



CASE STUDY

Biochemical Manufacturer Reduces Costs and Keeps Reliable SAP Print Management

A leading chemical company selected the VPSX® solution to reliably print vast amounts of SAP generated documents and labels within short timeframes. By using the VPSX software on the AIX platform, they eliminated all need for z/OS-based software, recovering more than \$300,000 in annual costs.



SIGMA-ALDRICH

ORGANIZATION

Sigma Chemical Company (Sigma) is the world leader in producing biochemicals, including antibiotics, buffers, carbohydrates, enzymes, forensic tools, hematology and histology, nucleotides, proteins, peptides, amino acids, etc., used in basic life science research.

Located in St. Louis, Missouri, this specialty chemicals manufacturer sells primarily to pharmaceutical companies, research universities, and a variety of other types of life sciences companies around the world.

GLOBAL SAP PRINTING ENVIRONMENT

The day-to-day rigors of a specialty chemicals maker necessitate the use of many business critical documents. Sigma had come to rely on their VPS® mainframe solution from Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc. to manage delivery and printing of large amounts of pick tickets, packing slips, restricted article forms, invoices, bills, certificates of analysis, material safety data sheets, and so on.

In an effort to eliminate the z/OS platform and those business applications, Sigma invested in SAP applications. They deployed more than 30 AIX servers to support their SAP manufacturing and other modules.

Sigma's St. Louis helpdesk traditionally dealt with mainframe printing. Now, they serve as the point of contact (central point of control) for all printing issues. John Hunter, team lead and VPS administrator, explains, "We support 3,000 SAP users in North America, South America, Asia, and Australia. We manage around 600 printers distributed across those regions." Hunter adds, "Zebra label printers are practically everywhere, with about 95% of our printing coming from SAP applications."

NEED FOR RELIABLE PRINTING

Sigma manufactures hundreds of thousands of specialty chemical products. Each product requires customized product documentation as well as product and shipping labels, and a variety of necessary logistics documents and certificates.

Sigma ships the majority of their products via overnight delivery service to their customers (ensuring peak readiness). When a product is ready, Sigma has a small window of time in which to print all required product information and necessary labeling, as well as documents for regulatory compliance and product transportation. Sigma relies heavily on their print capabilities, because if these documents do not print on time, then the products do not ship and Sigma is not paid.

The Sigma team quickly learned that they could not depend on the native AIX print facilities to reliably process and print their SAP and other documents. They decided to route all SAP output to their trusted VPS solution on the mainframe, ensuring that their business critical documents reliably print.

GETTING RESULTS

The Sigma team knew the kind of capabilities and functionality that they needed. With a requirement for AIX software, they investigated IBM's Infoprint Server only to find that IBM recommends dedicating one full time employee to keeping it running smoothly. Hunter's VPS experience suggested that normal operations should require only a small fraction of a person's time. They also noted that Infoprint Server lacked an SAP certified output management interface.

Sigma was already impressed with LRS' product reliability, support, excellent relationship, etc. Hunter notes, "We talked to LRS about developing a Unix solution years ago; so we were eager to be a beta customer." Sigma tested and chose the VPSX output management solution for their AIX platform.

They quickly placed VPSX into production. "We transparently switched our straightforward SAP printing. Some of the specialty printing required the use of filters, which were easy to write and test. Overall, users noticed very little during these changes," explained Hunter.

The VPSX solution now centrally manages large amounts of business

"I can write a script using any command(s) and invoke it as a filter in VPSX. I've already created a simple script to send files to another location using the FTP command."

— John Hunter, Sigma Chemical Company
Team Lead and VPS Administrator

critical printing, ensuring document delivery to a variety of printers while keeping thousands of users informed about their jobs. The solution's easy-to-use browser based interface provides a single place to view and manage output generated on more than 30 AIX servers and delivered to 600 printers located around the world.

Furthermore, the Sigma team has not had a significant printing issue since putting their new VPSX solution into production. Hunter adds, "The VPSX solution provides us with the same assured delivery and more. With the VPSX solution in place, we can take advantage of even more capabilities in a second phase of improvements."

Hunter is now considering use of VPSX encryption to protect print data sent to printers outside their network.

THE VPSX SOLUTION

The VPSX output management solution enables Sigma to:

- Establish a central point of control over hundreds of distributed network printers
- Provide assured document delivery
- Enable proactive job and device status notifications
- Send legacy reports via email
- Incorporate command based processes or invoke optional document transforms
- Protect documents delivered outside of their networks using encryption
- Efficiently manage worldwide print operation from a browser
- Manage SAP printing (with optional SAP certified interface)

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