcontractor must have adequate time as well. General contractors must allow subcontractors at least five days to study a set of plans. In turn, the retailer will receive better pricing and ultimately better savings.

By modifying their reprographics strategy, Staples, the world's largest office products company, has been able to flip the hourglass and "get back a day" by uploading blueprints through an online plan room where their project manager can format and distribute a set of plans in under six hours. This allows Staple's general contractors an additional day to view the plans, while providing Staple's employees up to three to five hours a day on running other jobs in progress.

An innovative tool such as an "online plan room" is just one example of how a retailer can upload and distribute a set of plans in a quicker, secure process. An online plan room enables the centralized organization of project plans, revision tracking and control, digital archiving and document storage. Traditional in-house reprographic methods require too much time and energy, which can distract a company from focusing on its core business.

Traditional printed plans remain a staple in the bidding process despite digital advances. The introduction of CDs, DVDs, portable USB drives and PDFs have eased the process of transporting, sharing and archiving a set of plans; however, subcontractors will agree that it is very difficult to make a firm bid off of a 17-in. monitor.

In a growing trend, many Web-based reprographic companies are providing additional perks for their users, such as extensive contractor databases. With a few clicks of a mouse button, retailers are able to send invitations to bid to a customized, targeted list, while providing the option to make supplementary invitation phone calls.

Today, most successful retailers use an online plan room and therefore don't pay for plans, as their general contractors use that plan room to purchase that first set.

Instead of pouring valuable resources into the plan distribution process, retailers should be able to utilize an automated invitation to bid system with fulfillment capabilities. By evaluating, acknowledging and restructuring their reprographics processes, they will in turn save time, costs and bolster productivity, which will lead to increased revenues.

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