



## Real World Printing Gone Variable

*We examine four organizations as they integrate variable data printing into their service offering.*

By Melissa Tetreault

Variable data provides options for digital print. Personalized document printing is within reach of most in the graphic arts due to advancements in software and hardware applications. Companies implementing variable data printing (VDP) are experiencing impressive results. "We have grown 20 percent in the last two years and the major reason we were able to do that is because of variable data printing," says Andy Turcich, VP, Overt Press.

Rob Seaver, VP business development, TAG Marketing and Recruiting—a division of The ADAM Group—is experiencing similar success, "Variable data has more than tripled our product offering, and our customer satisfaction has gone through the roof. We now offer products and services that not only fit our larger client's needs, but can now offer solutions for our small to medium business customers as well."

With the ability to service all business levels, VDP is a solution most companies can benefit from. From Web-to-print to electronic bill presentment and payment (EBPP), any market can achieve success by bolstering their marketing and customer relationship management efforts.

**Promotions Made to Order**  
During the summer of 2002, Integrity Graphics, Inc., a print company, acquired e-Integrity. Based in Stratford, CT, e-Integrity is a marketing automation technology company specializing in custom Web-based marketing workflow and production applications.

e-Integrity creates applications to help clients improve ROI. Many clients utilize the Web-to-print component of e-Integrity's MarketingHub product, which is built on the Pageflex document customization engine.

MarketingHub is a marketing on demand product. Users create marketing materials with online templates and by instituting certain rules that control editing rights. Once designed, customers can place orders via the Internet to a commercial printer or they can even print right to a desktop printer.

E-DAM is e-Integrity's proprietary digital asset management system that can be incorporated into any of e-Integrity's products, such as Marketing-Hub. Another offering, a square inch analysis tool called Accumeasure, measures product and ad spaces in circulars or catalogs and then captures the product data. The measurement and data gathering can be done in minutes compared to a manual process that normally takes days.

e-Integrity's flexible services are designed to increase customer relevance, protect brand identity, shorten a sales cycle, and measure efficiency with products that are available to the customer 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

Currently, a majority of e-Integrity's clients are based in the U.S. and Canada, one of which is Align Technology, Inc., a medical company that manufactures and markets an invisible orthodontic product, Invisalign. Align wanted a Web-to-print system that would help standardize Invisalign's promotional materials. In particular, they hoped to increase brand awareness with a promotional and educational program for dentists, orthodontists, and patients called Invisalign Day.

Invisalign Day programs, hosted by health practices, consist of treatment consultations that help recruit prospective Invisalign patients. To correctly market to the client, promotional products need to be customized with the appropriate date, time, and office location.

To allow individual health offices to create their own materials, Align needed to add a creative services staff to their business and involve itself in branding and legal approvals. The company was not interested in pursuing these options. Instead, they looked to e-Integrity to create a Web-to-print system that would allow sales people to easily create promotional materials.

With the new solution, sales material templates are accessible online. Users can customize them according to their needs and then order for printing. Each piece can be personalized according to practice name, logo, doctor's name, date, promotions, photos, addresses, and incentives. These are available as flyers, postcards, banners, statement stuffers, and posters. Legal requirements related to text can be locked down by Align. Now they don't have to worry about meeting federal and state regulations and additionally there is uniform language on each promotional piece.

Launched in April 2007, the success of the program is apparent. Align is able to track and report which promotions are thriving through the back end of e-Integrity's system. Michael Lulo, VP of sales, e-Integrity, says that this is a significant part of the solution. "We help our customers create efficiencies in their workflow, but more importantly we help them gather that data to measure its performance. If you can't measure its effectiveness, then it isn't worth much."

The reporting feature of the program can be completely custom designed. Align modified it to measure things such as the popularity of different promotions, how many Invisalign dates occurred, and how many doctors participated. The reports can be imported into a variety of formats, including Excel and HTML, for easy viewing. With these statistics on hand, Align determines what business model works best, which helps them plan for future promotions.

It is estimated that Align will save more than \$380,367 in creative services a year. In the first nine months of using the system, salespeople were able to schedule 3,251 Invisalign Day programs. This successful example of seamless integration is true one-to-one marketing according to Lulo. "Every aspect of the communication can be customized to each customer. This has allowed our clients to eliminate unnecessary inventory, react more quickly to market demands, test new offers in a cost effective manner, and save money in the process." In addition, the project was recently awarded a PODi Best Practices Award for Sales Material. The endeavor resulted in a winning solution all around.

