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Company of the Month: We need twenty sets of plans...tomorrow: Buckaplan simplifies the reprographic industry as we know it

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We need 20 sets of plans...tomorrow. Buckaplan simplifies the reprographic industry as we know it. Sound familiar?

It's been a long afternoon. The phone has been ringing off the hook. Your inbox is overflowing with unread messages. You barely made time to scarf down your lunch.

Defeated, you click the "save" button and hear your computer process the weeks of the time and effort that you have put into producing this impeccable set of drawings. Through strained eyes, you realize that the clock is fast approaching 4:30 p.m., as a small wave of panic begins to swell in your chest.

These plans are embarking on a one-way trip from your hard drive to your client's desk in Kansas City. As the standard "close of business" hour creeps closer, you are suddenly faced with the all too familiar procrastinator's challenge of printing and shipping today to hit tomorrow's looming deadline.

Enter: Buckaplan, a subsidiary of Waterbury, Connecticut-based Universal Copy, specializing in reproduction and overnight delivery of standard-size, high quality design and construction documents.

"We can handle it - no problem," reassures Brian Burke, president of Buckaplan. "This is what we do."

The Concept

Buckaplan, produces copies of construction documents, architectural drawings, maps, renderings and specifications in a variety of sizes, specializing in large format printing up to 36" x 48." Buckaplan provides these document reproduction services to contractors, subcontractors, engineers, architects, real estate brokers and developers - all for only one dollar per plan, plus the cost of shipping.

Here's how it works. Clients simply email their files to plans@buckaplan.com, or upload them online at buckaplan.com before 5 p.m. Upon receipt, they're efficiently reproduced, neatly packaged, and overnight shipped for next day delivery via UPS, to anywhere in the U.S.

An Opportunity Seized

Most companies do not have large scale printing equipment in-house. The machinery is simply too expensive; requires upkeep, maintenance, service, supplies; and technical expertise to operate. It's an investment that many firms can't justify. With the absence of these capabilities, customer needs are handled by local shops that can't compete on pricing, or large chains that lack customer support and speed.

Reprographic pricing has always been calculated on a sliding scale involving a number of variables, including total per s/f, quantity, size, deadline, and number of sets. Currently, most firms are paying

an average of \$3 to \$4 per plan. In an effort to simplify a frustratingly expensive process, Buckaplan built its business using a fixed pricing model, challenging traditional reprographic theory by locking in the cost of printing at one dollar per sheet for any standard size plan.

And it's working. Buckaplan enjoys a 100% customer retention rate, with every single client who has ordered once becoming a believer and a repeat consumer. Each month, the company expands its reach, adding new clients and growing its market share throughout the Northeast.

A Reliable Partner

Having a clear understanding of the demanding deadlines faced by real estate, development, design and construction professionals has helped Buckaplan differentiate itself in an evolving reprographic industry.

Burke explains, "We don't stop working because it's five o'clock. Our team adapts our schedules to meet our client's deadlines, and we are proud that we can provide that high level of service and responsiveness to their needs."

Buckaplan works diligently in the context of lean budgets and aggressive schedules, because that is exactly what its clients are doing. Across the board, Burke describes that his customers have learned to "do more with less" - operating with fewer resources than ever before, while taking on additional responsibilities.

"The printing and delivery process should never delay your ability to dive into a set of construction documents. That's the last thing my clients should have to worry about," Burke declares.

Industry perspectives

The construction industry has been heating up and orders arrive into Buckaplan daily from clients of all sizes and types.

Regardless of role - contractor, subcontractor, architect, engineer, broker, developer - Buckaplan's clients are united by a shared need to keep their projects within the defined schedule and budget.

Construction firms

Invitation-to-bid systems, online plan rooms, and .ftp sites, have changed the way construction managers and general contractors distribute plans, specifications, addenda, and notifications to their subcontractors. Reprographics companies historically served as the distribution center for hundreds of sets of plans and specifications being sent to potential bidders. A few years ago, this tried and true distribution model, used by most of the construction industry, changed almost overnight.

Correspondingly, Buckaplan responded by working directly with construction companies and their subcontractors. Construction companies post plans and specifications to online bid sites, and send Invitations to Bid to prequalified subcontractors. Subcontractors can simply forward the link to Buckaplan to receive the requested plans the next day at their office or jobsite.

