

One system, one vision – from shop floor to top floor. That’s what is now available to security printing specialist the TALL Group, thanks to its implementation of Unity, the leading print software solution from Sanderson



Banking on security and visibility

Since its implementation of the Unity solution from Sanderson, the TALL Group has enjoyed improved visibility, sharper processes and faster response times. Now, with the addition of new shop floor data capture functionality, that visibility is instantaneous and it means anyone – from the boardroom to the

factory floor – can see, at a glance, the status of all orders within the operation.

The TALL Group, a £10-million turnover organisation, was founded in 1991. The company provides payment solutions, designs and prints business cheques and other secure, encoded documents – and its customers span many

Phil Long *Director*

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sectors. From business cheques for customers of major banks, to ballot papers for international authorities, to cheques for the Lotto, the group's customers include many blue chip organisations and all place very different demands on the business.

The group's head office at Runcorn houses 100 employees, with a further 50 at a sister site in Hinckley, Leicestershire. Both sites work independently, but share capabilities for contingency purposes – a requirement for banking customers.

Prior to choosing the Sanderson solution, TALL's systems were approaching the end of their life, as founder director Phil Long explains: “We had a very old system that generated our works orders, sales invoicing and resolved stock issues. But it was very basic and there was no integration, so when the supplier told us that support would soon be withdrawn, we decided to use the opportunity to source a new, integrated solution that could be used across the business.” As the business was growing, customer numbers were increasing and TALL knew that it wouldn't be able to support substantial new business without a modern business management system.

The group chose Unity from Sanderson: “From the outset, Sanderson were able to meet more of our requirements than anyone else. The product met 95% or more of our specification,” says Long.

TALL decided to implement Unity in the Runcorn site and the benefits were immediately apparent. “We use Unity to manage everything from initial estimates, through to final despatch. The difference in our operation is immense,” says Long.

Implementation wasn't without its challenges, however, as he explains: “For us, moving to Unity

was as much about changing the culture as the technology.” For the people within the company, this new solution was accompanied by a whole new way of working. “It was a quite a leap for many of them,” says Long. “Take the order input team, for example: they used to key basic information into a word processing document on the old system and this didn't interact with anything. Now, as a business, we do all the planning, the paper allocation, the machine recording and time booked to jobs, at the start of the job. So the order input stage is crucial in that it interacts with every process thereafter.”

The latest addition to TALL's technology systems has been the installation of shop floor data capture as part of the Unity solution. Touchscreens are positioned throughout the shop floor and the improvements are already starting to materialise – particularly in terms of data visibility and accuracy. Previously, managers resorted to paper and spreadsheets to try to control workflow throughout the operation. “The shop floor data capture system means any of our print managers can see the status of any job. We also have an accurate means of recording labour and materials costs for each job.”

Even better, he says, this is incorporated with Unity's capacity planning. TALL produces, on average, more than 100 jobs a day: each is fairly complex, with many design elements, security features and so on. “If we make a change to any order schedule, we can see immediately what the effect will be. Unity is planning and scheduling the workload continuously, based on each order's despatch date.” Without relying on paperwork and spreadsheets, TALL can now draw on the shop floor system to secure precise job costings and workload visibility.



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“It’s a little too early to calculate the exact cost savings from the shop floor data capture system,” says Long, “but I have no doubt that it will save us money. In terms of information at our fingertips, it’s already bringing immense benefit to the whole operation.” Service levels are benefiting too, as he explains: “In this day and age, information is easy accessible and people want answers there and then. Before, when a customer called to check how their order was progressing, it could take some time to find out the precise status. Now, the data is there

on the system and we can respond immediately, which saves time and provides improved service for customers.”

It’s been quite an upheaval, convincing everyone in the factory to leave the manual processes and spreadsheets behind them. The processes are now smoother, more efficient and fully integrated. “Previously we had order input and invoicing and nothing much in between. The production managers ran spreadsheets but these were laborious and time-consuming to update and, in effect, were only valid for that



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particular department. Now, the reports from Unity can be run by individual managers and are relevant not only to them but to the business as a whole.” The difference? It’s one set of data that is accessible to all.

It’s not only the overall business view that has changed: visibility of individual processes has improved enormously, too. “We have an instant, real-time view the second each job finishes because the data is captured there and then.

Prior to implementing Unity, TALL struggled to draw useful management information from its systems. Reports were slow and cumbersome to produce: “If we tried to run a ‘due-out’ report of all the jobs in the system, the report would take well over an hour to run and it would tie up someone’s computer for that time. Now, the speed with which we can call off information is incredible: we can run a more detailed report on all outstanding work and it takes just a few seconds.”

“The Unity solution has undoubtedly helped us to become more responsive, more agile,” says Long.

That responsiveness is set to improve still further – TALL is about to implement the last module for its Unity solution, the customer contact module. “The nature of our business is such that we have a complex mix of customers and channels. This module will enable us to get a better insight into buyer behaviour by tracking ordering patterns. In turn we will be able to promote additional products, services and solutions that are specifically relevant to targeted customer groups.

The Unity solution is underpinning TALL’s move to a modern, more efficient way of working. “Without a doubt, it has changed the way we work – for the better,” says Long. For the future, he is looking forward to reaping the rewards from the new system – and anticipates mirroring those benefits by implementing Unity in the site at Hinckley. “I know there are even more benefits to be had from the system. This is a system that is here to stay for the long-term and, as our processes develop still further, we will be able to raise our game even more in terms of service and efficiency.”