

On-demand printing with HP Color LaserJet 9500 printer score big in service and savings for Toronto Blue Jays

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“When we were searching for a solution to our season ticket printing problem, HP came forward and delivered a top-quality HP Color LaserJet printer that has enabled us to provide an outstanding level of customer service to our very deserving season ticket holders. In addition, it has saved us 54 percent of our printing budget – it’s like hitting a home run!”

– Jacques Farand, Director, Information Systems Technology, Toronto Blue Jays

In 1992 and 1993, the Toronto Blue Jays made history by being the first Canadian baseball team to win two consecutive World Series Championships. While in recent years the players seem to be in a bit of a jam as the team struggles to regain its winning streak, Blue Jays fans remain extremely loyal.

“The fact is, the Blue Jays are the first Canadian team to win any world series and are a first-class sports organization,” stated Paul Godfrey, Blue Jays President and CEO. “In baseball, ticket revenue is your top source of income, and season ticket holders are your number one source for ticket revenue. If you don’t have good customer service, you’re going to lose out.”

Foul territory

In 2000, the Blue Jays found themselves in foul territory with its season ticket holders. The franchise would estimate the number of season tickets for a season and then outsource the printing and fulfillment of season tickets.

“The problem was that we had no control of what was happening at the commercial printer,” reflected Jacques Farand, Director of Information Systems Technology for the Toronto Blue Jays. “The customers would receive their tickets at the very last minute, which always caused lots of problems for us from a customer service point of view.”

He elaborated, “If a customer requested a different set of seats or wanted to change locations, we had to send the change request to the commercial printer and wait at least two weeks to receive the new tickets. Often we wouldn’t get the original tickets back so there would be two sets of tickets in circulation. Outsourcing our season ticket printing meant we had little flexibility to meet the changing needs of the fans.”

In the strike zone

Farand first learned of the team’s season ticket fulfillment issues when he joined the Blue Jays in 2002.

“When people spend their money upfront, they expect their tickets to arrive in a quick and reasonable period of time. For whatever reason, we just couldn’t deliver that,” he said. “I had to find a way to produce a ticket supply that would satisfy these precious customers because we could ill afford to lose their business. I wanted to handle season ticket printing and fulfillment more efficiently, and without all the constraints of a commercial printer.”

Winning season line-up

Farand contacted HP and it suggested an on-demand, in-house printing solution with software developed by the Blue Jays IT staff and the HP Color LaserJet 9500 printer, which creates superior image quality, colour and gloss consistency. This high-speed printer provides uniform colour and enhanced print quality without sacrificing print speed.

“HP invited us to test print some tickets, in fact they were output on a variety of HP printers to determine the optimal



At a glance

- **Organization:** Toronto Blue Jays, owned by Rogers Communications, Inc.
- **Headquarters:** Toronto, Canada
- **Founded:** Club established in late 1976 – first season of play was in 1977.
- **Telephone:** 416-341-1000
- **URL:** www.bluejays.com

device – based on quality, paper and print speed – to meet our needs. Once we selected the device and paper, we showed the printed samples to our senior management at the Blue Jays and they whole heartedly supported our decision. We immediately purchased an HP Color LaserJet 9500 printer and purchased another one shortly thereafter. A number of different paper types were tested until HP and The Blue Jays agreed on the best paper stock for the tickets,” reflected Farand.

“We were surprised that the printer could produce such high quality on such a high volume of printing,” he added. “From the first page we printed to the 200,000th page, the quality is identical and flawless.”

Batting 1000 on benefits

The on-demand printing solution with the HP Color LaserJet 9500 printer reduced season ticket production time from weeks to mere hours, and significantly decreased costs.

“In-house season ticket printing has saved 54 percent of our production costs from previous years. Plus, if we have last-minute changes or corrections, the reprint costs are now marginal,” Farand noted. “In-house printing is so much more efficient – in terms of costs, time and flexibility.”

He went on to point out other benefits. “We can customize advertising on the tickets. If advertisers want to promote

a certain event, now we can put their logos on the appropriate tickets. We also now print bar codes on the tickets, which enables us to control entry into the stadium. If tickets are lost or stolen, we can reprint with new bar codes to prevent duplicate entry.”

When the Blue Jays outsourced season ticket printing, the tickets were printed and then assembled in a pad format. The tickets would be torn out individually, which was often awkward and sloppy.

“Now we print four tickets on 8½ x 11-inch sheets,” Farand remarked. “We also print two VIP cards, personalized with the customer’s name on them. I’m really excited about the quality of our new tickets and the positive feedback they have received from our season ticket holders.”

Winning streak

Looking ahead, Farand is considering expanding the Blue Jays’ in-house printing to include the team’s other marketing material – which might include posters, calendars and pocket schedules.

Farand concluded, “When we were searching for a solution to our season ticket printing problem, HP came forward and delivered a top-quality HP Color LaserJet printer that has enabled us to provide an outstanding level of customer service to our very deserving season ticket holders. In addition, it has saved us 54 percent of our printing budget – it’s like hitting a home run!”

Challenges

- Improve fulfillment and distribution of season tickets.
- Reduce cost of outsourced season ticket printing.
- Enable flexibility in ticket packaging.
- Facilitate ability to make last-minute changes to season tickets.

Solution

- Print tickets in-house on 2 HP Color LaserJet 9500hdn printers.
- Software developed in-house by Blue Jays IT staff.

Results

- Reduced production time from weeks to a matter of hours.
- Lowered printing costs of season tickets 54 percent.
- Improved quality.
- Increased packaging flexibility.
- Gained better security via bar codes.

For more information on how working with HP can benefit you, contact your local HP sales representative, or visit us through the Internet at our world wide web address: www.hp.com

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