

# West Coast Printer uses Lean Printing Practices to rebound

Coastal Printing of Sarasota has rebounded from the downturned economy and sea-change in pricing in the printing industry by applying Lean Printing Practices and investing in their Management Information System.

Two years ago Coastal was seeing monthly sales and competitive pricing at all time lows. "The pressure of lower volumes of printing, compounded with lower pricing, was crippling the company - until we decided to be proactive and fight back," says Terry Rayner, COO.

We purchased the "Lean Printing – Pathway to Success" book from the Printing Industries of America and together our management team read the contents. It was tough – many of our managers could not understand what Toyota business practices had to do with printing – but we persevered and all of us committed to trying new things. Two years later we have shaved over 12 percentage points of costs out of business.

But it was not just embracing Leaning Printing philosophies that helped Coastal Printing make these dramatic changes; it was also investing in their Management Information System.

Coastal Printing has had the same MIS system for over ten years – DecisionWareSoftware.com by Western Business Services, however, they were just using the original estimating and financial modules. Rayner looked at the number of employees at Coastal and realized that unless they could manage the business in a new way they were going to be doomed. He looked at several leading-edge MIS systems and quickly realized that if he could streamline the workflows by reducing human touch points, Coastal could see some significant savings (less labor). Rayner got with Chris Hester, the president of Western Business Services and told him that Coastal needed a system that would allow them to provide their customers with instant quotes, then when the orders were awarded, to be able to turn them quickly into electronic job tickets, which in turn would populate a scheduling system – but more the system had to be interactive so that sales, customer service, production and management could see (on easy to use screens) the status of a job or the loading of a piece of equipment within seconds.



**Craig Hawkins, President of Coastal Printing (center), and the Coastal sales team**

"The Challenge was: "Do we spend \$200,000+ and take six-plus months to implement a new system or do we look to our current software supplier to step up to the challenge?" stated Rayner. "Western Business Services took on the challenge, and we now have an instant estimating system, real-time production status reporting and more – for less than half of what we would have spent with the other guys and without having to go through six-plus months of implementation!"

Coastal Printing's sales have increased by over 20% (in dollar volume), but by a whopping 40% "in jobs" over the last two years! And they can cope because they have changed from manual "hand written" job tickets and sharing job instructions verbally to fully-integrated automation.

Craig Hawkins, President of Coastal Printing stated: "A customer calls for a price and we (any of the sales team) can give them a price within minutes – and then if they revise the specifications and ask for a re-quote (that never happens – he says laughing), we can get that revision out in a matter of minutes (again). Our sales growth hasn't been built around offering low prices; it's been built on

even better customer service – instant turn of quotes, instant information about job status and on-time deliveries – all made possible by our advanced MIS system!"

Gerry Guttridge, Operations Manager says "The combination of Lean Printing (reducing make-ready times and increasing efficiencies), spread from the shop floor to the office, with real impact for our customers (and for Coastal). No longer are we quoting jobs at market prices and losing money on them. We now quote at Coastal Printing prices, which meet the market, but more because we are now sized right and efficient – we make money on jobs, which two years ago we would have had to turn down or take on at very low margins!"

Bottom Line – now is the time to look at the way you run your business – a good MIS system can pay for itself within a year! And with profits razor-thin every percentage point of savings that can be made makes a real difference!

*For more information about Coastal Printing, visit [www.coastalprint.com](http://www.coastalprint.com).*

