Better Together: Avanti Slingshot® + RICOH ProcessDirector™

Keeping Pace With Changing Needs & Opportunities

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Without a doubt, you have heard and likely experienced the benefits of automation in your print operation—more throughput, fewer manual touches of each job, fewer opportunities for mistakes and increased access to data. With so many automation solutions available, each with slightly different features or focus, it can be challenging to see how they fit together, without leaving some gap in the workflow, overlapping tasks or running into limitations that one software package may place on another when they are integrated.

Fortunately, none of those challenges describe the super-charged integration of Avanti Slingshot® and RICOH ProcessDirector™.

Linking the end-to-end control and visibility of Avanti Slingshot's print business MIS with RICOH ProcessDirector's powerful production automation and data collection capabilities creates a combined tool greater than the sum of its parts.

Whether you are already using one or the other or you are considering implementing both in an overhaul of your print workflow, Avanti Slingshot and RICOH ProcessDirector truly are better together.

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Avanti Slingshot and RICOH ProcessDirector

How Avanti Slingshot Makes RICOH ProcessDirector Even Better

If you are already using RICOH ProcessDirector to automate your production process, you know it includes powerful tools that allow you to:

» Create customizable workflows to control and automate repetitive jobs

» Eliminate manual touch points in the production process

» Collect essential data for reporting and auditing in the transactional print arena

» Collect status data about each job at each step in the production process

» Collect data about device performance, materials usage and time spent for each job

» Connect with all brands of hardware through vendor-neutral and scalable design

Each of those is a benefit worth accessing on its own; when combined, those features help print businesses achieve 100 percent output integrity, reduce costs, eliminate errors, increase productivity and, by doing so, increase profitability.

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Avanti Slingshot and RICOH ProcessDirector

But when RICOH ProcessDirector's data collection capabilities are paired with an end-to-end print business MIS like Avanti Slingshot, that data becomes a powerful tool for enhancing customer relations and making critical business decisions, and Avanti's estimating and job entry capabilities allow RICOH ProcessDirector to accept incoming jobs with minimal manual intervention—sometimes none at all—speeding up prepress processes, allowing you to take on more work and keeping printers running continuously.

Adding Avanti Slingshot to RICOH ProcessDirector provides integration with the business end of job input and tracking, linking each job in the system from order to invoice. Jobs can start in Avanti Slingshot, through either an estimate and order process or a web-to-print (W2P) portal, or they can be accepted directly by RICOH ProcessDirector through an FTP connection for regular contracted work, in which case RICOH ProcessDirector transfers the job information back to Avanti upon receipt to develop the job ticket tracking that will bring all data about that job together.

Avanti keeps job information embedded in its system to make order, production, cost, scheduling, completion and billing data all available in a single location, without requiring manual transfer between systems. It also links that information directly to customer records when using Avanti's advanced customer relationship management (CRM) module. For existing RICOH ProcessDirector customers, the addition of Avanti Slingshot provides powerful analysis and visibility of business data and costs to drive business decisions.

The transfer of jobs from Avanti Slingshot to RICOH ProcessDirector can be automated using rules to fit your preferred workflow, with flexibility for every option from sending W2P orders directly into production without any human intervention at all to rules that would hold orders in Avanti's scheduling module until the devices are ready to receive them or even manually sending each job from Avanti if you have a reason for that level of manual control. This flexibility lets you choose the best way to schedule printing among your devices and can also integrate with additional solutions such as RICOH TotalFlow BatchBuilder™ to maximize the advantages of automating your print processes.

This direct transfer of job details from the order entry system (Avanti Slingshot) to the production automation system (RICOH ProcessDirector) eliminates manual entry, saving time and reducing the risk of errors. As your print shop's volume grows with hundreds of jobs potentially coming in each day, you can't afford for your staff to touch every one of those jobs. With the combination of Avanti Slingshot and RICOH ProcessDirector, they won't.

RICOH ProcessDirector and Avanti Slingshot

How RICOH ProcessDirector Makes Avanti Slingshot Even Better

If you are already using Avanti Slingshot, you understand the benefits of end-to-end automation of your business processes, providing a single dashboard view of jobs and eliminating manual transfers of information from estimating software to job tickets to invoices and replacing manual management of inventory, scheduling and more.

Are you already using Avanti Slingshot to:

» Prepare consistent estimates and transition them directly into sales orders and job tickets?

» Stay on top of inventory with automated reordering and tracking?

» Integrate with major shipping services to automatically transfer information for packing slips and labels?