**The** Spread across three locations throughout the U.S., DATAMATX specializes in full service print, mail, and document distribution. Founded in 1976, it was originally a custom software and information processing company based in Atlanta, GA. Divisions are now open in Phoenix, AZ and Richmond, VA.

**New**

**E-Bill**

While traditional print is its primary offering, the company is slowly shifting to the world of electronic billing solutions. Jake Johnson, GM of the Eastern region, DATAMATX, explains that many clients are taking small steps in that direction. "We have several people asking for e-faxes. They want their bill distributed quickly, and for their smaller customers, who might not have email,

this is the best way. It is really catching a lot of people's fancy." Johnson believes that e-fax is an evolutionary step away from paper and toward EBPP.

That isn't to say paper is vanishing. Instead, Johnson notices that most are expecting paper to keep pace with technology. "Five years ago people were concerned with the quality of the print, it was more about the P in VDP. Then EBPP came into play. Now, people are looking for a print document to have the same functionality as the e-bill with flexibility, marketing components, and design. The V in VDP is really how we sell ourselves now," Johnson admits. DATA-MATX's strength is processing variable data successfully to create a document that is both multifunctional and attractive to its customers.

Exstream Dialogue software helps Johnson and his team exceed these expectations. DATAMATX became involved with Ex-stream early on; its Richmond office was a beta site for the original Dialogue product. They used Dialogue 1.3 all the way to Dialogue 6.1, and without it, Johnson believes that they wouldn't be able to bring all the functionality of an e-bill to paper.

Components in the program such as shrink to fit, font sizing, variable and intelligent messages, and library set-ups all allow paper to be as flexible as email. Based on DATAMATX studies, about 90 percent of its customers are still distributing hard copies, despite the paperless office craze. "Paper has become the hard copy form of the electronic world," Johnson points out.

It is evident that many of DATAMATX's clients are willing to pay for this functionality. People want to build documents that are more electronic in nature, enhancing easy-to-recognize marketing messages, brand elements, and graphics.

Pushing the content over the color is key. Many of those in the print environment cannot afford color, but that does not mean you can't make an impact without it. Johnson says that out of DATAMATX's last 25 clients, 22 of them had some form of highlight color. The other three clients used grayscale, shading, and multiple fonts to create the illusion of a non-B&W piece.

IOMA, a publishing house, is a real life illustration of a successful conversion from traditional B&W to VDP. Johnson explains, "Five years ago they were all about multiple, pre-printed stocks, trying to fit numbers into pre-printed boxes, and very standard messages. Today we use multiple paper stocks that are completely blank and apply electronic forms that are unique to each publication."

Involved in the production, distribution, and marketing of over 100 publications, IOMA offers back office and management support for writers looking to be published. Each week DATAMATX receives 25 to 40 thousand records with 630 variable inputs from IOMA. Based on each record, publications are built from scratch using different library elements created in Exstream Dialogue. With this new, streamlined system, instead of using 90 different forms, they use four. And they were able to transform 12 different envelopes to just one. Using VDP, IOMA transitioned from a traditional one to many approach to a one-to-a-select-niche approach, and response rates sky rocketed. A mass insertion of a marketing offer to 20,000 subscribers once generated only 200 responses, now when they send out an offer to a targeted niche of 300 subscribers, they generate up to 80 responses. DATAMATX's main goal is to help its customers raise revenues while work- ing as a partner—which was certainly the case here.

## **One**

## **Pass**

## **Printing**

A family owned and operated business, Overt Press, opened its doors in 1937. Based in Chicago, it recently purchased a Videojet G4100 digital imaging system to compliment its two Kodak

Versamark 5100s. Prior to installing the Videojet, the company used both offset presses and limited VDP machines. The benefits of digital are endless in Turcich's opinion.

"We don't need to use chemicals, there is no plate-making process, and no plate cleaner, the only consumable is ink. We still use our offset press, but less and less. VDP in general streamlined our business," he says.

The company still uses other equipment, such as its Kodak Versamark 5100s, to print a lot of its variable data work, but because they require more than one-inch print heights and one pass printing, Overt Press chose to install the Videojet G4100 printer. The Videojet attracted them with its affordability and efficiency.

The Videojet G4100 uses HP inkjet technology. A relatively new device to the commercial print market, Videojet is no stranger to inkjet. For over 25 years, they have also manufactured the machines that print barcodes, lot numbers, expiration dates, and other variable data on food products found in the grocery store.

