Making Wide-Format More Efficient
IMS Printing & Signs Finds Success with PressWise

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> It is the 'brain' of our organization."

While most printing companies are learning to redefine their businesses as marketing service providers, IMS Printing & Signs in Lone Tree, CO took the opposite path.

imsprinting&signs

Company Name: IMS Printing & Signs
Location: Lone Tree, CO
Business Type: Hybrid Digital & Wide Format Printer
Specialization: 70% Wide Format
Website: www.imscolorado.com

IMS actually has always stood for Integrated Marketing Solutions. "We evolved from an advertising and marketing company," notes J.J. Heim, President of IMS. Heim explains that the company's initial customers—primarily commercial and residential real estate firms—frequently were not pleased with their print vendors, so he began dabbling in offering production services and "found we were good at it."

Today IMS primarily offers printing and graphic design services to customers in three local states. The firm's heritage enables them to collaborate on the marketing goals of the print jobs at a deeper level than most printers typically offer.

70% of IMS' business is wide-format jobs such as banners, tradeshow displays and retail signs, while digital and small-format pieces make up the remainder of their work. "We're a blended workflow," says Heim. Nearly all (around 98% in fact) of these orders are managed using PressWise, a SaaS-based print workflow system from SmartSoft that includes web-to-print, MIS, and workflow automation capabilities.

"PressWise has revolutionized the way we operate as a print provider. It is the 'brain' of our organization. It helps us track everything from proofing and production to accounting and inventory," explains Heim.

Serving Customers Better with Web-to-Print

Heim recalls when he began looking for a workflow system in 2012: "As we were growing, our old 'by hand' system just wasn't cutting it any more. We needed a way to become more organized, to track, and better serve our customers."

In addition to the MIS tracking capabilities, Heim knew that in order to better serve their customers they would need to offer online storefronts as well. PressWise accomplishes both goals for the company. The job details that the customer selects or enters online flow directly into the backend PressWise production system without any need for further rekeying, significantly streamlining the order entry process.

Using PressWise, IMS has launched several private ordering websites for select customers and three additional storefronts that target specific segments of the IMS customer base:

1. **IMS Colorado** is a full-service site, meaning that established IMS customers who use it still work closely with IMS CSRs on their orders. Visitors to the site can select from over 150 products, upload their digital files and artwork, select printing options, and pay for their order online. All of the details are tracked in PressWise. Offline, IMS staff often still assists with the graphic design of these orders.
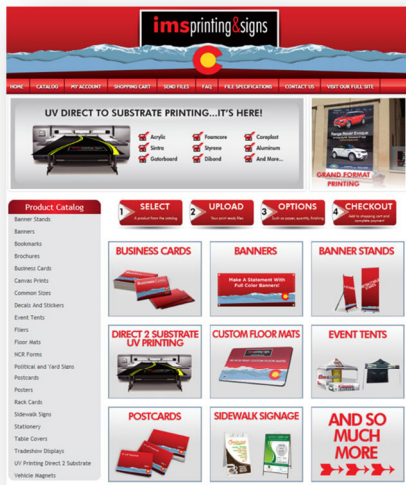
IMSColorado.com utilizes a PressWise web-to-print storefront for seamless order acceptance

2. **IMS Wholesale** is a password-protected site dedicated to the company's wholesale business supporting other print and sign shops. A limited catalog of products is offered on the site at a discounted price.

3. **QuickPrintingAndSigns.com** was launched in spring 2014 and is a fully self-service site open to the general public. Orders are printed as purchased online with no additional modifications by

IMS staff. The company offers its most popular and straightforward products on this site.

Adapting PressWise for Wide-Format Jobs

One of the challenges that IMS had when they decided to adopt an MIS system is that 70% of their work is wide-format, which presents challenges to traditional MIS systems. Some of the more unique facets of wide-format jobs include less standardized dimensions, huge file sizes making real-time online PDF proofing through a storefront extremely difficult, and more wasted substrate.

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IMS investigated both large and small MIS systems before deciding on PressWise. They were impressed by the PressWise team. "We also liked how we could run digital, offset, as well as large format jobs through the system. PressWise was the only hybrid option at the time. We also liked having lower upfront costs to get started, with spread out monthly payments because of the SaaS model," recalls Heim.

IMS was one of the first PressWise customers to use the system for wide-format printing. Based on feedback from customers running wide-format work through PressWise, SmartSoft programmed a number of changes to the system to manage the differences inherent with these types of jobs.

"At SmartSoft we pay close attention to what our customers tell us about their experience with our software, " said Eric Wold, VP of SmartSoft, who heads up the PressWise team. "We identified a number of areas where we could make that experience much better for wide-format work. Our company structure is such that we have the agility to be able to quickly implement new product features, and since PressWise is a cloud-based service, we can distribute product updates quickly to all customers, so everyone has access to the most current version of the software."

> *"We also liked having lower upfront costs to get started, with spread out monthly payments because of the SaaS model."*

IMS also found the online knowledge base and video tutorials PressWise offers very helpful. "They have put a lot of thought into the online tools," notes Heim. He is also pleased that someone at PressWise always responds quickly when they have a question, concern, or problem using the system.

Creating a Digital Audit Trail

While the company has begun receiving orders online, most orders are still entered into PressWise by customer service representatives (CSRs). The CSRs use the system to generate estimates, place orders, and deliver electronic proofs.

