



ishipdocs Fulfills Need for Time-Critical Document Printing Worldwide

Document drop-box services abound, but with rare exception, none deals with the essential issue of what happens to those files at the receiving end. For architects who need to get drawings to a construction site halfway around the world – or across the country, or for exhibitors who need to get updated trade show booth signage to a convention center – simply sending files is not good enough. What’s needed is a certified service bureau, capable of printing large drawings, trade show banners, or even business cards and delivering them to the local destination, all in a very short time span. This is the idea behind *ishipdocs*, powered by California based American Reprographics.

ishipdocs is a secure Web-based file distribution and fulfillment service leveraging the power of cloud computing. Implemented as a proprietary SAAS (software as a service) solution, *ishipdocs* requires no software to be installed on either the document sender’s or output provider’s computers. This end-to-end system creates a comprehensive digital content distribution and fulfillment service that encompasses a network of professional Print Service Providers (PSP) and business partners worldwide. Though it’s common practice for print shops to accept orders through an FTP site or receive them as e-mail attachments, rarely do they offer a mechanism for tracking jobs beyond their on-the-cheap, Web-to-print approach. What sets *ishipdocs* apart is that



CAPTION

it is all about digital workflow and finishing the job, including printing and distribution.

More than 400 fulfillment locations have been certified in 55 countries with another handful added in late September, according to Mahil Maurice, *ishipdocs*' Senior Product Manager of Global Services. Certification isn't easy. To achieve it, PSPs must demonstrate a breadth of printing and finishing competencies on their in-house repro equipment. *ishipdocs*' certification of an ever-increasing roster of output partners sets it far apart from mere drop-box services. For an architectural firm sending critical drawings, knowing that a competent printing firm has already been located and vetted eliminates what could otherwise become a project-stopping bottleneck.

That scenario of a hypothetical bottleneck running for days became very real earlier this year. When

A ShoreThing/ishipdocs

(continued)

Iceland's Eyjafjallajökull volcano erupted in March 2010, the majority of news coverage focused on air-travel disruptions and stranded tourists. Left unsaid was the fate of cargo – perishables spoiling on airport tarmacs and engineering drawings sitting in limbo for weeks, leading to potentially massive and costly construction delays. *ishipdocs* avoided these setbacks, allowing projects to continue without interruption.

CLEAN DESIGN, EASY NAVIGATION

A major problem with many online applications is their abysmal screen design and user workflow. Fortunately, *ishipdocs* has avoided this fate.

Logging into *ishipdocs* wisely brings the user directly to the create new order screen – no need to click on “create order.” Again, smart design keeps everything needed for placing an order on this single screen. Project ID, purchase order number, delivery date and time occupy the top portion of the screen. Below that is a button to attach files. Next is a button labeled “View destinations where *ishipdocs* jobs can be sent.” Clicking it pops up the PSP country list. Hover over a nation's flag and *ishipdocs* lists cities containing PSPs. A PSP search function is also available, as are a world clock and currency converter. An embedded text editor allows entry of detailed delivery and printing instructions.

From the Order History screen, orders can be tracked by job number, and e-mail or text messages can be sent or viewed. Similarly, recap status information, such as “Delivery Completed” is available without the need to drill down. Greater detail, however, is instantly available by clicking on a button featuring a truck image. Order history is searchable on five different parameters and can also be exported in Excel or CSV (comma-separated values) file formats.

It is evident that a lot of thought has gone into screen design and keeping the *ishipdocs* experience simple. Unlike SAAS or cloud-based solutions that offer up overwhelmingly dense, difficult to navigate screens, those in *ishipdocs* are clearly laid out, use simple graphics, and contain enough “air” to avoid looking crowded. Paradoxically, building a system that is sim-

ple for users is hard work for developers. The clean design and clear workflow of *ishipdocs* is exemplary.

IN THE FIELD

At San Francisco based URS Corp., one of the world's largest engineering, construction and technical services firms, Document Control Specialist Racquel Rivera has slashed delivery times and no longer spends money on overnight couriers.

In charge of the thousands of documents for a major medical center construction project, Rivera is leveraging the power of *ishipdocs* to eliminate the time lags associated with traditional methods of document printing and distribution. “When I need something to be done right away, *ishipdocs* lets me upload files, specify exactly what we need in terms of number of copies, size, finishing, and then direct the job to a destination I choose and trust. For me, this is fast and efficient, and I can keep track of everything in one place.”

For a major Seattle based architectural firm, that efficiency was critical for the zoo it was building in Dubai. In just one 48-hour period, the firm transmitted 1,400 plans and 1,500 specification sheets, for about \$20,000. By turning to *ishipdocs*, it avoided the logistical nightmare and expense of printing, packaging, and shipping hard copies.

Today's mega-construction projects can carry a price tag easily topping a billion dollars. The shipment of physical drawings to Dubai or China via the major international courier services, a process that can take up to four days, including time for clearing customs, is no longer acceptable. Even domestically, the traditional overnight process of shipping updated drawings, trade show banners, or other documents is no longer fast enough. Taking the idea of the drop-box to its logical conclusion with certified output partners that can handle files ranging up to several gigabytes in size, *ishipdocs* is fast on its way to becoming a standard in the architectural and engineering industries. 🔴

Consulting analyst Joel Shore is an expert in document-centric and color-managed workflows, electronic document management, and archival photographic printing.