With Lexmark’s printers and consulting services, MERKUR was able to simplify workflows, reduce the amount of paper used, and reduce its operating costs in its 117 stores.


The Organization
MERKUR has 117 stores and is one of the most successful supermarkets in Austria. REWE International has some 9,000 employees, making it one of the country’s biggest employers. MERKUR sees ‘always searching for the best solution’ and sustainable entrepreneurship as fundamental values that it also expects its business partners to have.

Some 2,000 m² sales space with over 20,000 products at each store and an award-winning store design make shopping for the stores’ more than 1.3 million customers a week a unique experience. As a marketplace and experience store, MERKUR offers its customers a wide range of high-quality products and makes shopping fun.

The Challenge
Managing such a varied product offering is a complex undertaking that involves complex processes and a lot of paper. To handle these tasks, the company needed a fast and versatile printer, a so-called multifunctional device. MERKUR was using printers of various brands and had a number of different photocopying and fax machines. Most of the processes were manual. To print efficiently and cost effectively, the company’s output management needed to be reorganised by professionals.

In 2005, MERKUR knew something had to be done: A legal change was to be introduced in 2006/2007 that required registering new employees with national insurance on their first day of employment. ‘That wasn’t possible with the current hardware,’ says Helga Gartner, Organisational manager at MERKUR and project manager. ‘Some of the forms were incomplete and the quality of the scans wasn’t high enough because there were no automatic settings.’ A standard workflow was needed that accelerated the flow of information to HR and guaranteed that the quality of the scans and printouts was good. The workflow would also have to be implemented to report people sick.

But automating the processes was not the only challenge. The printer landscape also had to be simplified: multifunctional printers were to be used instead of fax and photocopying machines.

“The subsidiaries would have done anything to keep the Lexmark printers. They were so much quieter than their predecessors. They printed in duplex, sorted, stapled and scanned, and they were fast too.”

Helga Gartner
Organisational manager at MERKUR, project manager
Success Story

MERKUR, a REWE International company

“The before and after effect is incredible.
We save time and have reduced costs,
we’ve streamlined processes and we’ve eliminated a stress factor.”

– Helga Gartner

The Solution

MERKUR was recently looking for an effective and environmentally friendly way of optimising its output management and different workflows, and found the perfect partner in Lexmark.

REWE International AG, which owns the BILLA, MERKUR, PENNY, BIPA and ADEG companies in Austria, has been working with Lexmark since 1995-1996. This collaboration consists of installing about 1,000 office laser devices at each subsidiary. The printers are replaced every three years. REWE International AG started working with Lexmark after installing a specific application. REWE was looking for devices that were compatible with the software.

‘It was important that the printers could accurately reproduce the shade of green we use in our logo,’ Helga Gartner remembers. Despite the positive experiences with Lexmark, MERKUR set up a complex selection procedure for the optimisation project. Three manufacturers were invited to tender. Two were considered worth taking a closer look at based on the quality and size of their devices. In 2006, two test subsidiaries were equipped with the new Lexmark T644 models. They were used for a year. Between 350,000 and 400,000 sheets of paper were printed before a decision was made.

The Results

Lexmark analysed MERKUR’s printer requirements for almost a year and worked out a strategic concept explaining how output management could be further optimised. ‘We quickly determined that a lot of savings could be achieved with the paper alone,’ says Amin Belbeisi, Key Account Manager PSSD at Lexmark. Lexmark estimated that the annual savings potential would be over 30 per cent.

But in order to achieve that number, the two partners still had to implement specific workflows at the different subsidiaries, in particular in the area of scanning and dispatching. ‘We had to change direction, but all of a sudden things went very well,’ explains Belbeisi. ‘The collaboration was very positive, even in the most challenging phases. Everyone involved was dedicated to advancing the project.’

Gartner believes: ‘Our contacts at Lexmark were very professional and the support we received was always excellent.’ At the beginning of 2008, all of the subsidiaries had been switched to the new system and the employees had all been trained.

MERKUR is still very happy with Lexmark’s solution. ‘The paper savings estimate was even slightly exceeded,’ says Gartner. ‘We not only effectively saved costs, we also saved a small piece of forest.’

Thanks to the positive experience at MERKUR, more projects with REWE International are almost certain to happen. ‘The before and after effect is incredible. We save time and have reduced costs, we’ve streamlined processes and we’ve eliminated a stress factor,’ summarises Gartner.