> *"Prior to using it we were sending out old school proofs. Now estimating, quoting, proofing, production and billing are all produced using PressWise."*

"We don't work around PressWise at all," notes Heim. "Prior to using it we were sending out old school proofs. Now estimating, quoting, proofing, production, and billing are all produced using PressWise."

Heim has found that PressWise allows the company, which has less than 10 employees, to "track and manage orders more efficiently." The service provides a digital audit trail that can be easily searched and reviewed, including order details, when proofs were sent to a customer, customer signoffs, and emails between IMS staff and customers.

Tracking an Order End-to-End

With access to dashboards that show the status of every job running through the shop, owners and production managers can easily get a "10,000 foot view" of production – anytime and anywhere they have an internet connection. These dashboards also put every job, digital asset, catalog, template and customer record within easy reach of CSRs, pre-press and sales workers, creating a better informed, more efficient shop.

IMS' PressWise Order Dashboard Puts All Orders At Their Fingertips

In most cases IMS CSRs enter job information into PressWise based on a telephone call or email from a customer. The system produces an estimate and once approved by the customer a CSR converts the estimate to an order within PressWise.

Digitized artwork submitted by the customer is linked in PressWise to the order details so that a digital proof can be generated. The proof is sent via email by PressWise to the customer so that an audit trail is created. The customer's comments, change requests, new proofs, and ultimate signoff are all tracked in the system.

Once ready for production, PressWise will batch the job if needed and feed it to the RIP. Job tickets can be printed or flow electronically with the job through the production process. The production staff can also look up the job directly on the shop floor. Once the job moves to the shipping department a shipping label is printed from PressWise.

Finally, after the order is shipped to the customer, an invoice is produced from PressWise and the order details exported directly to accounting. IMS integrated QuickBooks software with PressWise, creating a seamless flow of accounting information. "That integration has worked very well," comments Heim.

Reducing Manual Touches

As an example of how PressWise has streamlined his overall business, not just wide format, Heim describes the business card production business that IMS does for a large pharmaceutical company. Each year IMS produces 75 – 100 sets of business cards for the company. Each set has always required many "touches" – a human being physically handling the job and manually completing a step in the production process. IMS account managers would review a proof, and send it to the customer who would then request a change. The IMS account manager would document the change request and production staff would make the changes, a new proof would be generated, reviewed, and sent again to the customer. This process might repeat multiple times before the business cards would be printed.

> *IMS staff saves about one hour of effort per order, resulting in over two weeks of man hours saved with just this one customer.*

Once IMS began working with PressWise they used its online storefront capabilities to generate a private-branded business card ordering website especially for the pharmaceutical company. The customer submits the business card content details online, reviews proofs and makes content changes in their web browser, and signs off online, giving final approval for printing.

PressWise has allowed IMS to shift many of the time-consuming tasks for the business cards to the customer. IMS staff saves about one hour of effort per order, resulting in over two weeks of
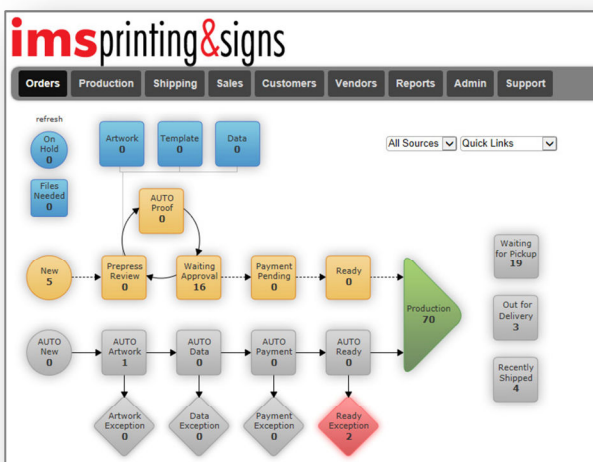
man hours saved with just this one customer. As a result of the labor savings provided by the use of PressWise, IMS has been able to offer the customer a discount and turn around printed business cards more quickly and accurately. Both IMS and the customer have benefited from the use of PressWise.

Managing a Growing Business

As a SaaS product, PressWise servers are hosted and managed remotely, removing the IT burden from the printer, and Heim finds the pay-as-you-go business-model for a SaaS system such as PressWise more manageable. While he notes that "we treat the expense as equal to a part-time employee," the PressWise system is able to accomplish much more than just one employee could.

18 months after adopting PressWise, IMS is processing 20% - 25% more jobs. Heim credits their ability to handle an increase in sales to the implementation of PressWise and the resulting reduction of manual touches in their production processes.

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Heim recalls that while they started using PressWise with customer jobs within the first month, it took three or four months before it was fully configured to handle their wide format jobs. "It has been a learning process for us and the PressWise team, but they really stuck with us," says Heim. He says that after the modifications, PressWise now is well suited to the vast majority of IMS' work – both conventional and wide-format. Even though it was a large undertaking for his staff, Heim says that he would absolutely do it again.

Heim sums up IMS Printing & Signs' experience with PressWise by saying, "We are thankful to have the PressWise team in our corner and love having the system in place."

Wide Format Production Printers At IMS Colorado

Find Out More

To find out how PressWise can help your business:

Visit: www.presswise.com
Call: 888.227.7221
Email: contact@smartsoftusa.com

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