

# Growing your CRD

you can



The outlook for CRDs is bright! On one hand, organisations keen to control and reduce costs should print in-house. On the other, digital technology empowers CRDs to deliver more complex print solutions and embed reprographics in the corporate infrastructure. The organisation wants more value from the CRD, and the CRD wants more work from the organisation.

It seems like a 'win-win' situation, but it's more accurate to say it's a potential win-win. In the Canon Insight Report *Corporate Reprographics: Trends and Opportunities* researchers from the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) identified a number of factors hindering its realisation. Generally speaking, the CRD sector lacks prescribed business models, business integration and corporate print strategies. Many inplant departments have a low internal profile, not least because they are often reactive rather than proactive, and many have low-grade facilities.

In the following pages we look at how you can start to turn things around and grow your CRD, both in terms of its capabilities and its perceived value to the organisation. To do so, you must manage a number of issues. You have to align different sets of expectations, so that you know what your departmental customers expect from the CRD, and they know what you can do for them – and how they can help you do it. Because this will almost inevitably involve changes in all parties' perceptions, practices and processes, you have to successfully manage that change. And you must promote the CRD's capabilities within the organisation.

We explain the key actions you must take to achieve these objectives. We first cover the theory and then we look at a 'real world' example of a CRD that has transformed itself into a busy, motivated and respected corporate resource.

## Matching demand and supply

It may seem logical that the first step in matching what customers demand with what the CRD can supply is to talk to the customers – but it isn't. You should talk to the CRD first, for several reasons. You must be confident it is 'fit for purpose' to deliver what customers tell you they want; and you need staff to understand why you need to consult with the CRD's customers before you start, otherwise they are likely to feel unsettled, and that's bad for morale.

But before you do anything, you need the support of senior management for the process, to add credibility and encourage cooperation. At first sight, this seems like a classic chicken-and-egg situation. How do you win management support for change when you don't know exactly what needs changing, and to find out you need management support? The answer is to seize an opportunity that arises to justify a review of the role of print in the organisation – for example, an organisation-wide directive to reduce costs, or the imminent renewal of the contract for printers and copiers. But even without such catalysts, in the current cost-conscious commercial climate, there is nothing to prevent you proactively making a case for a review.

While we recommend talking to management, staff and customers in that order, once the process is under way it makes sense to consult in parallel. For example, if it becomes apparent that customers have difficulty ordering print, tell the relevant people in the CRD promptly. This starts the search for a solution, and helps keep the tempo of the consultation high – which in turn convinces participants that the project is credible.

## Speaking to your people

Before consulting your staff about the state of the CRD, remember Mark Twain's observation that "I'm all for progress. It's change I don't like." In a process where each staff member's role is scrutinised and evaluated, it's easy for them to feel insecure and uncertain, so make sure you present the process in a positive light – not as a cost-control exercise but as one that will expand the role of the inplant and secure its future. Place change in the context of progress.

Some issues need careful discussion. A good example is implementing web-to-print, for which the argument is irresistible – according to the RIT research, CRDs with a web presence were rated 'excellent' by 55% of customers, compared to just 22% of those without one. Despite this, some staff may regard ordering print online as a threat. This needs to be recognised and the staff reassured.

By talking with the CRD staff before talking with your customers, you are working 'from the inside out', ensuring their experience helps shape new strategies and services. Between them, your staff know more than anyone about the equipment, the work profile, and the customers' demands. They know what works and what doesn't, where they are winning and where losing. They are also likely to have ideas for improvements. But if they're not used to being consulted, it can be difficult to persuade people to talk, so consider using a tool such as a SWOT analysis to encourage them. By analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the department, they will often tell you directly where you need to concentrate and, in the process, buy into changes at an early stage.

Some staff won't be forthcoming in open session with colleagues, so conduct one-to-one interviews as well. And some won't contribute because they don't feel comfortable talking to management. In both cases, you may want to consider bringing in an independent consultant to act as a neutral facilitator to whom staff can talk freely.

Lastly, you will get more from these meetings than just feedback about the CRD. They are also an opportunity to assess everyone's willingness to learn new skills and take on new responsibilities – in customer relationship management (CRM), for example – in what is likely to become a more technology-driven and customer-focused CRD.

