

Coleman Cable Eliminates Paper and Expenses with Formtastic



Coleman Cable, Inc. is a Waukegan, IL based manufacturer of wire and cable products, servicing the electrical, electronic and automotive markets. With extensive design and production capabilities, Coleman utilizes over 1 million square feet of manufacturing space in 13 facilities throughout the United States. Coleman Cable, Inc.'s distinct advantage is its relentless commitment to quality and service, complemented by its superior technical expertise. Through acquisitions in Canada and the U.S. in 2007, they have grown to employ about 1200 employees.

The Challenge – Increased Document Output Leveraging the IBM System i

With the size and expansion of the company, Coleman Cable generates a large volume of forms to process using their IBM System i (iSeries 400) 9406-MMA System, approximately 600-1000 invoices and 500 packing slips per day, along with a host of other documents including purchase orders, checks, shipment notices and return authorizations.

The old method the company used to print forms was dependent on cumbersome hardware. Coleman Programmer Jeff Peterson explains, "We had to deal with the expense of IPDS cards and then make sure we had printers that allowed us to use them." He continues, "We also had some old hardware like a burster that took up a lot of space."

Time was also an issue. Between mailing delays that resulted from waiting for the bursting of the company's invoice forms, to the sluggish response time when merging spool files onto documents for sales reps, Coleman realized they were wasting countless man and system resource hours.

"I found it easy to use. If you can use a standard Windows application like MS Word, then there is no learning curve since it's pretty much drag and drop."

Quadrant Software to the Rescue

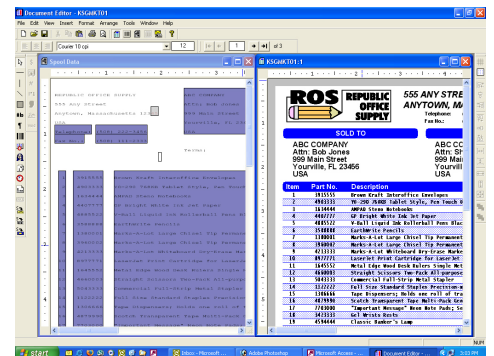
Coleman's vendor, IBM Business Partner 411 Solutions, discovered some outdated and under performing forms and spool file management software that Coleman was using. As a Quadrant Software Product Alliance Partner they were quick to recognize a perfect application for Quadrant Software's Formtastic package.

411 Solutions collaborated with Coleman Cable's IT team and they decided it was time to get rid of old hardware and software solutions they were using to generate documents from the iSeries. "They mentioned Quadrant Software because we used a document imaging solution to capture a lot of spool files and images out of our system," Peterson elaborates. "They told us that Formtastic played well with that solution, so we gave Formtastic a try."

The other motivating factor was Quadrant Software's long term status as an IBM Business partner and expertise in manufacturing environments and the IBM iSeries (AS400) platform.

The Solution – Quadrant Software's Formtastic and Formatter Software

After his project manager asked him to explore the solution, Peterson immediately became a Formtastic fan. "I found it easy to use. If you can use a standard Windows application like MS Word, then there is no learning curve since it's pretty much drag and drop. On the iSeries side of it, it was really user friendly as well."



Formtastic's dual-screen design GUI makes it easy to design forms and map spool data.

Following the quick implementation of Formtastic (about a week not counting time for approvals), the benefits on the business-side immediately made themselves known. The first three forms chosen to be replaced by Formtastic included invoices, purchase orders, and packing slips due to their high volume.

The process for Coleman works easily for producing these forms. It begins in Accounts Receivable, where they generate



Quadrant Software
120 Forbes Blvd.
Mansfield, MA 02048
Phone: 508-594-2700, Fax: 508-339-8380
Web: www.quadrantsoftware.com Email: quadrant@quadrantsoftware.com

the invoice and send it to a non-printing queue for a nightly routine that takes the invoices and merges it with the Formtastic invoice form and then sends it to an out queue that prints it on laser printers.

By printing on laser printers, Coleman Cable was able to eliminate the bursters. The company was also able to switch from costly IPDS cards and printers to the more universal PCL format for printing. Peterson knew Formtastic was the right choice, *"It did improve the business because it doesn't take as long to process invoices."*

Coleman Cable also has taken advantage of Formtastic's PDF module. The module allows the documents the company generates to be converted to PDF. For those customers who prefer electronic format, after the forms print, *"I have a nightly job that runs and picks up the PDF files Formtastic creates and it puts them on the Information File Server,"* Peterson adds. By converting the files to PDF, Coleman Cable is able to automate sending out those forms as emails saving significant printing and handling time.

"It did improve the business because it doesn't take as long to process invoices."

With the previous forms software the company used, Peterson was populating his Linux web server with different documents to make them available to sales reps. *"The major quirk was that it was really slow,"* explains Peterson. He continues, *"It would take hours to merge spool files, but then I decided to do that in Formtastic. It took a job that previously took the system hours to do, and did it in seconds."* Peterson goes further on, *"That's just because it didn't have to send out spool files across the network, since it sat natively on the IBM AS400. That's strength."*

Coleman Cable also paired Formtastic with Quadrant Software's Formatter solution. Formatter allows users to save

Innovation - Better Service to Customers Provides a Competitive Advantage

Formatter delivers the capability to look for data in database files and add it to the electronic form created in Formtastic. Peterson found this ability extremely useful when one of Coleman Cable's customers requested extra information on their packing slips. They wanted their warehouse bin location and number on the slips, that way they can quickly look at the SKU with a bin number next to it and send it to the correct place in the warehouse. The problem was the bin number was not part of the original spool file.

Formatter came to the rescue by being able to use the SKU number from the spool file to find the bin number in a separate database file and insert it in the electronic form without having to make any changes to their core ERP system. Coleman can now deliver a value-added service to their clients.

on printing costs by removing redundant information (such as headers and footers on multiple pages) or combining multiple lines as single lines. By doing this, document lengths can be cut by 50 – 75%, allowing for a significant reduction in paper usage.

Another aspect of Quadrant Software that made an impact on Peterson was the technical support hot line. *"The experience I've had with tech support of other companies is that they're either really good or they don't even want to deal with you. With Quadrant Software, they had immediate and expert response."* He further explains, *"One time I asked for a feature that Formtastic didn't support. They talked to their development team, and they sent me an update to make Formtastic do what I needed it to do."*

Future Expansion

Peterson plans to expand Coleman's use of Formtastic to include checks, shipment

notices, and return authorizations.

As Coleman Cable continues to grow, so does its volume of forms output. With the help of Formtastic, they were able to eliminate some of the elements that contributed to growing pains. The company now gets invoices delivered to customers faster realizing a positive impact on cash flow. Formtastic allowed Coleman to switch to cost effective and industry standard PCL for printing saving the expense of purchasing multipart forms. On top of all that, Coleman was able to better accommodate its customers by putting information they needed (but couldn't regularly get) on their packing slips without having to make changes to their core ERP system.

As the company expands one thing is for sure: Coleman Cable's innovative uses of Formtastic and Formatter will grow as well. Peterson's advice to anyone looking to new technology for forms output and management, *"I'd tell them that Formtastic and Formatter are good options. Look for something that integrates with document imaging systems, like Formtastic does, even if you don't need it now. It's something you will definitely want to utilize eventually."*



Contact Us Today

For more information on Quadrant Software Solutions, please call 508-594-2700 or E-Mail quadrant@quadrantsoftware.com

