Printing and Marketing Group, Inc. Sees the Big Picture with Avanti Slingshot

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CLIENT: Printing and Marketing Group Inc. (PMI)

THE CLIENT

For nearly two decades, Printing and Marketing Group, Inc. (PMI) has delivered confidence, trust, and peace of mind through its in-house printing, marketing, and mailing solutions. A family-owned business, PMI specializes in print-on-demand and fulfillment solutions PMI's head office is located in Union City, California, with a sales office in San Diego. They employ a full time staff of 17, in addition to seasonal employees.

Like most commercial print shops, PMI got its start in traditional offset and color work, with a focus on the real estate industry - a market they still service. Today, however, the majority of that work comes through their digital storefront. Through this storefront, they help agents create materials and sell properties. Their niche is digital printing, with a large percentage of work coming through print brokers and resellers in the B2B space.

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"We saw a shift in the industry to print-on-demand and realized it's where we needed to be in order to grow our business", states Armando Pena, COO and self-professed Chief Cook and Bottle Washer, of PMI. "We still maintain a small offset press, but got rid of the large offset to concentrate on digital."

This shift allows them to run campaigns with PURLs, as well as set up and manage storefronts for large, corporate clients. They also made a strategic move into the fulfillment.

Armando Pena,
COO and Self-Professed
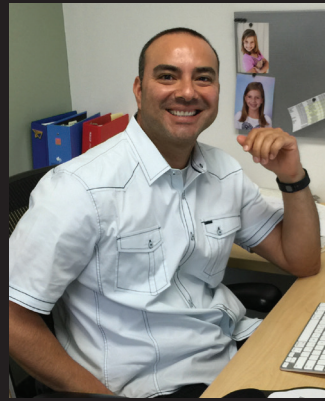*Chief Cook and Bottle Washer*

THE CHALLENGE

One of the biggest growth challenges facing PMI was the level of manual entry required to fulfill all the orders coming in, particularly through their digital storefront.

"On a typical day, we could get 50 orders between three storefronts. We average 1,000 – 1,500 orders a month." Says Pena.

> **"I'm seeing things I didn't even consider; things that make you go, 'Oh yeah, this makes sense!'"**

Fulfillment orders could be one item, worth $7 to $8, or 100 brochures ranging from $30 to $40. PMI needed to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, the breaks in the workflow, including all of the manual keystrokes, copy/paste functions, multiple spreadsheets, and other time-consuming methods, that were slowly eating away at the company's productivity and bottom line.

One of PMI's key requirements was an open system that could communicate and integrate with their various W2P storefronts, including Page DNA, FOUR51 and PTI Marcom. Although they had a print MIS system in place, they had outgrown it and needed a solution that would not only meet their current needs, but help and support them through future growth.

"The solution we had in place didn't communicate well with other systems, and didn't do a good job at import", says Pena. "Since we can't predict what the next application will be in two to three years, it was paramount that the solution be able to grow with whatever comes next."

THE SOLUTION

The solution boiled down to their existing print MIS provider and Avanti. PMI's experience with the incumbent was not a good one. Although integration was not an issue, once third-party software was introduced, it "all fell apart". According to Pena, "Avanti was open to integrate with 'whatever' and had a 'we'll do what it takes' approach." As a family business, that attitude resonated strongly with the company.

Avanti Slingshot was selected because it had the most open architecture. Where historically other vendors would walk away, unable to meet the needs of PMI, or worse, offer a solution at a highly inflated cost, Avanti was willing and open to do what was necessary for a successful integration.

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• *www.avantisystems.com*

Avanti Slingshot was built from the ground up to handle large format, digital, conventional print as well as mailing and fulfillment workflows; all in one easy-to-use and easy-to-implement platform. It is browser-based, device-independent and database-agnostic, providing organizations with the flexibility to access the system at any time and from anywhere. Designed to easily integrate with third-party applications and equipment, it includes a robust Application Programming Interface (API) leveraging industry protocols such as JDF and XML. When asked: "What's it like to work with Avanti?" Pena stated, "I'm not going to sugar coat it. Never in my years of software have I had the pleasure to work with as many developers who were willing to take suggestions! Despite the difference in time zones, the team was very responsive. I cannot express the difference it made to talk to, and deal with, live, real people."

And there is continued excitement surrounding the ongoing development of Avanti Slingshot. "I'm seeing things I didn't even consider; things that make you go, 'Oh yeah, this makes sense!'" The continued development of new features, and Avanti's proactive approach, has further cemented PMIs decision in their purchase of Avanti Slingshot. "We're not a big company, but we sure were treated like one," declares Pena.

