



**United Mail's New
Competitive Advantage**



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IN 2018, A VARIOPRINT i300 FROM CANON SOLUTIONS AMERICA INCREASED UNITED MAIL'S COLOR WORK BY 42% AND GAVE ITS CLIENTS THE ABILITY TO REACT TO MARKET CHANGES

BACKGROUND

United Mail, based in Louisville, Kentucky, is a direct marketing company rooted in direct mail, data analytics and variable print. Its mission is to serve clients by “enriching connections between companies and their audiences.” The company specializes in complex variable data jobs in the financial, health care, and utilities marketplaces.

United Mail strives to stay on the edge of innovation, while providing its customers with the consistency and excellence they expect. “We continuously upgrade and expand our suite of services to bring state-of-the-art communications to our clients and their customers,” says Casey Hendrick, president of United Mail. “As technology has advanced, so has our suite of services.”

Although direct mail is at the heart of everything it does, United Mail offers a full range of billing and document management services, results-driven marketing services, digital print services (including personalized URLs and full data-driven personalization) and web-to-print/digital storefronts.

Today, United Mail has more than 5,000 happy clients across the United States.

CHALLENGE

In the 1980s, United Mail began serving its clients with presorting/comingle operations. In the early 1990s, the company grew into a digital printer and lettershop environment. As its production volume grew, its existing production solutions became too limiting.

“At the time, our presses just weren’t fast enough,” Hendrick explains. “Plus, the type of jobs we were running changed. In both the transactional and marketing spaces, our customers were going from high-volume monochrome direct mail packages (envelopes containing multiple documents) to high-quality color packages. They also wanted to increase their personalized, one-to-one communications. We knew that we needed to get into production inkjet.”



United Mail needed to find a solution to maintain its level of data handling while providing application flexibility. In December 2017, it installed a VarioPrint i300 from Canon Solutions America.

Media and application flexibility were also becoming challenging. United Mail needed to maintain a lot of muscle in data handling while providing outstanding application flexibility. This meant investing in a press that could run a wide range of substrates. The solution would need to compete with offset prices, too.

SOLUTION

In December 2017, United Mail installed a VarioPrint i300 production inkjet press from Canon Solutions America. The press runs at 294 ipm, with sheet sizes up to 13.8x19.7". This gives United Mail extremely high productivity and low running costs. "Not to mention unparalleled flexibility," Hendrick says.

The VarioPrint i300 was installed with the Canon PRISMASync controller platform, which streamlines United Mail's production by making printing operations intuitive and uniform. Every aspect of its jobs, from composition to media to production to finishing, is easily managed, even when there are last-minute changes.

The installation included the optional ColorGrip feature from Canon Solutions America, which expands the range of media on which the press can print. It does this by enhancing the image quality on papers not designed for inkjet. These papers now have print quality rivaling inkjet treated stocks.

"ColorGrip is a great tool for creating vibrant color," Hendrick says. "We use it on all stocks that are not coated. The result is a higher quality mail piece that really catches people's eye."

The VarioPrint i300, combined with the PRISMASync workflow, gives United Mail a cutting-edge workflow solution for end-to-end performance. "We can do anything from a few variable pieces to many thousands, and every single one of them can be different," says Hendrick. "Plus, the output is an impressive high quality."

A big part of the purchase decision was the company behind the press — Canon Solutions America. "As we worked through the decision-making process, the ability to work with Canon Solutions America was a big part of our decision," Hendrick explains. "They really had a step up in service, and they helped us get to where we needed to be."

Because the VarioPrint i300 can combine black-and-white and color pages on one single print platform, this also saves United Mail money by eliminating the need for dedicated monochrome and color printing systems.



The VarioPrint i300 gives United Mail "unparalleled flexibility," according to Casey Hendrick, president of United Mail.

RESULTS

United Mail uses its VarioPrint i300 exclusively for variable data and versioning work. “We are currently running 100% VDP work on that press,” Hendrick says. “All of our personalized letters, newsletters and booklets are printed using a full white paper workflow.”

This not only saves customers time, but money, too. “We combine different forms, different pieces of art and different packages on the fly,” Hendrick continues. “We store a lot less inventory and run fewer versions because we are printing them right on the press.”

This increases customers’ speed to market, and for many, that’s what it’s all about. “In the previous workflow, the speed with which we could get packages out the door was determined by whether or not the shell was available in the warehouse,” Hendrick says. “If inventory was depleted and the shell had to be printed, the whole job could take weeks. Now, we just print everything as we need it. With our storefront app, once customers can place an order, I can have PDFs on the press within an hour.”

This is a competitive advantage in markets, such as insurance, in which customers have to be able to react very quickly to changing marketing conditions. “Say a storm creates a lot of hail damage,” Hendrick explains. “They can go online, place an order, and be in homes within days. When our clients can be in-home before their competitors, it gives them a real advantage in securing that work.”

This workflow not only increases clients’ ability to react to market changes, but it saves them money, too. By combining all their records in a single mailing, clients save a significant amount of money on postage.

After one year of having the VarioPrint i300 installed, United Mail has moved 70% of its toner jobs to the sheetfed inkjet press. For jobs that are inkjet-compatible, this rises to 85-90%.

The press is already close to capacity and United Mail is finding it to be 65% more cost-effective than its toner-based presses. “The capital expense of the equipment is higher, but the cost per print is in the 50-65% range when looking at clicks, supplies and labor,” Hendrick explains.

Additionally, United Mail noted immediate significant improvements in uptime, application versatility and productivity. In fact, it is now hitting uptime between 97-98%. “The reliability is unlike anything we’ve ever had,” Hendrick says. “Our average in between fails is 2.9 million images. That’s absolutely amazing.”

Color volumes are up, too. United Mail’s monochrome work was up 1% in 2018, but its color



United Mail runs 100% of its variable data and versioning work on its VarioPrint i300, using a full white paper workflow, saving time and money.

work grew 42%. “With inkjet, the world is moving to color, including transactional color,” Hendrick says. “On transactional documents, for example, a lot of clients are printing more bar and graph charts so the recipients can visualize their data.”

Since installation, the company has printed more than 20 million sheets. Many of these have been new applications, including variable data booklets. Things are going so well, in fact, that United Mail is considering adding to its inkjet fleet. Ultimately, the decision will be based off of volume and speed. “Some of our volumes are really large,” Hendrick says.

Whether printers’ volumes are at the mid range or the high end, Hendrick notes that high-speed inkjet, and the VarioPrint i300 specifically, is a technology they need to pay attention to. “The VarioPrint i300 has been one of the best things this company has ever invested in,” he concludes. “We are really, really thrilled. It has absolutely exceeded our expectations.”