## Meeting the customers

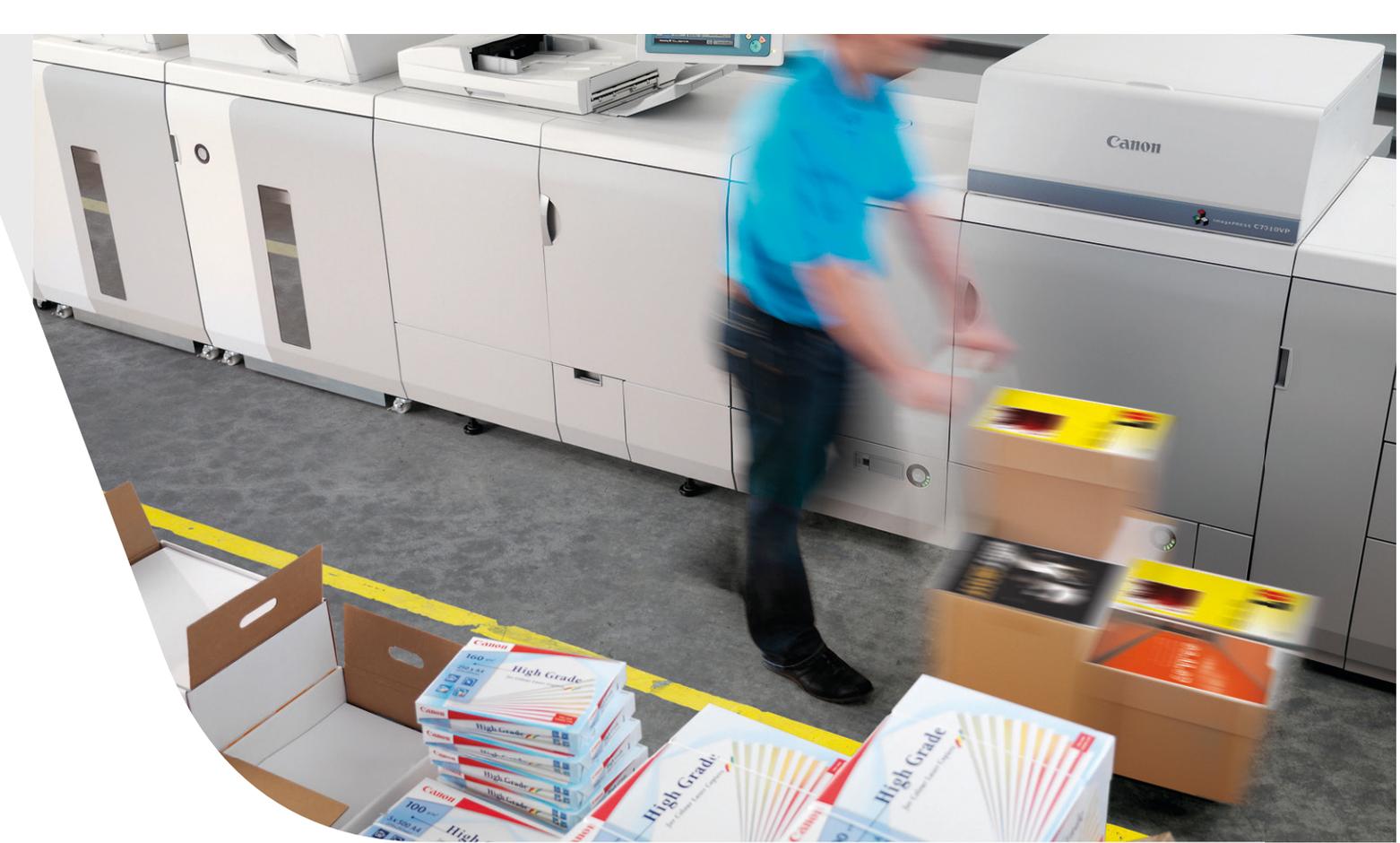
Compared to consulting your staff, speaking to internal customers is more complex; you leave familiar ground and enter the labyrinth that can be departmental print practice. It may be hard work and take time, but what you learn will be invaluable in shaping the CRD's future.

You want to get two things out of the process. You want 'hard' data about their print requirements—where they happen, what they are, who is doing the printing, and so on. Leave no stone unturned; your competitors aren't just commercial printers—they include the single users wedded to their pet laser printer by their desk. (A recent audit conducted by Canon at a medium-size accountancy practice identified 160 multi-function devices across 14 offices and 350 staff, from multiple suppliers, using different consumables and covered by a variety of service contracts. Post-audit, the MFDs were consolidated to just 43.)

You also want data that helps you understand how customers perceive the CRD – do they know what it can do, and how satisfied are they with its products? What do they base their perception on?

You should already know which departments use the CRD, how often, and for what. If you're typical of other inplants, sales, marketing and communications will be your biggest customers; if they're not, you've possibly identified both a cause for concern – and an opportunity.

How you conduct the research depends on factors such as how well you already know the departmental managers, how much time they have, etc. But we strongly recommend you meet existing and potential customers face-to-face. This will enable you to explore issues as they arise during the discussion, it will yield high-quality information and allow you to put a face to the department – and vice versa.



**You should clearly state why you want to meet. For example, explain that the meeting will help you:**

- Gain a better understanding of your customers;
- Understand their requirements and improve your service to them;
- Identify additional service requirements;
- Deliver the most cost-effective service to the wider organisation;
- Enable both parties to work together for the benefit of the organisation.

