

Case Study

production

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A2Z Printing

Commercial Printer Delivers on Its Promise to Quickly Complete Any Project — Large or Small — For An Affordable Price

"Our customers want faster and faster turnarounds. With Ricoh production printers, we can complete jobs with fewer delays and less downtime, which helps us be more profitable."

– Allen Taheri
Partner
A2Z Printing
Jackson, MS



ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

Allen Taheri started A2Z Printing in Jackson, Mississippi while in college on little more than a late-night whim. After convincing a friend to join him, Taheri realized quickly that the duo knew very little about the business. They had no printing experience and their print fleet comprised a single 45 pages-per-minute copier. Somehow, that was enough to land a client.

Suddenly, they knew exactly what to do — give the client exactly what it needed as quickly as possible.

"Everything clicked," said Taheri, Partner at A2Z Printing. "We went from thinking we were in over our heads to believing we could change the entire print industry. We purchased new printers and chased new customers."

Soon, A2Z Printing began working with a wide range of clients — including politicians, news organizations, realtors and more — who believe in delivering timely information to audiences. Their messages lose impact and relevance if not delivered at the most opportune moment. Fittingly, most of these clients impose tight deadlines on print requests.

With more projects and more deadlines, the company's printers were overmatched. Downtime skyrocketed. Taheri and the rest of the team routed jobs to other devices, but eventually, they ran out of available printers. Plus, the devices were too slow to churn out large volumes quickly and deadlines were missed.

CHALLENGE

- More print projects with shorter deadlines
- Existing production printer incapable of meeting demands
- Slow service response
- Downtime for existing production printer rose to about 40%

SOLUTION

- Increase uptime via four Ricoh production printers
- Respond with fast, comprehensive service
- Add more print capabilities, including clear and white toner

RESULTS

- Nearly doubled revenue in the first year
- Reduced printers downtime by nearly 500%
- Cut service costs by \$20k annually

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A2Z Printing needed to overhaul its printer fleet and bring in faster, more reliable devices with more capabilities backed by responsive technicians. Taheri wanted to expand his print business and make it one that lived up to its mantra, “If you can think it, we can print it.” He knew that if the company could consistently meet customer demands, it could accept more types of jobs. More importantly, it could accept more profitable jobs.

CHALLENGE

It’s easier to make decisions when you have the right information. Imagine you’re a local politician with an election right around the corner, but your campaign signs, handouts and brochures are still with the printer. You might just decide to take your business to another print vendor.

“Nobody wants to read old news,” said Taheri. “A single print production delay can make an entire run irrelevant.”

A2Z Printing has experienced steady growth since its inception less than a decade ago. But it hasn’t always been easy — especially when it tried to meet customers’ needs using an unreliable printer. The company had political promotions queued up along with flyers for upcoming concerts, game day programs for local colleges, forms for the local hospital and many other projects. Each client had a singular demand: they needed the job completed as soon as possible.

The most powerful legacy printer produced only 65 pages per minute, so the team had to block out a significant amount of time for production. Those jobs took even longer when the printer was out of service. The unreliable printer required countless maintenance trips. Soon, delays mounted and deadlines were missed.

“Our customers have very little margin for error,” said Taheri. “Unfortunately, we were dealing with a comedy of errors, including inoperable printers, slow service response times and outdated, overmatched devices.”

Often, technicians arrived several hours after a service request. For a company that took pride in “getting things done”, the delays waiting for unresponsive technicians became especially frustrating. Downtime inched above 40 percent and Taheri was ready to find newer, more capable production printers.

“We needed to be more reliable to realize our vision,” said Taheri. “We have to be the printer who’s actually fast enough for our clients, so we can accept more of their jobs and make more money. We can only do that if we have better print equipment.”

The capacity to print faster is only one way to be better. Taheri wanted more options, too. He knew that the current printers limited the types of jobs A2Z Printing could accept. With more print capabilities, he could introduce new types of print opportunities to clients and produce them profitably.

A2Z Printing had a growing customer base that required fast print turnarounds. The team was willing and ready — but the legacy printer couldn’t meet the demands.

