



## SUMMARY

### Customer

Alliance Entertainment  
United States — Sunrise, FL

### Industry

Distribution

### Challenge

Reduce expense as result of printer downtime and cost of replacement printheads for thermal label printers

### Solution

- Certified Zebra Supplies
  - In-stock labels from ZipShip
  - Free printhead replacement
- Service and support:
  - On-site printer tech support from partner

### Results

- Significantly reduced printer downtime
- Optimized printer performance
- Savings over \$80,000 in annual printhead cost
- Reduced freight with planned volume purchases

# Alliance Entertainment enjoys extreme savings on printhead replacement

*Company also uses shipping labels made for Zebra® printers and boosts printer uptime.*

Alliance Entertainment, a wholesaler and direct-to-consumer e-commerce seller of music, movies and consumer electronics, is saving about \$80,000 a year on printheads for barcode shipping label printers since it became a customer of a Zebra® Technologies partner. The partner provides labels, printhead replacement and onsite printer technical support at Alliance's 660,000-square-foot distribution center in Shepherdsville, KY.

Zebra's Printhead Protection Program offers customers unlimited printhead replacement when they purchase Zebra® Certified Supplies. Alliance's experience demonstrates that the savings from the program are potentially substantial.

## High printhead costs, lengthy printer downtime

Alliance previously did its own printer maintenance. Insourcing this task and foregoing the use of Zebra® Certified Supplies with the printers had two negative financial impacts, according to Sandy Marsans, Alliance's senior information technology manager.

First, using supplies that were not pre-tested for image quality, durability and premature printhead failure within Zebra® printers reduced printhead operating life and some printheads had to be replaced soon after going into service. Marsans estimates that about 120 printheads were replaced on the Shepherdsville facility's printers every year at a cost between \$80,000 and \$90,000.

Second, for a business that ships items to more than 2,000 independent music and video retailers and more than 21 million items directly to consumers, time is money. Due to its limited Zebra® printer maintenance expertise, Alliance often experienced printer downtime of a week or two. According to Marsans, getting the printers up and running again was often costly and the need to work around idle printers to get shipments out often caused inefficiencies.

## A single-source solution

The partner approached Alliance—which had several vendors supplying direct thermal shipping labels—with a single-source label supply solution back in 2014. Under Zebra’s ZipShip program, Alliance would get rapid delivery of 4-by-8-inch, 4-by-6-inch and 4-by-2-inch shipping labels it commonly uses from Zebra’s Flowery Branch, GA label converting plant. The labels are tested, manufactured and certified by Zebra®, an ISO 9001-compliant label converter, for use in its printers.

As part of the solution, Alliance also would get onsite printer tech support and Zebra’s Printhead Protection Program, which offers customers unlimited printhead replacement when they purchase Zebra® Certified Supplies. Alliance found printhead protection a particularly attractive aspect of the single-source solution.

Marsans was working on the budget for the next fiscal year and noted how much printhead replacements had cost the previous year when the partner proposed the solution. “I asked myself, ‘How do we not jump into this right away?’” Marsans says.



## Saving on printheads, cutting printer downtime

More than three years since the partner became its single-source provider of labels, printer maintenance and printheads, Marsans says the benefits of the solution are even greater when she adds reduced printer downtime to the savings on printheads. “I went from about two weeks to maybe four hours of downtime on printers,” she says.

She adds that the use of Zebra® Certified Supplies is a major factor in reduced printer downtime. The partner’s use of Zebra® parts and supplies increases the printers’ uptime, she says. The partner and Alliance work closely on forecasting the label quantities that Alliance will need on roughly a quarterly basis and Alliance receives label shipments in just two or three days.



Learn more about Zebra certified supplies at  
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