» Or access the advanced modules that integrate billing, charge-backs, direct mail management, a CRM and more into a single source of information?

Now imagine if you could access even more of your production data from that single source of information.

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RICOH ProcessDirector and Avanti Slingshot

If you already use Avanti Slingshot, integrating it with RICOH ProcessDirector allows you to harness the data being collected through each step of the production process and use it to improve business operations by calculating costs and profitability, tallying inventory used and tracking jobs in real time without manual input. Combining the two provides a single source of truth for all business functions.

Data that flows from RICOH ProcessDirector back into Avanti's system, linked directly to the job, customer and devices used, include:

» **Up-to-date access to job status** for customer service representatives (CSRs): Know exactly where a job is to track how it is meeting SLAs, receive a notification when a job is complete and automatically transfer the completed job to accounts receivable for invoicing.

» **Actual production data:** Track actual costs for labor and materials, which can be compared to estimated and budgeted costs to improve estimating and inform business decisions, all without the need for manual entry.

» **Materials/inventory updates:** Automatically update inventory levels based on actual usage, including ink usage on select devices, rather than relying on manual entry or "best guesses" to trigger reorders.

Avanti Slingshot's customizable modules can also consolidate data from additional steps outside of RICOH ProcessDirector workflows, integrating the entire process from order entry to finishing, delivery and invoicing. Modules such as Shop Floor Data Collection even integrate labor costs for handwork that occurs outside of automated systems, such as special folding or binding to ensure that all costs have been accounted for when the job is complete.

With real-time production data from RICOH ProcessDirector at your fingertips—automatically fed into Avanti's business MIS system as a single source of truth—you can compare estimated, budgeted and actual costs to determine which products and customers are most profitable, uncover costs that your estimating may not be accounting for and make decisions about future business investments or changes.

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Connecting the Dots

Connecting the Dots Between Avanti Slingshot and RICOH ProcessDirector

Avanti Slingshot and RICOH ProcessDirector's use of industry-standard data exchange formats—JDF and JMF (Job Definition Format and Job Messaging Format)—makes effective integration possible. In essence, they speak the same language.

With integration licensing from each vendor, the core system offerings from each have everything needed to work together at a basic level; additional modules and mapping can be implemented to share more complex data between the two systems to fit individual print shop needs.

Because both solutions are vendor-agnostic, you don't have to change the hardware or other software solutions you are already using. Both Avanti Slingshot and RICOH ProcessDirector can integrate with other solutions that use JDF and JMF, such as RICOH TotalFlow BatchBuilder™.

It doesn't matter which solution you may be using first—each enhances the other and builds on the intentional flexibility of both software packages without limiting the abilities of the other.

If you are implementing both Avanti Slingshot and RICOH ProcessDirector at the same time, that implementation period is a perfect time to closely examine all workflows you currently have in place and align the systems from the beginning, but if not, Avanti can still pick up on existing RICOH ProcessDirector workflows, and RICOH ProcessDirector workflows can be mapped to send the essential information needed to an existing Avanti system.

Conclusion

When two systems connect as seamlessly and completely as Avanti Slingshot and RICOH ProcessDirector, you can eliminate manual touch points and bottlenecks, increase productivity and allow your business to take on more work with confidence.

It can be difficult to see the opportunities within a workflow you are intimately familiar with, which is why Avanti Slingshot offers workflow evaluations to help print shop owners take an objective look at their current operations, assessing how many manual touches each job receives without automation and the cost associated with each touch point. Schedule a no-obligation workflow evaluation today to see how automation, including the combined power of Avanti Slingshot and RICOH ProcessDirector, can eliminate bottlenecks and errors, free up staff for customer-centric tasks and move more jobs through your plant more quickly to provide opportunities for growth.

We'd love to show you how Avanti Slingshot, RICOH ProcessDirector and your business are better together.

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At Avanti, a Ricoh Company, our goal is to help you deliver more jobs, in less time, with the confidence in knowing that every aspect of your shop is integrated into one powerful platform.

Award-winning, JDF-certified Avanti Slingshot® allows for the sophistication required by today's Print and Marketing Services Providers. The platform is able to manage multiple lines of business, handle large/grand format, digital and offset print, as well as mail and fulfillment workflows.

Connect islands of automation, eliminate breakpoints in your workflow and get the information you want – when you want it, and where you want it – easily, with Avanti Slingshot®.

From order entry through to production and billing, Avanti Slingshot® enables you to work more efficiently, control your costs and move more jobs through the shop.