

A photograph of an office environment. In the foreground, a man in a blue and white plaid shirt is smiling and looking at a woman whose back is to the camera. They are sitting at a desk with a computer monitor. In the background, there are office chairs and a window with blinds.

PRINTING AND MARKETING GROUP, INC. SEES THE BIG PICTURE WITH AVANTI SLINGSHOT

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 fulfillment.

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 online storefront.

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

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.



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 fulltime 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 online web-to-print portal. 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.

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 MarcomCentral. 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 us.

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.

Avanti Slingshot was built from the ground up to handle large format, offset and digital, as well as mailing and fulfillment workflows; all in one easy-to-use platform. It is browser-based, device-independent and database-agnostic, providing you and

your staff 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 an 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!"

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



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 PMI's decision in their purchase of Avanti Slingshot. "We're not a big company, but we sure were treated like one," declares Pena.

THE IMPACT

In the first three months after PMI went live with Avanti Slingshot, they had already seen a reduction of errors in order input. Order Entry and Shipping has resulted in the biggest time savings and they're expecting 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 storefront, 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."

"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 CHALLENGES

- High level of manual entry and other time-consuming tasks were slowly eating away at the company's productivity and bottom line
- Current system was unable to integrate and communicate with various web-to-print storefronts, which average 1,000-1,500 orders per month
- Needed a flexible solution that grew as technology changed

THE SOLUTION

- Avanti Slingshot Print MIS System core modules
- Integration with various W2P storefronts through JDF and XML
- Order entry
- Shipping

THE RESULTS

- Significant reduction in order input errors
- Able to quote from anywhere, creating a tremendous benefit to customers and therefore to the operation
- Able to fulfill more orders more quickly
- Observed a reduction in overtime hours

THE FUTURE

- Goal to save up to eight hours per day just on order input, tracking and managerial tasks
- Able to develop storefront with the newfound hours
- The team can focus on building business rather than simply getting jobs out the door

BENEFITS AT A GLANCE



The central system helps eliminate breaks in the workflow



Effectively navigate the shift of the industry to print-on-demand



Capably manage 50+ orders/day between 3 storefronts



Reduced order input and shipping errors with web-to-print integrations leveraging industry protocols such as JDF and XML



Tightly controlled operation able to fulfill on orders of any size or item



Open industry solution that provides flexibility and scalability for future growth

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WE HAVE ANSWERS®

At Avanti, our goal is to help you deliver more jobs, in less time, with the confidence in knowing that every aspect of your shop is integrated into one powerful platform.

Award-winning, JDF-certified Avanti Slingshot allows for the sophistication required by today's Print and Marketing Services Providers. The platform is able to manage multiple lines of business, handle large/grand format, digital and offset print, as well as mail and fulfillment workflows.

Connect islands of automation, eliminate breakpoints in your workflow, and get the information you want – when you want it, and where you want it – easily, with Avanti Slingshot.

From order entry through to production and billing, Avanti Slingshot enables you to work more efficiently, control your costs and move more jobs through the shop with ease.

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