Warwick, Rhode Island-based Iron Construction Group, LLC, (www.icgri.com), is a general contractor, project manager, and design-build construction company. President Steven DePasquale, with over 30 years of experience in construction, takes pride in the fact that his team "maintains the qualities of a family-oriented business while providing a level of service often associated with much larger firms."

Their bid coordinator Melissa Drolet has ordered plans from others but once she discovered Buckaplan, there's no going back. "Besides being half the price, it's a straightforward charge per page plus shipping so I immediately know what these costs will be."

Iron Construction recently completed a new \$9 million Wellness & Fitness Center at the University of Rhode Island and ordered hundreds of pages of plans from Buckaplan. A newly-won project is a

\$6.8 million addition to the Middletown Fire Station. Drolet said, "We simply downloaded our specs and plans to Buckaplan's FTP site with our own security code. We ordered five sets of the 81-page set of plans, and two bound sets of spec books for the estimator and project manager, each of which was about 600 pages."

Drolet says Iron Construction needs to stay on schedule and on budget for its high-profile projects like the Johnston, RI Fire Station, additions to the North Kingstown Police & Fire Headquarters, and additions and renovations to Rhode Island College in Providence. Other projects include senior and youth centers, medical facilities, schools, animal shelters and class A office facilities.

Design firms

Design firms need to communicate regularly with owners, sub-consultants, municipalities, planning and zoning commissions, and related review boards and committees, so that everyone is on the same page throughout the course of the project. Buckaplan helps architectural and engineering firms produce printed copies of plans and specifications for review, approval and bidding at various states of design completion.

Steven C. Hayes, Architect PC, based in Brewster, Mass., on Cape Cod (www.stevenchayesarchitect.com), is a growing business that has been serving clients throughout New England for 37 years.

Hayes provides architectural services to residential and commercial clients such as real estate development firms, financial institutions and construction companies. Projects include new construction, additions and renovations, interior design, and space planning. These include single family residences, multi-unit housing, community centers, medical and veterinary facilities, office buildings and dorms.

Steven Hayes, president/owner said, "Before we discovered Buckaplan, we used local reproduction companies which are 2 to 3 times the cost. We call on Buckaplan mainly for large format architectural drawings. Buck-a-plan has excellent service, very quick turnaround, and has saved us a lot of time and money. They are very reliable, easy to use, and we always get good quality prints and quick results."

Real estate and development firms

Real estate and development firms turn to Buckaplan as a resource to streamline the document scanning and reproduction process throughout the project planning, development, and marketing phases.

The Grossman Companies, (www.grossmanco.com) a commercial real estate investment, brokerage and management firm based in Quincy, Mass., owns and manages three million s/f of office, retail and industrial space and uses Buckaplan to help keep their digital files organized and accessible.

"Buckaplan is convenient, accurate, responsive and prompt. There are no hidden charges, no sign-on fees, no monthly charges, no file-processing fees. Their prices are about one-third of local competitors so when I have more than a few scans to run, I send all the large format sheets to Buckaplan. Having scanned documents makes my job easier," describes Paul Dawson, director of asset management.

Developers like The Colucci Companies (www.coluccicompanies.com) of Cranston, Rhode Island rely on Buckaplan to maintain the firm's reputation for quality and service in the construction of various residential communities throughout Rhode Island, Mass. and North Carolina.

"We understand that their purchase from us will be one of the largest investments they make in their lifetime. Our mission is to make that experience pleasurable. Now we get all of our plans and drawings from Buckaplan.com. We know we can count on Brian Burke and the digital documentation experts at Buckaplan.com," said Steve Colucci, president.

See for yourself

In the real estate and construction industry, deadlines are tight and budgets are even tighter. It's natural to attribute Buckaplan's growth to prices that are significantly cheaper than box stores and major printing chains. But Burke says there's more to it.

"Our customers like us and trust us," he said. "You can't put a dollar value on that."

"Our client base has expanded because our product is priced right, and we work round the clock shipping plans to customers nationwide," Burke continues. "But the heart of our business is attention to detail and customer service. We'll go the extra mile for you. When you look good, we look good."

Buckaplan's fixed fee eliminates any surprises. There are no tiered pricing structures or mysterious formulas dependent on size, quantity or deadline. Buckaplan considers every job to be a rush job - and ships it out the next day without tacking on expediting charges. Very simply, Buckaplan is changing people's expectations of the reprographics business.

Sound too good to be true?

If you're looking for a catch, there isn't one. Give Buckaplan a try and see for yourself. Mention the promo code NEREJ and receive \$5 off your next set of plans.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540