Case Study

Alba Energy Recoups Substantial Time and Labor with Print Automation

Alba Energy is a Texas-based solar panel installer serving the residential and commercial markets. The company has been in business for five years and employs over 50 experienced professionals.

Challenge

Mastering solar PV labels requires a good amount of industry experience and diligence. Like many small businesses, Alba Energy has learned some tough lessons regarding proper labeling. Take code requirements, for example.

"The national electrical code requires certain labels to be used," explains Design Manager Frank Merola. "Then, the jurisdiction will have its own requirements. It's difficult to capture all that information with the limited labels we're using. We'd send the crew down, thinking the labels met all requirements. But sometimes, we'd have to send a crew or tech back out with corrected labels."

Driving three hours to fix a labeling issue is bad enough. But with improper labeling during inspection, says Merola, "the inspector fails you and the system has to remain shut down. It could be another two weeks to get the inspection, which is terrible news for the customer."

Merola adds, "On top of that, we went from purchasing labels online – which was inefficient for several reasons – to printing our own. But opening all those label jobs one at a time was tedious. There were weeks it was tough to find the time to print them, so I'd have to come in on the weekends."

Solution

At an industry show, Merola saw HellermannTyton's print automation demo. That was all he needed to implement the solution at Alba.

"Todd at HellermannTyton walked me through the setup. We use one printer, so I send batches according to the label size loaded in the printer. On the 1-inch stock, I print six or seven individual labels per job, one of which gets printed 10 times. On the 2-inch stock, I have another four labels. The AC disconnect label is unique to each job."

Merola explains how he outputs all these different labels that used to be opened and printed individually. **"All my labels are saved in one file. I select print and enter the quantity. It's that easy."**

An optional barcode reader can enhance the efficiency of print automation.

Result

"For one thing," Merola says, "I don't have to come in on weekends anymore just to print batches of labels." In fact, he believes print automation has cut his printing time in half. But that's not the most significant boost that's got him excited.

"At the top of my wish list was increasing our volume. We've literally doubled our capacity. And I firmly believe print automation is directly responsible."

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More

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HellermannTyton North America
Phone: (414) 355-1130 • Fax: (414) 355-7341
email: corp@htamericas.com • **www.hellermann.tyton.com**