Another benefit to Overt Press' purchase of the Videojet G4100 is that the manufacturer is local. If there are any mechanical problems they are close by to resolve them. However, since its installation in December 2006, Turcich has had no issues with the printer. It runs eight-hour shifts everyday with one operator, although four employees are trained to operate the device.

The appeal of the G4100 printer goes beyond affordability and efficiency. Safety is also a factor. Before, personnel ran the risk of getting an arm or shirt sleeve stuck in the offset press. Now, there is just a simple moving belt to avoid. Additionally, Turcich found that not having to instruct an operator on the plate-making process decreases time tremendously. He explains, "You spend a week educating them with hands-on training from an experienced professional and they are set to go."

Additionally, thanks to the digital aspect of the printer, everything in the office is networked. Overt Press employees can simply transfer files over to the Videojet G4100 and print.

Overt Press does a lot of commercial printing nationwide, including four color work on letterhead, brochures, and direct mail pieces. They also are very popular with non-profit organizations in the Midwest, creating church offering envelopes for numerous parishes.

Turcich estimates that they create 25 million envelopes serving over 200 customers annually. VDP helped this number grow. "The Videojet G4100 is allowing us to grow slowly. The competition grows fast by acquisition but we grow by customer service. We go out there and service customers by talking to them and showing them that we can work with them."

Compared to a lot of Overt Press' competition, they strive on the personal side of business. If a customer has an issue they don't call a 1-800 customer service number, instead they talk to Turcich who individually handles each client.

A typical church offering envelope order consists of receiving the names and addresses, printing and addressing the envelopes, and manually processing them. A collection of two months worth of envelopes for one parishioner is carefully collated and checked to make sure all the information matches. They then have to go through a certification process and take them to the post office for permit mailing.

Turcich explains each envelope is different because of dates and parishioner contact information. The Video-jet G4100 is able to print both the parishioner's information and the date all in one pass, unlike Overt Press' past printing devices.

Time is the biggest challenge of all during these orders. Most jobs are sent out standard mail, so it is important to print efficiently. Customers cannot receive church envelopes a month late or all of the dates on the envelopes will expire. Says Turcich, "Timeliness is important, and the Videojet helps that. We receive the names from the church and two days later we can get the order in the mail."

## **Healthy**

## **Printing**

Created from an existing company in 1998 and originally named The ADAM Group, TAG Marketing and Recruiting primarily services the home care and hospice industry with marketing and recruiting pieces nationwide.

One hundred percent of its marketing pieces are direct mail or email related and are designed to be highly targeted. TAG Marketing and Recruiting's VDP streamlined its offerings with help from its HP Indigo digital color printing presses. "The equipment is rarely down and the normal preventative maintenance is a breeze to keep up with," says TAG's Seaver. "The overall quality of the output is comparable to our offset work that we have been doing for years."

Texas Home Health is a client of TAG Marketing and Recruiting. TAG created 130,000 direct mail postcards with its HP Indigo 5000 and personalized URLs (pURLs) using VDP for the health care company. The goal was to increase the number of applicants for home care field staff positions, registered nurses, and licensed vocational nurses in TX.

Texas Home Health had previously attempted to recruit applicants by placing ads in local newspapers, but found it to be non-profitable. Additionally, using recruiters proved too costly at \$20,000 for each person hired because firms share a percentage of the employee's annual salary for each placement. "Texas Home Health was more than ready to try a new solution and when TAG presented the highly relevant and personal approach of variable data, they were confident they would achieve better results," says Seaver.

And achieve better results they did, the direct mail campaign printed by TAG generated a three percent response rate and Texas Home Health saved \$70,000 in recruitment costs compared to previous years.

## **Beyond**

## **VDP**

VDP is changing the direction of a world that was largely pointing toward paperless. Print speed isn't the only element changing this direction, but also software and its endless capabilities.

"I really think the biggest evolution is trying to make paper more closely emulate what you can do electronically," explains Johnson. VDP software is making paper versatile. Johnson continues, "Customers, users, and providers are adopting the mindset that just because paper is a static medium, doesn't mean what you put on paper has to be static."

Now, with all this technology at their fingertips—both digital print engines and VDP software—print service providers are rapidly transforming into marketing service providers. As they adopt new technology, they are able to offer clients end-to-end marketing solutions complete with higher response rates and impressive ROI.

Once clients are introduced to the benefits of VDP, the difficulty is helping them successfully utilize it. "Now the challenge becomes educating our clients to focus on how to take advantage of their own data and focus on cost per sale instead of cost per piece," explains Lulo. In the grand

scheme of things, it should always be about helping the client recognize how they can make money. With VDP, you can do just that.

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