

Case Study | **Communis** United Kingdom

Communis, implements DirectSmile Software to expand service offering and increase customer ROI

Communis, the UK's leading data driven communications provider has long been a pioneer in the direct mail market since this marketing channel first hit the UK in the 1960s. Since then Communis has driven its competitive edge by continually adapting to direct mail market innovations as well as helping to shape advances in the production process.

In early 2008, Communis implemented its most recent business change. In response to the rapid growth and developments in digital communication, the company invested heavily to create a digital business unit, central to its customers' direct mail requirements. To do this, Communis significantly expanded its digital print capabilities and introduced cutting-edge print and web personalisation software from DirectSmile to gain a market leadership in the data driven communications space.

Choosing the right solution

"We wanted to incorporate a number of initiatives within the new digital service offering including, data management, and image, print and web personalisation," Andrew Lydiatt, group

digital business manager, Communis explains. "Communis' customer base spans many different industries and it was clear that many of our existing clients would benefit from transitioning their print requirements to digital and utilising personalisation technology, particularly those customers involved in financial services using transpromotional marketing. DirectSmile is a clear innovator in the image personalisation field and its software solutions were quickly determined as the right option for us."

Compatible with Communis' HP Indigo press 5500 and HP Indigo w3250 Digital Press, the company chose the full suite of DirectSmile products, including DirectSmile Production Edition to manage its high volume production needs. Communis print anything from 50,000 to 200,000 direct marketing pieces every day, and this software allows for full scalability and has been implemented across the company's six servers.

DirectSmile Production Edition is an image and variable data personalisation solution that enables users to reach any desired rendering speed, by adding any number of production servers at any time.



Lydiatt continues, "DirectSmile Online completes the package and allows Communis to offer Internet personalisation services, such as e-mailings and personalised websites. The quick and easy rendering achievable with this software means we can produce thousands of online personalised images in just a couple of hours."

Communicating the benefits of personalisation

Once Communis established its digital offering, the company's next priority was to assist its customers looking to transition to a digital platform.

"It was important to us that our customers fully understood the benefits that our new digital service would bring to their businesses. To communicate the advantages of personalisation across different applications, we held workshops where our customers could come and discuss their marketing requirements, as well as see first hand the power of one-to-one communication enabled by DirectSmile software," Lydiatt explains. "We knew that our customers would be keen to utilise Communis' new digital service for complex, integrated marketing campaigns, but we were surprised at how many customers were choosing to personalise standard documents, such as corporate letters. These companies clearly appreciate the value of even simple personalisation, and found that it was a cost-effective option, even for everyday print jobs."

Demonstrating return on investment (ROI)

"Everyone's marketing budgets are being squeezed in the current economic climate," says Lydiatt. "Marketing executives are becoming more prudent and are constantly having to prove that their marketing activity is effective. Therefore, providing a means of adding value to marketing campaigns becomes a highly attractive prospect. Print and online personalisation can provide the 'wow factor' marketing professionals are looking for to better engage the consumer and ultimately, drive a response - whether that be initial communication with the company or an actual sale."

As well as enabling personalisation, DirectSmile software allows the user to align marketing activity across different communication channels. Re-emphasising the same, recognisable message in print and online can potentially improve the success of the campaign and have a positive impact on sales and brand awareness.

DirectSmile software is also designed to track response rates to personalised marketing campaigns. It is capable of providing detailed feedback that can be invaluable information, both when determining the approach for future campaigns, and when following up current campaigns with further targeted communication.

Prepared for the future

Communis and its customers are already seeing the benefits of its digital services.



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"Many of our existing customers who would have previously chosen traditional print and marketing methods have now moved to digital. We are already winning new business from companies who have approached Communis purely for our DirectSmile powered, digital services.

"If you are new to digital printing and data personalisation, the creative possibilities now available to you seem endless. Everything can be relevant, targeted and bespoke to each of your customers - using digital technology really breathes new life into communications," says Lydiatt.

Communis intends to progress and expand its digital offering in the same way it has always adapted its business model to stay at the forefront of the direct marketing industry.

Lydiatt concludes, "DirectSmile is a very flexible and supportive business partner. As such, we have already discussed implementing their latest product, Cross Media - a fully integrated solution for personalised communication across print, email and URLs. Now that Communis has a multichannel marketing portfolio, we feel that we are prepared for the future and are confident that DirectSmile will continue to provide the technological developments to enable us to maintain our competitive edge."



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