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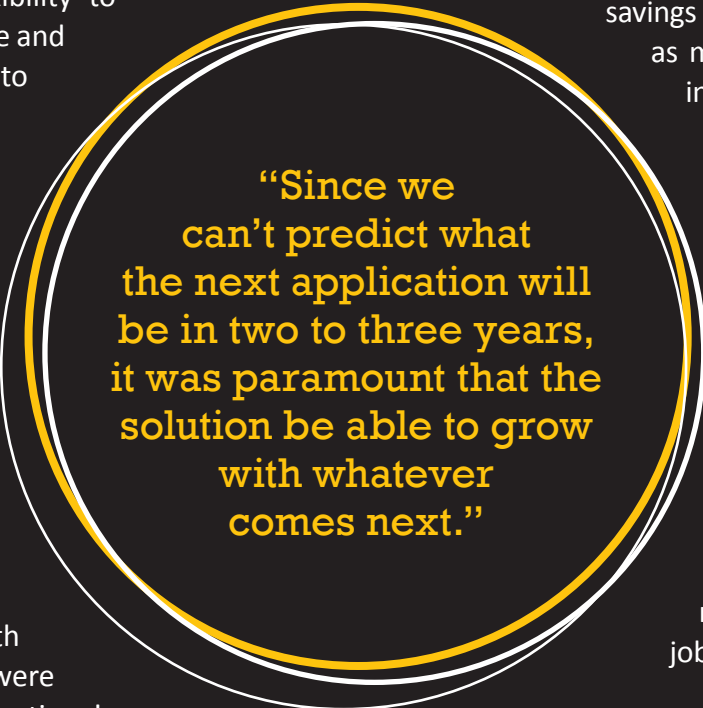
THE IMPACT

In the three months since PMI went live with Avanti Slingshot, they have already seen a reduction of errors in order input. Order Entry and Shipping has resulted in the biggest time savings and they're hoping to save as much as eight hours day just in order input, tracking, and managerial tasks.

With the newfound hours, PMI will continue to develop its store front, fulfill more orders more quickly, and reduce overtime costs. With a new Print MIS in place, Armando and his team can focus on building business, rather than simply getting jobs out the door.

"Everyone's finally starting to see the big picture," declares Pena. "Once you start working in estimating, you realize your true costs. We can look at history, particularly in outsourcing, and it's all in one place. We no longer need to run around and find information."

The learning curve had been a concern at first, but was quickly overcome. Now, everyone understands how the system works. And, with some advanced planning, they can anticipate any hurdles to new processes. "The beauty of Avanti Slingshot is that it's browser-based and hosted, so we're not dependent on being on-site," says Pena. "You can access it from anywhere. You can do a quote from anywhere. This has been a tremendous benefit to our customers and to us."

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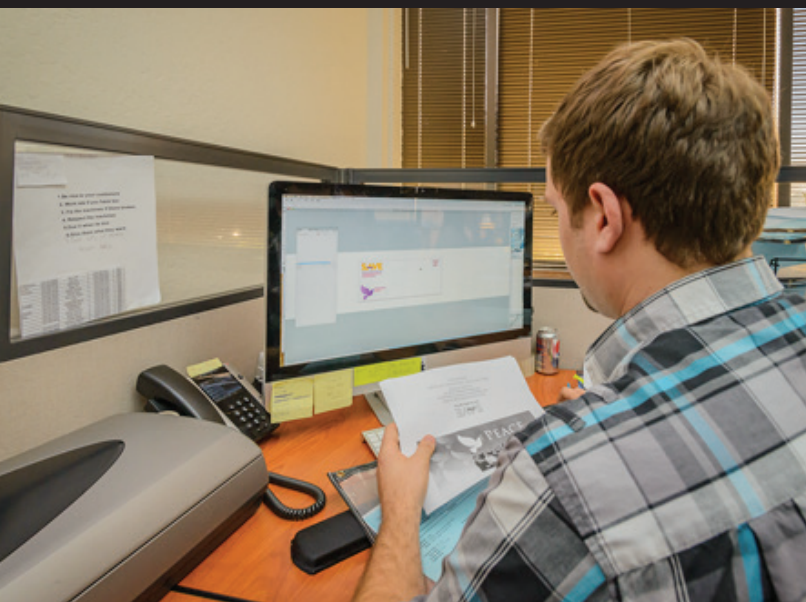
ABOUT AVANTI

Avanti develops innovative, award-winning Print MIS solutions that help print and communication organizations automate all facets of their business and cultivate a more meaningful relationship with their customer.

Since 1984, Avanti has been providing industry-leading and JDF-certified print management software to Commercial and In-Plant print shops. The company has developed the most open industry solutions for Sheetfed, Web, Digital, Large Format, and Binderies with integrated modules extending from the Internet through to the shop floor, CRM, and billing.

With hundreds of implementations, Avanti has a proven track record delivering stable, reliable, integrated solutions to companies worldwide. Avanti is a leader in best practices fostered in mutual trust, respect, fairness, and honesty.

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