**Here are some essential questions to ask about their print requirements:**

- What do they print? How much is in colour? How much is printed duplex?
- Are departmental volumes monitored? Is print recharged or allocated against departmental budgets?
- Are departments/users aware of how much they print? Are strategies in place to control unnecessary printing?
- What is the ratio of in-house/externally-bought print? Why is print bought externally – on grounds of quantity, quality, delivery, or all three?
- How is design sourced? How involved are designers/creatives in purchasing print?
- Do they expect their requirements to change in the future? If so, how?
- Are they aware of the benefits of digital printing? Do they know about variable data printing?
- What would they like the CRD to offer that it doesn't?
- What is the next print job they are planning?

The last three questions are especially important, because while customers' past experiences of the CRD are valuable, it's their future requirements you must understand.

**Questioning about internal perceptions of the CRD could follow these lines:**

- How do they rate the general quality of the materials produced by the CRD?
- In their opinion, how do the costs of CRD-produced materials compare to those they could obtain externally?
- How do they view the CRD's speed of response in producing and delivering documents?
- How do they rate the overall service provided by the CRD?
- How do they rate the helpfulness of the CRD staff?
- How do they order work from the CRD? Who do they deal with? Is the process simple?

## Putting the theory into practice

Jo Lloyd, a consultant with Canon's Essential Business Builder Program (EBBP), has extensive experience of advising CRDs how to adapt to their customers' changing requirements. Below she explains how, after a false start, one large CRD successfully handled the transition from offset to digital.

The organisation had replaced its extensive litho-based CRD with high-volume digital colour and mono presses, finishing and workflow software. This had a considerable impact on staff morale.

Initial conversations with the CRD staff and their internal customers confirmed that the internal perception needed improvement, which wasn't too surprising given that the CRD had never carried out any internal marketing.

The general perception was of a slightly grand photocopying department, despite its strong litho heritage. Customers mostly dealt with the department remotely, placing orders by phone or email, which gave rise to errors through miscommunication. Input from the printroom was never sought when strategies, ideas or help were needed.

The department had customer relationship managers – an important role found in most commercial printers – but they were more focused on completing their own internal paperwork than helping customers. Most had a production background, but instead of using this experience to guide customers, no feedback was provided when files were presented wrongly. They saw it as a chance to justify their existence rather than an opportunity for improvement and education.

Injecting new customer focus became a central plank of the new strategy, enhancing customer service skills and introducing the concept of selling. The idea of selling was alien to staff at first, so we spent time considering the whole sales process, and showing how it could become a pro-active, consultative, solutions-led process. Staff were encouraged to suggest changes or improvements to each job they saw, even if it was too late to make changes – because the customer could do things differently next time.

In parallel, I organised training from equipment vendors in the key technologies that would enable the CRD work closely with customers in developing and delivering new services – VDP, web-to-print and Job Definition Format (JDF). The department then hosted workshops to bring customers to the printroom. Besides VDP, workshops covered environmental issues, print terminology for non-print staff, and the requirements of the Data Protection Act. Each workshop involved a tour of the CRD and short talks from production team members on equipment capabilities, supported by case studies and plenty of takeaway samples.

The appearance of the department was transformed. The waiting area was redecorated in bright colours and equipped with sofas, a phone and a water machine. Information posters made waiting a learning experience; samples stimulated interest and ideas. The idea was to make customers look forward to visiting the print room.

Internal marketing via email prompted customer departments about postage price increases, new distribution solutions, etc, the idea being that people would welcome input from the print room, and not see it as intrusive. Finally, the CRD sent out feedback forms after each job. These were designed to elicit meaningful feedback about the whole buying process – from initial enquiry to delivery, and all stages in between.

A year after the process started, the CRD was almost unrecognisable. It was busier, with additional shifts being required to cover busy periods and the general hustle and bustle that surrounds a successful print room. Buyers dropped in unannounced to discuss projects and monitor progress. Minders realised that it was OK to talk to clients about any artwork file issues, or ideas they'd had while processing the job. Respect grew between all parties.

The amount of print produced by the department increased, as did the effectiveness of the material produced. Internal perception improved noticeably, judging by anecdotal feedback at senior manager meetings.

Printroom morale improved significantly. Staff turnover decreased and, as they became busier and better regarded, people came up with more ideas for improvement, and began to look for training initiatives of their own. In total, it took a year to effect this dramatic turnaround in the CRD – which is rapid in the scheme of things.

I have one final piece of advice for CRDs starting the process of change. It's easy to feel dispondent if you discover a sizeable discrepancy between perceptions of the CRD's capabilities and the reality. **Don't be – because the bigger the gulf, the greater the opportunity for growth!**

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