

Success Story: InfoPath

Company:
InfoPath

InfoPath Meets Customer Needs for Real-Time, On-Demand Distribution

Industry:
Information Technology Services

At a typical small-run publisher, outbound media distribution needs vary from day to day. A training and educational organization may need to send 10 copies of its DVD courses one day and 100 the next. Or, a B2B services company might ship dozens or hundreds of marketing collateral packages depending on the time of year or a recent campaign.

Z-Firm solution:
ShipRush Server
PrintRush

Results:

- InfoPath fulfills media orders on the same day, rather than the two weeks it took previously – even for high-volume requests.
- Fast shipping of customized content drives a positive experience for end customers.
- InfoPath's customers reduce overhead significantly by not having to maintain collateral in-house, or invest in the infrastructure and staffing to meet distribution demands.
- Automation enabled InfoPath to bring on new marquee, enterprise-level customers and compete effectively to retain existing customers.

Regardless of the type of media to be sent, an organization's revenue generation and customer satisfaction hinge on timely distribution. But fluctuating demand makes it tough for organizations to balance equipment and staffing needs cost effectively.

InfoPath, an IT process service provider, helps companies mitigate the ups and downs of media distribution. Working with a range of mid-size to enterprise-level companies, InfoPath automates the entire lifecycle of corporate media, creating and distributing materials for its customers on-demand and in real-time. The company integrates with its customers' databases, and then processes and ships orders as needed. As orders go out, InfoPath relays key tracking information back to customers' systems.

"With a fully automated process, we provide customers with same-day distribution, ensuring that materials reach recipients quickly," said Tom Loughran, General Manager at InfoPath. "Customers don't need to worry about putting the infrastructure or staffing in place, or stocking inventory, to handle changing distribution needs."

Automation with ShipRush, PrintRush

Until 2005, InfoPath managed its customers' media distribution needs manually. Using Excel spreadsheets, the company tracked requests for materials, and the status and details of distribution. Typically, it took about two weeks to fulfill orders, especially during high-volume times.

InfoPath evaluated a variety of automation solutions to expedite this process. Only Z-Firm's ShipRush Server and PrintRush solutions provided the combination of functionality the company needed.

"We needed SQL database integration, the flexibility to print and ship together, and links to UPS. Having all those capabilities integrated together in a single solution with Z-Firm enabled the automation that is so key to our service delivery."

"We looked at a lot of different alternatives. We needed SQL database integration, the flexibility to print and ship together, and links to UPS," said Loughran said. "Having all those capabilities integrated together in a single solution with Z-Firm enabled the automation that is so key to our service delivery. It's all linked together in the database and so easy."

— Tom Loughran, General Manager

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Expediting the Process End-to-End

InfoPath connects with its customers' databases via Web services, XML, FTP or database integration. The media requests are received by InfoPath in real-time and the fulfillment process begins immediately.

With ShipRush Server, InfoPath processes shipments rapidly. ShipRush Server automatically pulls addresses from InfoPath's SQL server, eliminating all manual effort from the process. ShipRush Server automatically prints bar coded shipping labels with order reference tags, and saves tracking numbers in InfoPath's database.

At the same time, the company sends tracking and shipping information back to its customers' databases so they can answer customer questions. Order recipients also automatically receive email notifications that include tracking numbers.

PrintRush automates merge printing, generating receipts that InfoPath includes with orders. The company quickly creates the necessary receipts, even for high-volume orders.

Results: Same-Day, On-Demand Distribution

Automation enables InfoPath to fulfill media orders on the same day, rather than the two weeks it took previously. In the case of one large client, InfoPath ships real estate and appraisal course materials for more than 200 real estate schools across all 50 states. The company rapidly produces and ships customized content as needed, even when order volumes reach 500 at a time.

In response, that particular customer was able to grow its business and handle a higher volume with InfoPath's service. Customized content, per school, allows the educational company to command a higher price for its offerings.

Fast shipping of customized content also drives a positive experience for end customers. InfoPath's customers reduce overhead significantly by not having to maintain collateral in-house, or invest in the infrastructure and staffing to meet distribution demands.

"There's no learning curve for customers and they immediately have information available about shipments," Loughran said. "By automating the process, we eliminate the need for customers to have a shipping department, or to warehouse collateral. We create media on-demand and ship the same day."

Automation opened the door for InfoPath to bring on new marquee, enterprise-level customers in the past year. In the case of the real estate education organization, expediting the process allowed InfoPath to effectively compete and retain the business.

"Our customers can compete against ever-increasing commoditization," Loughran said. "If it's not specific to an end user or timely, then it has little value. We can create something that 1,000 people get tomorrow, and it's customized and up to date."

About InfoPath

InfoPath, based in Alpharetta, Georgia, is an information technology (IT) process service provider. Founded by computer services industry executives to serve the growing number of mid-size companies that seek to control the cost of owning and running end-to-end information technology. A key value is also the significant reduction of risk associated with business interruption, loss of medical and financial business information, and security/privacy of medical business information.

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About Z-Firm LLC

Used by tens of thousands of users, Z-Firm's software reduces complex processes to a smooth, integrated button. Established in 1992, Z-Firm has built parcel shipping solutions since 1998. Today the ShipRush platform is the most prevalent independent parcel shipping software in North America.

Z-Firm's mission is to create tools that are developer-friendly and shield the developer from underlying complexity.

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