

Applied Printing Technologies

Leading the Way in Personalized Digital Printing

Based in Moonachie, New Jersey, Applied Printing Technologies (APT) is one of the top 50 commercial printers nationwide. With billings in excess of \$100 million annually, APT specializes in print production, finishing and fulfillment. Services include prepress, short and long run sheet-fed printing, half-web and full-web printing, full service finishing capability, fulfillment, point of purchase production, on-site facility management programs and new media.

Understanding the flexibility their customers needed to communicate more effectively with their audience, APT viewed the trend toward 1:1 digital printing as the perfect opportunity to launch a new venture that focused on fully personalized document creation services. In early 2000, APT announced the creation of APT Digital, a division devoted solely to offering customers high-quality, variable digital printing solutions. APT Digital was established with the mission of moving beyond simple customization by producing fully personalized, 1:1 marketing materials that include customer-relevant images, text and promotions for direct mail, high-volume statements and newsletters. To that end, APT Digital began assembling the tools needed to ensure a successful operation.

FINDING THE RIGHT TOOL

"As a total solutions provider of graphic communications, it's been our tradition to use the latest technology to bring value-added services to our customers," said Nicholas Brusco, senior vice president of APT Digital. And as the first company in the United States to own an IBM InfoPrint Color 130 plus, APT Digital needed software that could handle IBM's Advanced Function Presentation (AFP) architecture for high-speed, variable, full color digital printing. Additionally, the software would have to process data quickly and handle a variety of other outputs, including PostScript and PDF. It would also have to be versatile enough to work on a number of different platforms, and allow reuse of variable graphics and text across multiple document applications.

APT Digital also wanted the capability to develop Internet applications for their customers. "Our objective at APT Digital is to deliver on the promise of customer relationship management through variable digital color printing and the Internet," said Brusco. "The software we chose also had to support the ability to create on demand, interactive applications over the Internet.



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APT Digital uses Dialogue to create colorful, fully personalized direct marketing pieces for companies like AT&T Wireless.

EXSTREAM JOINS THE TEAM

Prepared to review all the products on the market, APT Digital attended the Xplor 2000 conference, where a representative from IBM told them about Dialogue™ from Exstream™ Software. Upon learning that Exstream was the first software vendor to support the new extensions to IBM's AFP architecture, APT Digital went to Exstream's booth for a demonstration.

APT Digital found that Dialogue could seamlessly handle their high-volume applications requiring imaging and text composition on the fly, including variable pie charts and tables. Dialogue could also easily create the necessary PostScript, PDF and full color AFP outputs they required, and they were impressed with Dialogue's ability to reuse graphic images, eliminating the need to rip each individual page during production. "With Dialogue, all images can be pre-ripped and stored for future use, making it incredibly efficient in the use of resources," said Brusco. "And, Dialogue's design interface, use of rules, and data handling functions are all tightly integrated and very easy to use, making it a perfect tool for efficiently building high-volume, variable output applications."

Another major selling point for APT Digital was Dialogue's speed. "Dialogue prepared a 180,000 page file in five minutes, processing 950 pages per second. We were amazed," said Brusco. "This was a file that took our old system 60 hours to process. And even more impressive is what took four weeks to develop with our old system took a few days using Dialogue."

GOING A STEP FURTHER

Taking advantage of Dialogue's eFulfillment capabilities, APT Digital is now able to offer their customers the ability to react quickly to market demand. Customers can request personalized documents, like 401(k) statements, on demand over the Internet. They simply sign-on to the Internet and input information requests through a custom-designed Web form. Dialogue then generates the requested document, fully personalized, in real time and displays it online in seconds for the customer to view, print and respond to. "With Dialogue's eFulfillment capabilities, we are able to pass along savings in printing, warehousing and shipping costs to our customers," said Brusco.

Using Dialogue's sophisticated campaign management and tracking capabilities, APT Digital decided to illustrate for their customers the benefits personalization brings. They sent out two mailers, one created by Dialogue that contained images relative to the interests of the recipient, and the other with the same images to everyone. Both mailings offered the same promotion with the same text-only the images were variable. "The results from this comparison were incredible," said Brusco. "What we found was the mailer with the same images on every piece averaged a 2% response rate, while the mailer with the personalized images, based on customer interests, garnered between 18 and 40% response. That's when we really knew what a powerful tool we had with Dialogue."

LEADING THE WAY

APT Digital has a reputation as a high quality solutions provider. By recognizing the power of digital printing, they have moved ahead of the game and are continually looking for ways to better serve their customers. For example, the company holds customer relationship management (CRM) presentations for their customers every six weeks in an effort to show them how they can capitalize on information they have about their customers to bring a greater return.

"Dialogue truly supports our mission," said Brusco. "We are now able to build increased customer loyalty by providing our customers with very competitive value-added services." As an innovator and proven market leader, APT Digital is poised to continue to lead the way in customized digital printing.



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