

# ONLINE EXCLUSIVE: Picture Perfect: Embroidery Company Expands After Implementation of Document-Imaging Software

*Adam Madison*

When a manufacturer's market is good, the only thing standing in the way of significant growth could be its ability to fulfill orders. If these orders are being managed on paper, a company could be light years off.

Antigua Group, an Arizona-based custom embroidery company, explains how the company doubled in size with the help of reliable document-imaging software. The company has its roots in golf and is

most known for casual business attire. Antigua now has grown to have more than 5,000 corporate clients and maintains license agreements with Major League Baseball, ESPN, the NCAA and several other professional sports organizations. This might not be possible if it were not for the implementation of a software program, said Director of Information Technology Chris Devous.

Before Antigua installed iSynergy, a Web-based application developed by iDatix, packing slips were printed first and hand-delivered to a production floor about the size of a football stadium. The slips waited on large tables in sorted stacks, sometimes a foot high. Meanwhile, people scurried about trying to match packing slips to shirts. After that, there was a labor-intensive process of double-checking to ensure every item was shipped to the correct location.

"It was pretty scary," Devous said. "I don't know how they did it."



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Today, all of this is managed through electronically generated PDFs, which employees consult at computer terminals. The worker finds the appropriate garment, matches it to an unfulfilled order and prints the ticket for shipping. It is a much more efficient process, he said. This simple solution effectively cut man-hours in half. However, this is not a success story that sent workers into the unemployment line. In fact, Antigua preserved those jobs because its business grew so substantially as a result, Devous said.

Antigua's growth also is attributed to a surge in e-commerce. Displaced sports fans now can order their home team's shirt from anywhere in the United States, he said. Even better, with the efficiencies built into the system, Antigua can guarantee that order will be shipped within three days. Devous said Antigua's ability to respond quickly during peak demands, such as holidays, helps separate it from the competition.

iSynergy also has simplified document management within customer service and credit departments, and Antigua has begun ridding itself of file cabinets. With imaging software, customer files can be maintained electronically to increase convenience and accessibility. These files always are available to personnel computers that meet the right security requirements. Antigua restricts access from outside computers, but iSynergy could be programmed to allow remote access. No longer do employees have to leave their offices to retrieve files or wait if one has been checked out. A built-in search function also aids the process.

A key is to be sure that enough server space is available to store all of the necessary documents. Devous said Antigua started seeing system warning alerts as disk space was filled. The company never anticipated accumulating so many orders and files. It now has a routine process to archive unneeded material. Failure to remove extraneous files could have resulted in a system crash, he said.

Antigua also backs up all critical documents each night. It's better to be safe than sorry, but the system never has failed since it was installed nearly a decade ago. Paper, however, is easily lost or damaged.

Despite the obvious advantages, some companies are reluctant to make the leap from paper to PDF. Devous said some users are easily intimidated because there are so many options on the market. Confusing the situation further is a vast price range of products, and consumers don't want to guess. He said Antigua truly got lucky with iSynergy and admits he relied on the referral from corporate partner Toshiba Business Solutions.

"As an IT director, I like things that just work and leave me alone," Devous said. "I don't have to fight it, and I get good support from my vendor."

iSynergy and similar software was once thought to be exclusive to paper-intensive industries such as mortgage firms or hospitals. Now, manufacturers take these programs to entirely new levels, said Janet Bryant, iDatix director of corporate development. Some go so far as to run entire production lines with iSynergy as a platform. The electronic documents follow precise sequences and store data pertaining to the production process. This information can help identify bottlenecks and instantly check the status of goods in production. Assembly lines relying on written instructions are replacing textbook-sized manuals with iPads. And unlike paper, the information cannot be lost, Bryant said.

The ability to leverage technology in a fast-paced market of impatient consumers has played a key role in Antigua's success. But if it had failed to act as the technologies evolved, the company's revenue easily could have taken a turn in the opposite direction.