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Plan Express Helps Staples Put Closure on Costly Bids

MEMPHIS, TN – March 2005 -- If you're the number one retail leader in cost-effective business supplies, yet one of your critical internal processes – the process of bidding and delivering plans to bidders – is costly and time-consuming, how do you live up to your reputation internally as you do externally?

Enter Plan Express, Inc., (www.planexpress.net, PEI) which for two years now has helped Staples, Inc. (www.staples.com, NYSE: SPLS) send out thousands of plans to its bidders and reduced the cost per project for plans by more than 50 percent.

Before Plan Express, Staples would bear the cost of shipping thousands of plans to the thousands of bidders, architects, and general contractors who would vie for the job. The process would take weeks and the deliverables, turnaround time and costs would be exorbitant. Today, with Plan Express -- and its streamlined and automated construction document management, printing and delivery systems -- all that has dramatically changed.

According to Andrew Thorpe, Director of Architecture, Store Design and National Accounts for Staples, the nearly three-fold reduction in administrative costs to print and deliver plans to the field is not the only benefit Staples realized. "Our cost is now low enough with Plan Express that we don't feel we impose upon our business partners to obtain plans themselves. It is a much less costly, more streamlined and tighter turnaround process for all involved in the bidding and dissemination of plans, and with that, everyone wins," said Thorpe.

"It's not just this process and savings we are excited about," Thorpe added. "After construction, all of our plans are stored, so instead of 1,000 plans in the back room, we have them all on 60 CDs and can access them anytime. The regained space in our headquarters office, which formerly housed all of these plans, is now used for additional storage and offices. This has made Staples management very happy," said Thorpe.

Currently Staples has over 1,200 stores in the United States and constructs approximately 85 new stores per year. Bids are posted on a website, but not the plans.

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“We send our plans and an exclusive list of bidders (various national account vendors and business partners, etc.) to Plan Express, which codes them, sets up password sensitive accounts, and returns them to us for approval. This is done within hours, which before, without Plan Express, that step alone would have taken us days, even weeks. Once the bids are put out there, the handling of multiple bids in a single day is not lost on Plan Express, they handle it very well,” said Thorpe.

Staples is the leading office supply superstore company selling office products, furniture, computers, and printing and photocopying services at more than 1,600 Staples and Staples Express stores worldwide. Averaging about 20,000 sq. ft., Staples superstores offer about 7,500 office products (from business machines and equipment to a full range of office supplies) and services (binding, copying and printing). The retailer targets small businesses, home office products and consumer office goods.

Founded in 1994, Plan Express is the fastest growing (provider of late night logistics and automated logistical systems) and leading provider of construction documents, offering a complete solution for construction document management, printing and delivery of plans. The Plan Express solution allows corporations, developers, architects, and contractors to simplify all aspects of construction plan management and distribution. Utilizing an easy-to-use web interface, customers can place blueprints in the “online plan room” where the plans can be viewed and ordered for print and delivery via major carrier the next morning, same day pickup at select FedExKinkos locations, at 100+ Reprographic Services Association (RSA) print locations nationwide, or digital download.

The Plan Express platform enables centralized organization of project plans, revision tracking and control, digital archiving, and document storage. Plan Express maintains its headquarters near FedEx’s “super-hub” in Memphis, TN and has locations in Wilmington, OH, Tempe, AZ, New York City, Nashville, Chicago, Dallas and San Francisco, as well as several European shipping hubs.

Additionally, Plan Express has strategic partnerships and distribution relationships with major construction content and tools providers including Dodge-McGraw Hill Construction, iSqFt, Onvia, Blue Book, CMD Reed Construction, Primavera and Meridian Project Systems. For more information, visit www.planexpress.net or call 901-843-2142.

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