

Snapshot of Success

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Streamlined production processes deliver increased sales and cost savings

A mid-volume statement service provider shifts from over printing static offset forms with monochrome data to full variable color production in its evolution toward TransPromo

Leveraging efficiencies from single-pass full color production processes to deliver increased client value

This is the true story of a print service provider who changed his business model to better serve his clients. His name is concealed by request to protect his competitive advantage. The service provider specializes in transactional printing of invoices, bills, statements, notices, letters, postcards, and other financial documents that organizations require in the normal transaction of business with their customers.

The vertical markets in the printer's client portfolio include healthcare, utilities, collection agencies, financial, commercial, non-profit associations. These clients typically cycle their

transactional statements on a daily basis and require between 10,000 and 250,000 statements per month. The average run volume is between 1,000 and 10,000. Over time, the company has developed a loyal client base, thus increasing its production to over five million statements a month.

At one time, the service provider produced all its products in black and white on plain paper. Like most shops, they eventually made the switch to a two-step process involving preprinting full color forms and then overprinting them with variable data using monochrome laser printers. The service provider recently eliminated the labor and overhead costs associated with ordering, storing, moving,

and managing preprinted color forms (shells) by switching to a single-pass full color variable data production process. Today, the statements and other products are printed faster and at a cost savings of 20-30% per page utilizing full color RISO production inkjet printers and plain white paper stocks.

Becoming irreplaceable

The first major benefit from the shift to single-pass printing was the printer's ability to provide clients with much faster response time when design changes are requested. Why? As the owner puts it, “Rather than wait (to consume) three, six, or even nine months worth of stock, we were able to make the change within the form design software, validate it and go to print within

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a few days.” There was no longer the need to wait until all the pre-printed forms were used before a new design could be implemented. This capability translated into improved responsiveness, cementing the print service provider’s value to his clients and increasing repeat business; helping to make him virtually irreplaceable; and the easy choice for continued production as well as new jobs.

Across-the-board cost savings

Another important factor in the shift to the single-pass print-on-demand production methodology was cost savings. These savings came in two major steps. First, there is minimized waste of pre-printed forms. With template design modifications and other data changes, pre-printed forms become obsolete and unusable and therefore must be discarded. Waste of pre-printed forms could add up to several Dumpsters worth of paper a month. Second, there is the reduced cost of ordering, storing and handling the pre-printed shells, as well as elimination of the associated overhead in the form of labor and storage space.

The robust, scalable, full-color solution

RISO high-speed printers offer a truly scalable full-color printing

solution. Similar to large and costly roll-fed inkjet presses, RISO ComColor® printers employ industrial-strength Piezo inkjet print head technology to print at speeds up to 150 ppm or 9,000 full-color pages per hour. The production-class front-end features a true Adobe® PostScript® 3™ RIP with the ability to combine up to five engines in a single, scalable production cluster.

The shift to single-pass TransPromo

In analyzing his previous two-step process of overprinting black onto preprinted forms, the company’s owner realized he could increase the effectiveness of these statements while also improving efficiencies in the production process. In addition to abandoning the preprinted-forms model and producing the statements in a single-pass printing process, he would redesign the documents to include fully dynamic promotional content. This integration of promotional messages into transactional documents is generally called TransPromo. TransPromo messages utilize variable data and variable images and are often targeted to specific segments of a customer base. For his new business model, the company’s owner anticipated three major benefits in the

shift to TransPromo: improved production process, additional cost savings, and more effective promotional offerings for his clients.

More effective promotion offerings

In redesigning its services, the company’s owner asked himself three questions: What are we offering? What is its real value? What are we trying to communicate? He always believed that his company’s role as a print and mail service provider was to help create the desired response his clients were trying to obtain whether it was a timely payment or new purchase. He explains, “Our clients partner with us to provide a service that helps them collect money. In printing statements and bills, we’re only printing and mailing a very limited number of our clients’ total communications, but these documents can still serve as a call to action.” With color variable data printing capabilities, elements like past due notices, final payment demands, special offers, and loyalty incentives could all be specially designed spot color or full color to attract the reader’s attention and create a call to action. This is very difficult to do with black toner on white paper. The owner says, “There is an additional cost for color, but there are a lot of things that

go into its value that result in a lower overall cost for my customers.”