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SOLUTION

Everything changed with the introduction of the RICOH Pro C901 digital printing system. Initially, Taheri was skeptical when a Ricoh representative proposed a product demonstration in Dallas. Taheri went anyway, promising himself that at least he could get a brief vacation out of the visit.

"We put that printer to the test," said Taheri. "But it did better than we expected. We were even more impressed when we brought it in-house and ran just about everything through it with ease. Basically, we could print almost any project, at any time. Our plan was working."

Messages lose their effectiveness when they don't reach the audience in time. With the RICOH Pro C901, A2Z Printing added more capacity. Soon, business doubled as clients gained confidence in the printer's ability to complete jobs quickly. Revenue jumped almost \$800k in the first year with the Ricoh production printer. Business continues to grow. The digital press routinely runs more than 600k pages per month.

Today, the print shop hums with activity. The press runs almost continuously with minimal downtime. It produces up to 90 pages per minute, so the team can complete jobs and transition to the next one quickly. Plus, it holds up to 11,000 sheets, so there are virtually no restocking delays. Maintenance calls have been reduced significantly. In fact, A2Z Printing employees can take advantage of trained customer replaceable units (TCRUs) to perform many of the tasks themselves.

No matter what, they keep running," said Taheri. "In an industry where nobody is ever fast enough, we're turning jobs around the same day."

The industry standard for resolving downtime issues is between four and eight hours. A2Z Printing employees can now change toner bottles, fill paper trays and more and resume printing within minutes. With more than nine million clicks and counting, the RICOH Pro C901 remains a linchpin for A2Z Printing. Only now, it's not the only Ricoh device on site.

Taheri was so impressed when he saw the new RICOH Pro C7110 five-color production printer in action at a trade show; he purchased the device on the spot. He wanted A2Z Printing to be among the first print providers to take advantage of the device's newest capabilities.

"We want to push our customers to expand their business by trying new things," said Taheri. "After all, it's worked for us. By adding new Ricoh products, we can improve our print capabilities and our customers can improve what they're sending to target audiences."

With its 5th color station, A2Z Printing can compete for jobs that involve clear or white toner on transparent or colored media. It enables customers to reach audiences with a wider range of posters, banners, clings, magnets and other materials.

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Some customers care only about fast turnaround and affordability. A2Z Printing can handle them, too. With the RICOH Pro 8110EX, it can produce up to one million black-and-white pages every month. The printer is used primarily to produce large volumes of a local news magazine every week. The company receives the information on Monday, and the project is out the door the next day. There's no room for delays. Fortunately, there hasn't been a single deadline missed yet. Taheri doesn't expect there to be.

"These devices are like tanks," said Taheri. "No matter what, they keep running. In an industry where nobody is ever fast enough, we're turning jobs around the same day."

When there is a problem that the A2Z Printing team can't resolve in-house, Ricoh has been quick to respond. In fact, Taheri noted that he has received excellent instructions from technical service every time — even when he calls them late at night.

Downtime has been reduced by almost 500% since the first Ricoh digital press was added.

RESULTS

When printers run continuously, A2Z Printing can continue to do what it does best — deliver on time, every time. With its added capacity, the company has added more clients. Plus, it can produce a wider range of materials for those customers, including variable data printing and clear or white text on almost any media.

But it's not only about what A2Z Printing can do. It's about when it can do it.

"Our customers want faster and faster turnarounds," said Taheri. "With Ricoh production printers, we can complete jobs with fewer delays and less downtime, which helps us be more profitable."

Spreading the Word

Taheri points to consistent uptime as one of the greatest differentiators. Downtime has been reduced by almost 500% since the first Ricoh digital press was added. That's increased revenue. In fact, revenue doubled in the first year and has only increased since. Plus, the printer is saving more than \$20k every year simply on fewer technician visits.

"I think I've helped Ricoh sell at least 20 printers in the past couple of years," said Taheri. "I tell everybody what I like about them, what they can do and how Ricoh helps us accomplish what we set out to do."

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