

“Our members have a greater sense of confidence in our ability to deliver their checks in a timely manner. It would be impossible to do this manually and do it quickly and accurately.”

—Valery Kotik
National Director, Residuals Processing, Trust & Estates
SAG-AFTRA



Our Challenge

“For years, we matched actors’ residual checks and statements by hand. As we grew, the process became more challenging. We had to bring in temporary help every quarter. Accuracy was an issue. And because of the volume, it sometimes took up to 100 days to process a check. Our approach was unsustainable, so we implemented an automated system, but the system was designed to stop when it found a mismatch. We needed a faster solution that could identify mismatches without interrupting workflow.”

Our Solution

“Xerox developed a customized production system that includes two integrated cameras, one that reads checks and one that reads statements. The system not only prints and processes more statements, it also identifies mismatches and routes them to an output tray, without stopping the machines. We also doubled our processing speed. We can now process about 30,000 checks a day, with an average payment time of 30 days.”

Our Results

- Increased volume, with the ability to efficiently process 3.5 million checks per year
- Greater accuracy provided by the General Integrity System with integrated cameras that capture check-statement mismatches
- Uninterrupted workflow due to a customized solution that manages mismatches without stopping system operation
- Helped reduce turnaround time from 60 days to 30 days
- Twofold increase in processing speeds after upgrade to Xerox Nuvera® 288 Production Systems
- Annual savings in the tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars upon initial automation of manual processes

“We’re always looking to partner with industry leaders on new and cutting-edge technology. The partnership with Xerox allowed us to do that, while meeting our goals for volume and speed.”

—Daniel Inukai
Chief Information Officer
SAG-AFTRA



SAG-AFTRA and Xerox: Setting the Scene for Fast, Accurate Payment Processing

With today’s countless TV and movie distribution channels, managing residual payments for actors has become as complicated as a Hitchcock thriller. It’s the job of SAG-AFTRA (Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television and Radio Artists) to make sure that residual payments are made quickly and correctly. And Xerox is playing a major role.

Focusing on Automation Efficiencies

Each year, entertainment companies deliver approximately 3.5 million paper checks to SAG-AFTRA for distribution to actors. SAG-AFTRA enters the check information into a central database, creates and prints corresponding paycheck statements, and matches the two documents before putting payments in the mail.

“In the past, the process was manual,” says Valery Kotik, SAG-AFTRA’s National Director of Residuals Processing, Trust & Estates. “Every check and statement was manually entered, sorted, collated, stuffed and mailed.”

As the union grew, check volume followed, requiring 15 temporary workers to process payments every quarter. Turnaround times averaged 60 days and accuracy was becoming an issue. SAG-AFTRA partnered with Xerox to develop an automated production system, including an integrity system to automatically identify check-statement mismatches.

The new General Integrity System shortened delivery times, eliminated the need for temporary personnel and saved tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. However, when a mismatch was identified, the system stopped so operators could address the error.

“With our initial system, we had an automation need, and Xerox met it,” Kotik continues, “because whatever we need, Xerox tries to make it happen. But then we stepped back and said, ‘How can this work better?’ Xerox came up with a creative solution.”

The Sequel Outdoes the Original

For SAG-AFTRA’s 2.0 solution, Xerox customized two Xerox Nuvera® 288 Production Systems, adding integrity features such as dual integrated cameras (one to read checks, one for statements), multiple check feeders and production stackers, and front-end software to capture mainframe data.

“We developed the solution together,” explains Daniel Inukai, SAG-AFTRA’s CIO. “The ideas came from Xerox understanding our problem and providing a solution we could talk through and throw against the wall until we got an iteration that worked. They understood what could be done and knew how to utilize their technology to solve our business problem.”

“The two-camera solution is more advantageous to our workflow because the system doesn’t shut down if there’s a mismatch,” adds Kotik. “It pauses, so our operators can check to see what the problem is and then restart the process. We have better, more consistent results with our deliverables and can meet our customers’ time expectations.”

“I don’t know anybody else who has a solution like this,” Inukai says. “Unlike a bank, we don’t print our own checks. We’re generating statements and matching checks from 200 different payers. We’re using cutting-edge, one-of-a-kind technology to meet one of the biggest challenges our organization has ever faced.”

A Stellar Performance

With the new solution, payment processing cycles have been cut in half—from 60 days to 30. In addition, the system handles significantly greater volumes.

“Any time you introduce automation, you’re talking about improved efficiency and accuracy,” offers Inukai. “We doubled our speed with the new solution, which means more output. The new machines can handle our existing capacity and additional capacity if volumes increase.”

“Based on the volumes we’re processing, it would be impossible to do this work manually and do it quickly and accurately,” states Kotik. “We absolutely depend on the printers to make sure that the right check is matched to the right statement and delivered in a timely fashion.”

“We have more stability and more confidence that we’re utilizing technology and automation to its fullest in a streamlined, efficient process. The speed is there, the reliability is there. I’m very happy with where we are, but my goal in the coming months is to really see what these systems can do.”