

Case Study

The Economist Intelligence Unit
Business intelligence
Business Process Services

Ricoh outsourced service cuts costs by 20%, helps The Economist Group maintain brand reputation for high-profile EIU reports



Despite electronic information dissemination, many of the EIU's customers still need business intelligence reports in print format. Using Ricoh's outsourced service, the EIU

has cut print costs by 20 percent and maintained the high quality of its country reports, even for production print runs as small as 10 copies.

Executive summary

Name:	The Economist Intelligence Unit
Location:	London, UK
Size:	130 staff
Activity:	Business Intelligence

Challenges

- Managing the change from print to electronic information dissemination
- Maintain brand quality and service for customers that still need hardcopy printed reports

Solution

- Ricoh Business Process Services

Benefits

- Ricoh technology and outsourced service helps reduce costs by 20%
- Maintains a high-quality, cost-effective product, despite low print runs
- Delivers innovative ideas and processes to increase cost effectiveness and efficiency
- Helps protect EIU brand reputation for timely, well-presented business intelligence

Case Study The Economist Intelligence Unit

Challenges

The EIU (Economist Intelligence Unit) is the research and analysis division of The Economist Group, the sister company to *The Economist* newspaper. Created in 1946, it has nearly 70 years' experience in helping businesses, financial firms and governments to understand how the world is changing and how that creates opportunities to be seized and risks to be managed. The EIU is a British company which operates globally, serving clients across the world from 24 offices.

The EIU produces a number of country reports covering a wide range of economic, political and socio-demographic subjects. EIU customers - which include many leading businesses as well as universities and libraries - use EIU reports to inform decisions such as entering new market sectors, choosing which countries to open up new office locations and where best to invest.

While EIU reports increasingly are being disseminated electronically, there is still a considerable demand for hardcopy versions of reports which need to be printed and mailed out to customers. The EIU used to have its own in-house production print capability, but with the reduction in demand for printed content, this was becoming less viable. The EIU had started to outsource print work, but had been let down by suppliers in the past. It was looking for a reliable supplier to help the business now and in the future, to consolidate external suppliers and make the operation more efficient and cost effective. The EIU decided to work with Ricoh.

Gareth Owen, Production Manager, at the EIU, says, "Ricoh was chosen because of the quality of its service and value for money, but also the security it could offer in terms of having a reliable and fast backup capability should there be a problem and jobs need to be sent to an alternative Ricoh facility."



Solution

Ricoh is providing the EIU with a Managed Service to handle outsourced production and on-demand printing for all of the EIU's business-critical intelligence reports. The service is for high-quality, short-run printing using Ricoh's full-colour and mono digital printing technology.

From its regional print centre in Merstham, Surrey, Ricoh prints, finishes and packs around 120 different EIU reports every month. The reports - which are printed to the EIU special, near-A4 sized books - can range from 30 pages to over 100 pages. Print runs also vary significantly with some as small as just 10 copies through to around 50 items. The average turnaround time for a job is three days. For some of the reports, Ricoh also prints, labels and packs envelopes.

The items that Ricoh produces include the EIU's Country Reports, Country Risk Service, Country Forecasts, and Country Commerce. Ricoh also produces a number of ad-hoc, one-off white paper reports for the EIU.

The partnership with Ricoh enables the EIU to consolidate all of its business intelligence production print with one outsourced supplier, helping to increase value for money and efficiency, and reduce administration.

Benefits

Owen says, "EIU customers rely on the business intelligence we provide to make key business decisions, so it's important that they get our country reports on time and presented to a clean, clear and high-quality standard. The Ricoh outsourced service delivers that, but it does it in an efficient, cost effective, highly responsive and flexible way."

One of the main challenges for EIU has been managing the change from print to electronic information dissemination. The Ricoh service has enabled the EIU to continue to provide its customers with printed reports when required, as well as maintaining its reputation for quality. Ricoh's digital printing technology ensures that high-quality production is maintained, but still has the flexibility to print very short runs without increasing costs.

Ricoh is also helping to improve costs further. It has worked closely with the EIU to standardise a number of components across the various different reports. For example, a number of reports use pre-printed, full colour covers. Report titles are overprinted on the cover, so that the whole job is done in mono rather than full colour, but the customer still gets a high-quality product. The Ricoh service also allows the EIU to reduce waste by ordering the exact number of copies required instead of estimated ordering.

continued overleaf

Case Study The Economist Intelligence Unit

These kinds of innovative cost-saving and process improvement initiatives by Ricoh, along with the flexibility to produce what is needed, when it is needed, are helping the EIU to reduce its report printing costs by up to 20 percent.

EIU reports use a lot of graphs and images to present complex economic information and these need to be reproduced accurately and sharply. Although Ricoh is able to pre-print EIU-branded front covers for saddle-stitch reports under 60 pages, on perfect-bound reports with a higher pagination, every front cover is printed at the same time as the report. So matching brand colours, especially for large areas of block colour, is very important. Equally, customers often build up a library of reports and they expect each report colour to be the same.

Another aspect of the Ricoh service that the EIU appreciates is Ricoh's proactivity and responsiveness. Because of its in-depth understanding of the EIU, Ricoh will stop and check when it spots something that does not look right, rather than just ploughing on. Even if there is a mistake once completed, because the cost of each job has been kept low, it is much more cost-effective to re-print.

Ricoh Solution/Products

- Ricoh digital colour print technology

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