

Penn State Automates Acceptance-Letter Mailing Process with Folder/Inserter and Output Management Software



PennState
Multimedia & Print Center

The Pennsylvania State University system includes 24 campuses composed of approximately 100,000 students, 17,000 faculty and staff employees and a teaching hospital that provides care to more than a million patients a year.

Situation

Penn State's Multimedia and Print Center, a 55-employee in-house print service provider, processes all of the school's student acceptance correspondence. The student application packet volume inflated the university's usual business mail correspondence traffic by approximately 2,500 acceptance-related mail pieces every day.

Penn State's Undergraduate Admissions department used to assemble and stuff new-student acceptance packets by hand, a time-consuming process subject to a high degree of human error. The university's Admissions Office wanted the Multimedia and Print Center to automate. Multimedia and Print Center Director Abbas Badani agreed; he believed that automating the student acceptance correspondence process would save money and decrease the cycle time for offers to reach students. He was right.

Challenge

The school was using a competitor's outdated folder/inserter which did not meet regulation-prescribed requirements for handling sensitive personal information - in this case, student admission packets - securely. All out-bound admissions packages must match accepted students to their correct campus addresses. The consequences of a mismatch could be financial and legal for the university. Sending the wrong information to the wrong recipient meant that the school could lose thousands of dollars per student (because mistakes had to be honored) and put the school at risk of a regulatory violation.

The department believed that there was no other way to assemble the packets because each one had to be personalized with different materials. Badani found a way.

Solution

A team of Neopost USA's mail center optimization experts met with Badani and Bob Eichman, Penn State's Pre-Mail Coordinator for the Multimedia and Print Center. The Neopost USA assessment team determined, after a series of meetings and conference calls, that PSU needed Neopost's DS-200 folder/inserter equipped with Neopost's OMS-500 multi-channel communications management solution integrated with Satori address cleansing software.

Eichman was invited to a Neopost USA showroom and saw the DS-200 in action. The demo also highlighted OMS-500 in two modes: a generic demo which showed the software's capabilities and a custom-tailored demo which applied 2D barcodes to Penn State documents. The tailored demo showed the school's representatives how easy and economical it was for each student-specific barcode to insert secure information, multiple pages and ancillary documents precisely and accurately into individual admissions packets.

The demo convinced Eichman that Neopost's folder/inserter combined with OMS software was the exact solution that would free the school's Admissions Office of the manual inserting portion of the student acceptance process.

Penn State's Admissions Office also received a sample packet which showed the final product that Neopost-brand solutions could produce. That sample packet secured Neopost USA's partnership with PSU. Our technology-based enhancement was the perfect complement to the university's desire to automate, reduce processing time and virtually eliminate human error.

Badani installed a new Neopost DS-200 folder/inserter with OMS-500 software in the Multimedia and Print Center. Now 2D barcodes on the acceptance letters tell the insertion system how many pages the letter contains and which additional inserts — brochures, literature, magnets, etc. — should go into each envelope.

Effect on Customers' Business

Students now receive admissions acceptance packets faster than ever before. "Our cycle time for admission offers has shrunk tremendously," Badani revealed. Delivery time plummeted from a few weeks after acceptance letters were posted online to as few as three days. Badani says he does not know of any "other university able to get these materials out faster."

Penn State's Admissions Office was able to bring formerly-outsourced jobs into the Multimedia and Print Center. That saved time and money and allowed the Admissions Office to use its resources for projects that benefited students and faculty.

"We continue to find new ways to bring value," Badani explains. "We find new opportunities where we can...leverage what we know about Penn State to do something different. That's an example of how...we try to find pockets of value that haven't been there before," he says.