

ppi's Open Days 2008 in Lübeck

Newspaper publishing companies focus on "multi-channel publishing" and central publishing house press control system for integrated production

The newspaper industry aggressively announced the necessity of strategically reorienting its traditional business model at ppi's Open Days 2008 in Lübeck on June 16 and 17. This event, attended by over 150 nationally and internationally renowned participants, focused on the topics of a central publishing house press control system for local editorial and ad processes as well as central output management for decentralized production scenarios, but especially on multi-channel publishing and the accompanying reorganization in the editorial and ad departments. Ten representatives from well-known newspaper publishing companies and system suppliers in Germany, Norway, Canada, the Czech Republic, India and the USA addressed these issues and discussed the dramatic changes in the newspaper market. ppi Media, the German workflow specialist, showed that it had also read the writing on the wall by announcing its new online ad workflow system, AdInvent.

Shift happens – advertising goes online

Markus Feldenkirchen, CEO of ppi Media's American subsidiary, demonstrated in a humorous play on words – "shift happens!" – the increased volatility in the advertising market and just how much this has put newspaper publishing companies under pressure. According to Feldenkirchen, "In a world of media fragmentation, publishing houses that concentrate solely on ad display in their products will lose ground." Therefore, the maxim for newspaper publishing companies must clearly be to consistently expand their customer orientation and advertising offers and continue to reduce their costs. To support newspaper publishing companies in meeting this immense challenge, Markus Feldenkirchen presented a whole battery of new products and enhancements in ppi's portfolio of ad products. AdInvent, the cross-media ad workflow system, was at the heart of his presentation. On the basis of the publishing house's actual print and online structures, AdInvent enables easy scheduling of all ads in print and on the Internet. In addition, it provides an excellent tool for the active sales support of free ad space. This gives publishing companies the opportunity to offer their customers a cross-media advertising package.

Cross-media content workflow

Similar to last year, many of the lecturers addressed the topic of a "cross-media editorial system": Oliver Walz, Head of the "Projects-Organization-Processes" Department at the Verlagsgruppe Rhein Main (VRM/Rhein Main Publishing Group), was the first to present the requirements for a media-convergent editorial system from a publishing company's point of view. Right at the beginning of his presentation, the felix pilot customer made it clear that there is no alternative to the consis-

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tent expansion of editorial online competences although, according to Walz, VRM does not regard paid contents as a sustainable business model. Additional revenue is generated solely by marketing the paper's circulation. Together with the introduction of a newsdesk organization with clearly defined roles and assignments, a central data hub is required for the entire publishing house contents. Only in this way is it possible to supply contents to the different media channels in an effective and low-cost manner. Walz expects the implementation of felix, the new content flow system, to improve market cultivation by providing a holistic view of the business partner, dissolve functional redundancies of the publishing system and its contents, and provide a structured planning and control process on the basis of a page concept as well as a system-supported, integrated topic and resource planning to deploy resources efficiently. Martin Ruhle, ppi's managing director, then substantiated the previous speaker's theses by speaking strongly in favor of a central editorial press control system.

Innovative partners in the felix environment

Dave Story from Adobe, Ole Olsen from Digital Collections and Tom Skolbekken from Escenic then made it clear that ppi Media's felix program is not just another monolithic editorial system. The felix partners for layout (Adobe and InDesign/InCopy), ECMS (Digital Collections and DC5) and Web Publishing (Escenic and Content Engine) gave an overview of their own key developments and presented themselves as the ideal supplement for ppi's multi-channel editorial system with its consistent modular structure.

International challenges

As in 2007, this year's ppi Open House had a strong international slant. Altogether, there were four user reports from India, Norway, the Czech Republic and Canada. They impressively documented the northern German workflow specialist's increased international orientation. While George Jacob, Managing Director of India's largest newspaper in Malayalam, the Malayala Manorama, and Asle Vestvik, CIO of the Norwegian Adresseavisen, gave detailed information on their national markets, Steve Proulx, Editorial Services Manager at CanWest, the Canadian media corporation, gave an overview of the upcoming challenges his company wishes to master together with ppi. Apart from the centralization of the content and advertising databases, Proulx listed the integration of CanWest's numerous locations using ppi's central production control console as one of the foremost objectives in enabling effective local production. Zoltán Morvai, CEO of the Czech VLTAVA-LABE-PRESS, has already successfully mastered this challenge. Together with ppi Media, a total of five printing sites for 74 local newspapers have been successfully linked to one another since 2006.

Decentralized production using printnet OM

Volker Haack from M. DuMont Schauberg demonstrated that German publishing companies have also been following this trend. In order to organize future plate production from a central point at a total of ten printing locations, the head of system technology at this publishing company in Cologne, which has a long-standing

tradition, recently put printnet OM, ppi's output management system, into operation. After a complete switch from HP-UX to Linux and the integration of all locations, this newspaper publishing company expects a considerable increase in production automation linked to a substantial reduction in personnel costs as well as a significant saving in time due to the elimination of plate transport. Volker Haack also referred to the new printnet OM device manager, which makes it possible to achieve optimal load balancing of all RIP systems and CtP imagesetters at all locations. Axel Walker, Publishing Director at the Neue Westfälische in Bielefeld, pointed out the enormous savings his company has achieved since it introduced ppi's production system. By means of standardization and automation, the number of staff in the prepress stage was reduced from 115 to 35 during the period from 1994 to 2008, despite the fact that both page and ad volumes increased. In addition, great progress has been made in production reliability, and consequently delays in the start-of-printing time and customer reclamations have both been drastically reduced.

This motto paid off completely

Claus Harders, ppi's Senior Vice President for Customer Projects, emphasized the importance of ppi's Open House as a positive contribution towards customer proximity. "Once again, the mixture of information and professional dialog together with an evening's entertainment has proven its worth." Norbert Ohl, ppi's Managing Director, who moderated the two-day program, expressed his satisfaction, "The response to our guest speakers' presentations as well as that of our new developments has again confirmed that our media-convergent solutions have put us on the right track. Publishing companies are again facing changes that are no less dramatic than the digital revolution was at the beginning of the 1990s."

About printnet

With printnet, manroland and its subsidiary ppi Media offer a highly efficient workflow management system for printers and publishers. As a flexible, modular system, it networks all print sites and production areas in the sales, prepress, press and postpress departments. Production systems from third-party suppliers can be integrated in the fully automated printnet workflow via open interfaces. For further information please contact:

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