Advance Central Services Michigan

Facts and figures

Advance Central Services Michigan offers a complete turnkey printing service. With three state-of-the-art production centers located across the state, ACSMI provides print services to commercial print customers, many other newspaper publishers and retail clients.

ACSMI is responsible for printing all of MLive Media Group's publications, which includes eight newspapers across the state of Michigan covering local news, sports, entertainment and politics in print and online for a weekly 1.1 million readership.

The printing service provider **Advance Central Services Michigan** has a lot to do: it is responsible for printing no fewer than 74 publications, mainly from the state of Michigan, such as daily newspapers, magazines and flyers. At its three printing sites, ACSMI offers a complete turnkey printing service, with quality from start to finish. In addition to print services, ACSMI offers a complete suite of creative services, including all forms of print and digital advertising; web development and hosting; all varieties of landing pages; marketing materials, special sections, and other types of multimedia creative. Naturally, the requests and requirements of so many customers are manifold as well as customer-specific. Coordinating and handling them is, therefore, a challenge. ACSMI manages all of this with ppi Media's workflow solutions, which it has been implementing since 2003. During the course of these many years of cooperation, ACSMI not only centralized its production and efficiently coordinated its orders from its headquarters in Grand Rapids, but also expanded its range of products to include further services.
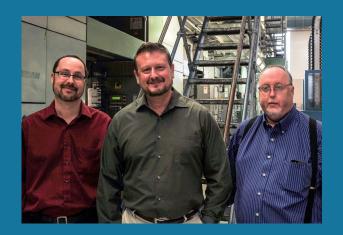
More than just business as usual

"Our history together started late in 2001 when we embarked on what has become a long relationship with ppi Media," say Dan DeVries (Analyst, System Support) and his ACSMI colleagues Matt Fleming (Director of Ad Production and Prepress) and Brian Leonard (Executive Director, Production and Information Technology). "At that time we were in the planning stages to develop a new printing facility for our customer, The Grand Rapids Press, with state-of-the-art technology. We needed to look at more than just business as usual. We needed software that would integrate as much as possible and automate as many tasks as possible. Many of the options out there would only do parts of the complex production process, but none except for ppi Media had a true end-to-end solution for computer to plate. We also required software that would allow us to transition seamlessly from one web size to another and from 65 lpi to 150 lpi. ppi Media has proven its value time and time again and provided us with software solutions that could not compare with others."

Transparent production control

Advance Central Services Michigan operates three state-of-the-art production centers strategically located across the state: Walker Production Facility near Grand Rapids, Ann Arbor Offset in Ann Arbor and Valley Publishing in Bay City. Walker is the headquarters for production planning and coordination for all three print facilities. The ppi Media product suite is installed on a VMware Version 5.5 virtualized computing environment. This implementation offers PlanPag, JobEntry, ProPag, ppi InkReduction, OM and AdCon as a closed loop workflow that guarantees transparent, flexible and smooth production control from start to finish and at all times for all products.

The closed-loop workflow integrates the ad booking, press control and editorial systems via open bidirectional interfaces with PlanPag for newspaper production planning and JobEntry for commercial production plan-

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From left to right: Matt Fleming (Director of Ad Production and Information), Brian Leonard (Executive Director, Production and Information Technology) and Dan DeVries (Analyst, System Support).

ning. Both planning modules interface with the central production control, OM, which offers proofing options, optimized ink usage with ppi Ink Reduction and first needed—first out automatic plate production based on planned production times. Based on the production plans provided by PlanPag and JobEntry, the production for all three facilities is hands off: the details are handled by the highly sophisticated workflow building blocks with ProPag and OM operating in the background. ROI is based on the strong integration of all modules (information is only provided once and automatically forwarded to the relevant systems) and the hands-off philosophy of the whole suite.

The ppi Media suite allows ACSMI to efficiently manage production for all products and facilities with a team of eight planners and two IT system administrators for all software systems involved.

Additional upgrades in support of customers

ACSMI has taken numerous additional steps to ensure it can support the needs of a growing customer base. For instance, to accommodate new business from Gannett, the company had Muller Martini install a 30-head SLS 3000 inserter in its Walker Production Facility, in addition to upgrades at its Ann Arbor and Valley facilities. The

mechanical and electronic components of the Aurosys material handling system in the Grand Rapids facility were upgraded by Retrotech and Manroland. Web-width reductions at Grand Rapids were instituted by Manroland, with the assistance of Britton Services. And Ann Arbor Offset had new press controls installed by Harland Simon.

High-quality, cost-effective printing services

ACSMI is suited to provide high-quality, cost-effective printing services to customers based both in and out of the state. Its largest customer is the MLive Media Group, which boasts eight newspapers across the state of Michigan covering local news, sports, entertainment and politics for a weekly readership of 1.1 million. ACSMI is responsible for all facets of prepress, production, printing, packaging, transportation, delivery and customer care for all of MLive Media Group's publications. In addition to printing The Grand Rapids Press, Kalamazoo Gazette, The Bay City Times, The Ann Arbor News, Advance Weeklies and other leading newspapers, ACSMI delivers excellence to commercial print customers that include The New York Times, Lansing State Journal, Port Huron Times-Herald and many other newspaper publishers and retail clients. ACSMI also provides a complete suite of creative services to outside customers.

Intregrated system at all printing facilities

"Fast forward 12 years since we went live in 2003 – ppi Media has been core to our business," says Fleming. We integrated commercial printing, ink and press plans at three print facilities and expanded our infrastructure to improve support and printing capabilities. All of these are centrally facilitated by ppi Media's PlanPag, JobEntry and output management system OM. We have leveraged ppi Media's software all the way through prepress, pressroom, packaging and billing," says Matt Fleming.

The next challenges to tackle

"Today, Advance Central Services Michigan is leaner and stronger than ever," says Dan DeVries. ACSMI continues to develop with the introduction of new products. In 2014, ACSMI introduced the JobEntry commercial workflow and ppi Media's ink reduction module, ppiInk Reduction. In 2015, ACSMI expects to add ppi Media's Disaster Recovery and a PDF workflow for the classic PlanPag environment as well as a new XML Editorial Interface. "Together with ppi Media as our partner, the process of improving workflows and identifying opportunities for revenue growth and ROI in a competitive market will continue," Dan DeVries is convinced.