

A story of teamwork and integration

By Alison Belsham

When large format print specialists DS Impression wanted a fully integrated solution that would bridge the gap between their production and sales operations, Caldera and Dataline Solutions worked together to provide them with an integrated solution. Gamut takes a look at how joining the dots provided the solution.

Based in Geudertheim, near Strasbourg, DS Impression is a wide format digital printing house that specializes in posters, POS, wall coverings and vehicle wraps. With a workforce of approximately 50, the company found itself producing more than 1,000 quotes every month, of which more than half became effective orders. They needed to find a tool that would cover three essential business functions for them – quotes, CRM and e-commerce – and they wanted all this in one perfectly integrated MIS/ERP solution that could seamlessly link with their existing production environment.

The challenge

For a company with two production units and more than 3000 jobs going through every month, DS Impression couldn't afford to make calculation errors when it came to quotes. They needed something that would give them an overview of the workflow, as well as rigorous procedures on preliminary calculations, quote calculations, planning and billing.

'We needed one solution that would be capable of managing the whole thing,' says DS Impression's Managing Director, Hubert Gonçalves. 'Up to this point we had been using a variety of different solutions with no real links between them – one for quotes, something else for planning and another system for accounting.' Data transmitted to the accounts department had to be processed separately, and eventually the whole system became unmanageable. 'We were wasting a lot of time rechecking everything to avoid

mistakes and you can imagine that with an average of 1,000 quotes per month, it quickly becomes very complicated and laborious.'

The solution

DS Impression's print processes were already being driven by Caldera RIP software, so it was important that any solution would be able to integrate with the system they were using. The answer came in the form of Caldera Nexio – a program that connects the Caldera RIP with third-party software using standard JDF/JMF protocols, making it possible to produce automatic sequences of actions that speed up production and advanced reports to improve operations.

Nexio can make the connections with ERP programs and web-based applications to automate regular tasks and so streamline the entire production process. This means not only do users save money and time, it also removes errors. It's ideal for printers who want to enable communication

between software packages and send jobs directly to the RIP from their CRM programs.

Partnering with MultiPress

To complete the solution, Caldera partnered with Dataline and their MIS/ERP software solution, MultiPress. This is a program that integrates all the administrative, commercial, financial and logistic business processes, while at the same time syncing with production software to automatically share information. It's a powerful tool that gives users the ability to accurately calculate costs, issue quotes, schedule production, manage stock and control

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the workflow. And unlike other MIS and ERP programs, MultiPress has been designed and developed with the needs of the print industry at the forefront. ‘MultiPress covers the beginning of the story,’ says Dataline’s Business & Sales Development Manager EMEA, Serge Clauss. ‘It has a CRM function covering quoting, order confirmation, invoicing, stock management and planning – and it’s completely complementary with Caldera RIP software. For users, the added value of having a fully integrated system can’t be underestimated – via Caldera Nexio it provides a link between sales and production, creating an automated flow for a faster process with reduced human error.’

Teamwork – a blueprint for the future

Creating an integrated system to streamline customer’s workflow is, in fact, just the start for the type of partnership Caldera and Dataline have created. The automated flow doesn’t have to be only in one direction. ‘The second level for us is for information to pass in the other direction,’ says Dataline Project Manager Davy Verstaen. ‘We’re looking at the automation of sending data from the Caldera RIP back to MultiPress for post-calculation.’ Once again, Nexio will form the bridge between the two programs.

The pre-calculation made for the quote is, of course, just an estimate of how much the job will cost. By comparing this with data from Nexio about the actual time taken and the media used, MultiPress will be able to refine its calculations for future quotes to become even more accurate. ‘Of course, if the operators key in the information while overseeing the job, this can already be done, but the bottleneck is always the human factor – the tracking of time and media has to be done manually. In the future, this information will relay automatically from the production devices back MultiPress. Then, when the quotes are more accurate, you’ll be able to offer your customers a better price or keep an increased margin for yourself.’

Automation between the sales and production functions as enabled by Nexio and MultiPress is already providing printers with significant gains in productivity – and evidently there is more to come. ‘Co-operation and integration between different companies involved in the print workflow is the big news in the industry right now,’ says Caldera’s Vice President Marketing & Communication, Sébastien Hanssens. ‘We’re seeing that by working together we can provide customers with solutions that wouldn’t be possible if we worked in isolation – and the result is streamlined production processes that save time and money.’