Transpromo means effective communication!

Today, the company has completely eliminated its preprinted color forms and now only prints dynamic on-demand documents that change based on the targeted audience and message. The company uses several RISO high-speed inkjet printers for its color printing, as well as a few HP laser printers for its black and white printing. Pitney Bowes equipment is used for the insertion and finishing of the mailed documents.

The use of full color variable data in statements enables the company to communicate more effectively by targeting specific markets and customer segments. According to the owner, “We can target a customer based on where he or she is in the collection cycle. For example, patients and utility customers who are current on their payments will receive different invoices from those who are past due or in the final notice stage.” He views color as a major value-add component to his offering because he can use color to communicate more effectively with its target audience. Color makes important information

stand out visually on a page, which significantly improves comprehension and a call to action for recipients of the document.

Because transactional documents serve as both a permanent and critical component of most business communications, it is logical to leverage any white space on invoices, statements, and notices by adding targeted, relevant data-driven information for the reader at no additional cost. The owner continues, “Our clients don’t really understand or necessarily care about the concept of TransPromo, but they understand improvements in communication and fewer customer support center calls because of increased comprehension.” The key is to understand the target audience in order to deliver a promotional, educational, or informational message that is likely to resonate with them and hopefully result in a call to action.

A hospital client’s experience: color printing means better results

In the past, documents for one of the service provider’s hospital clients consisted of preprinted forms that used overprinted monochrome laser imaging for the variable content. The service provider proposed the idea of adding color and targeted messages to the patient statements. “We sat down with the client and presented them with a new document layout that our in-house graphic designer created. We used their input to design a document that really worked for the hospital.”

The new document design included three new components: targeted segmentation based on collection cycles (current, past due, final notice), full color graphic images, and customized promotional/educational messages designed for each patient segment. The newly redesigned document generated surprisingly favorable results.



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“The hospital experienced about a 17% increase in their cash receipts after moving from black to variable color,” the service provider noted.

In addition, a full color graphic image on the bill prompted select patients to apply for a healthcare poverty assistance program. A significant increase in applications to this program followed, which the hospital attributed to this newly designed color document. The hospital’s marketing department got involved in the document design process, adding informational graphics that provided health tips to patients. Again, this educational messaging campaign didn’t cost the hospital any additional production costs because they were already incurring the fixed cost of printing the documents anyway.

An easy shift

The company owner claims that there were no major hurdles in the transition from preprinted monochrome statements to full color TransPromo color statements. The new TransPromo printing model enables him to determine if a statement is effective and to change it quickly if it is not. He states enthusiastically, “That’s the great thing about printing variable data and dynamic color. You’re

able to adapt and react a lot faster than you can with traditional printing. There are a number of hurdles with live programming and preprinted forms. Dynamic color printing enables us to change on the fly based on any type of request. The only limit is the speed with which we can program and design!”

Although the company also produces inserts using its RISO high-speed inkjet printers, the owner tries to stress to his clients that they have a captive audience reading their bills. As a result, the best place for important information is on the bill itself. The owner continues, “I don’t think people read inserts. I know I don’t. But if a message appears on my bill in color, it gets my attention.” Color takes this concept one step further because it increases comprehension in addition to attracting attention. The key is developing appropriate and effective messages.

Today, this printing company produces 95% to 98% of its printing jobs on its RISO high-speed inkjet printers and all of the jobs are produced in color.



The owner concludes, “We tested our new statements with a couple of clients and then we worked up to a few more. Today, almost all of our clients use variable color statements. RISO helped us reduce the barriers and ease the transition to TransPromo.”

The affordable full-color printing solution

RISO high-speed inkjet printers offer a truly affordable full-color printing solution. Color prints cost 2-3 cents, while monochrome pages run 1/2 cent or less per page. The simplified inkjet-centric design results in higher reliability and an initial acquisition price typically 30-50% less when compared to toner-based printers of half its speed.

The short paper path and compact design result in exceptional reliability at monthly duty cycles of 500,000 while eliminating any special power requirements or the need for additional cooling.

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