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SWAT: A new approach for changing ink suppliers

As part of Siegwerk's differentiation strategy, the PMC (Process Management & Consulting) team manages InHouse services, customer efficiency projects, and customer ink supplier transitions. Transitioning ink suppliers can be a daunting task and full of uncertainty which can lead to downtime for our customers. Siegwerk has now developed an innovative approach which provides a remedy and minimizes the impact to our customer's operations. Scott Harrison, Director of PMC for Siegwerk North America, explains how the new approach was developed and how Siegwerk manage to ensure a smooth transition.



Scott Harrison, Director of PMC for Siegwerk North America.

Q: Scott, "SWAT" probably does not stand for "special weapons and tactics" in this context, right? What does it mean?

A: SWAT stands for "Siegwerk Accelerated Transition", our new approach for changing ink suppliers. There are few activities more painful for a flexible

packaging converter than switching to another supplier. We recognize this in our daily business. Hence, over the last 18 months, we developed a new approach to make this process as painless as possible for our customers. It's unique and proprietary – one of Siegwerk's special weapons and tactics in a metaphoric sense.

Q: Why is it so challenging to change the ink supplier?

A: The crucial point is to carry out the changeover without disrupting production. This process should be completed as quickly as possible since every disruption and every delay leads to a financial loss for flexible packaging converters.

Q: How did you come up with this approach?

A: The approach was conceived from a conversation with Jarred Carter, BU Head, Flexible Packaging and a unique challenge where we needed to transition two customers in a short time frame with limited resources. In addition, recognizing the pain sometimes caused by this activity, we wanted to develop a new way to help customers with the transition. As a first step, we needed to understand the customers' experiences and expectations. We quickly realized that this would require a holistic approach. Therefore, our Process Management & Consulting team organized a workshop using our "One Face to the Customer (OFC)" strategy. This means we included members from Sales, Technology, PMC, and Print Service. The aim was to identify the best project plan, team, and resources needed to conduct a customer transition as quickly as possible. And this is what we did: the team delivered what is now known as SWAT. Siegwerk Accelerated Transition is the revolutionary new approach to change ink suppliers with minimal impact on the customer.

Q: We have already heard a lot about transition and process now. How does the new approach work and who is involved at Siegwerk?

A: The SWAT approach includes a defined color management process which begins as far in advance as possible to ensure the best results in correlation and color matching. The process involves our Color Management lab, Print Service team, Sales team, and Process Management & Consulting team, along with a dedicated transition team and a tool kit to minimize disruption to the current ink room operations. Effective communication is key to ensure the success of the transition and the customers satisfaction.

Q: How much can SWAT improve the transition process?

A: The result of SWAT is remarkable: It can reduce the time needed for switching the ink supplier by up to 50 percent. For one customer, for example, we succeeded in completing the entire process from Friday night shutdown to Sunday night startup. During this ambitious time span, we cleaned the dispenser, dispensed and staged inks at press, staged toner carts and produced inks two days ahead of the print schedule. However, it should be noted that time saving differs from project to project depending on its complexity. In any case, saving time means lower costs for the customer and less pain. The typical SWAT transition takes 45 days or less.

I must say, that its just a plan of execution. The real value is in the people that execute the plan. The team is led by our Head of OSC and set of hand selected, highly skilled team members.

Q: Who is the approach aimed at? Does it address only new customers or will existing customers also benefit?

A: It's definitely a benefit for both. It highly facilitates the transition management for new customers. With several customer transitions under our belt, the SWAT process and team has already proven itself to be the industry leading approach for switching customers' ink supply. But we are also extremely excited to offer

the new approach to our existing customers for strategic projects where performance has not been optimized yet.

Q: Why does the approach work so well? What is the secret of its success?

A: It is not enough to accompany the customer in the execution phase of the transition only. The important thing is to engage the customer from the onset. Understanding the needs right from the beginning allows us to set a course for success. All parties must work together on the development of a solution that fits the customers' needs. Then, and only then, can we ensure a satisfactory timeline and execution. We no longer engage the customer from one side of the business but from all sides right from the beginning.

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