TLG France prints to win with EFI Fiery and Konica Minolta

Leeds-based company The Lettershop Group (http://www.tlg.co.uk/) is headed by direct marketing pioneer John Hornby. And offers personalised marketing pieces, from design to mailing. The Lettershop Group’s innovative direct marketing products have garnered the company the “Innovation in Print” prize and the “Marketing Excellence Award in 2006”. The company has an annual sales figure of 36 million pounds.

A development based on responsive, personal customer relationship

In 1990 The Lettershop Group took on a Paris based subsidiary of Bayard Presse which devoted itself to micropublishing. Single copies and zero editions were printed using black and white print-on-demand technology. When Bayard Presse decided to drop micropublishing they looked for a buyer with a prime objective in mind: to maintain the responsive, personal customer relationship that print-on-demand had enabled them to build.

The Lettershop Group decided to keep the team that had worked for Bayard Presse and develop TLG France under the direction of a new CEO, Mrs. Chantal de Pontac. In 2001, Mrs. Chantal de Pontac had already set up TLG’s evolution towards direct marketing by adding sorting and mailing expertise to the printing capabilities.

At the same time, colour seemed to present real opportunities, but it also posed new quality challenges to which TLG fully committed. In 2004, when Mrs. de Pontac felt that the market was ready for colour, TLG had every skill in place to benefit from a fast growing market. The only thing left to do was consolidate the printing equipment stock.

Thanks to Konica Minolta C6500 and Fiery IC 303, TLG enjoys the security of an integrated workflow

Five Konica Minolta C500 were chosen because of their reduced footprint, their in-line binding and the flexibility provided by a group of machines. Partnering with EFI, Konica Minolta suggested Fiery controllers to drive the equipment.

“TLG was accustomed to other vendors, the controllers decision was a gamble,” states Mrs. de Pontac. “We were closely monitored by the Konica Minolta and EFI teams – so much so that when one year later the new Konica Minolta C6500 came out with an IC 303 controller created by EFI for Konica Minolta, we did not hesitate to reinvest.”

Today TLG’s equipment assets include, amongst others, a Konica Minolta C500 with a Fiery IP901 controller and five Konica Minolta C6500 driven by five Fiery IC 303. These have the most recent Fiery System8® to manage VDP, signatures, paper catalogues, and in-line finishing.

These resources make it possible to produce, for example, one-to-one pieces for a large auto manufacturer’s customer loyalty program. Chantal de Pontac proudly shows us a 16-page A5 booklet with 100% variable text and images, offering readers practical information like a list of local dealers, detachable promotional coupons, etc.

“We manage 3000 point-of-sale addresses and 600 different images”

“We produce 130,000 of these booklets every month. We manage 3000 point-of-sale addresses and 600 different images. The messages, the images and the digital signatures
are regularly updated and automatically selected according to the customer list given to us,” explains Chantal de Pontac. “The list of closest local dealers is generated automatically. This is what I call geomarketing,” says Chantal de Pontac.

“This is a high-risk business. Every client is unique and distinctive in their field. We must be able to respond to specific details at any moment,” stresses Mrs. de Pontac. Thanks to the combination of the Konica Minolta C6500 and Fiery IC 303, TLG enjoys the security of an integrated workflow, from document composition through mailing assembly.

Upstream the Fiery controllers integrate with GMC Printnet composition software (http://www.gmc.net) and with TLG’s central server. An optimised path (PrintSearch Path) allows the Fiery controllers to select variable objects on demand, keeping the print flow lean and fast; with the new Fiery System8®, variable data in VPS format are now handled 4 times faster.

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Fiery Virtual Printers automate the most complex scheduling tasks at the EFI Driver on any connected PC. “It’s a huge benefit in terms of user-friendliness. We are eliminating the possibility of errors; best of all, our operators can concentrate on other things,” states Mrs. de Pontac.

Sometimes certain mailings – loan agreements, for example – require up to 60 paper types that must be managed the same day, and three different finished formats in a single mailing. “The Fiery IC 303 offers a direct visual user interface to a centralized Paper Catalogue and multiple finishing options in the print plant, helping us avoid errors,” says Mrs. de Pontac.

Finally, assembling and inserting the different elements of a mailing in the envelope are crucial stages where errors must be avoided at all costs. Here again, the Fiery IC 303 organises production by managing the printing of a specific serial number for each document.

Customer relationships have also improved with an accurate affordable proofing process. The Fiery controller can print a complete set of “one-to-one” documents to create a “real size” proof of the final production. EFI Colorwise also enables TLG to integrate the customer’s ICC profiles in the colour management workflow.

The combination of Konica Minolta and Fiery technologies ensure reliable, colour matching

The combination of Konica Minolta and EFI Fiery technologies ensure reliable, quality colour matching. “We have generated 200,000 pages on one C6500 without any calibration. It’s a real gain in terms of productivity.” says Chantal de Pontac.

Serving a spirit of personalised, reactive customer service, Konica Minolta and Fiery technologies enable the production of high-quality customised products. “This allows us to not only retain our customers over the long term, but also acquire new ones through recommendations. So even without a dedicated sales force, our sales figures have grown by 40% in 2006,” states Mrs. de Pontac. “I believe that we must constantly search for the best technologies to maintain this growth. That is why I have decided to reinvest one year after the first installation, and to continue our association with Konica Minolta and EFI.”

“Our sales figures have grown by 40% in 2006, this is why we did not hesitate to reinvest in Konica Minolta and Fiery technologies one year after the first installation”