



10 Ways to Make Print Fulfillment Part of Your Marketing Strategy

Understand How the System Works

Effectively fulfilling print and promotions can have an important impact on both costs and the realization of marketing campaign goals. According to industry research firm Aberdeen Group, “Effective management of printed materials and services, a category which comprises nearly 7 percent of a company’s total budget, requires a delicate balance between cost and quality to not only maintain the company brand, but also sustain consistency in all outward marketing and advertising.”

Yet a recent study by the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) Council, *Competitive Gain in the Demand Chain*, says there is a serious disconnect between marketing executives and the go-to-market process. The issue is that marketers tend to focus on strategy, creative development and campaign execution to the detriment of effective demand chain provisioning. According to the study, demand chain provisioning includes:

- Efficient and timely delivery of marketing and merchandising materials to dealer, agent, franchise, retail and brand office locations
- Processing of customer requests for sales literature and samples through Web, call center and email channels

In fact, only 2 percent of survey respondents believe that fulfillment, warehousing and distribution of marketing materials are critical functions. That’s unfortunate, because the CMO Council study also points out that poor performance in the demand chain leads to the loss of billions of dollars in unseen revenue.

This lack of attention to the demand chain may also explain why many

marketing executives have little faith in their organizations’ fulfillment processes when it comes to handling print and promotions. The study revealed:

- 80 percent of respondents believe that their organizations are not efficient or effective in provisioning all of the demand chain
- 20 percent admit that their demand chain is underperforming or in need of improvement

Further, marketing’s indifference to the demand chain results in a relatively small number of companies providing sales support materials on demand, a move that the Council says would not only reduce costs, but also offer opportunities for greater customization and improved sell through. With only 15 percent of marketers conducting audits and evaluations of their marketing supply chain effectiveness, there is little awareness of organizational performance.

This white paper looks at key issues in the fulfillment of print and promotional materials and offers 10 steps marketing organizations can take to make their approaches more strategic.

Demand Chain Performance Perception



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*CMO Council: *Competitive Gain in the Demand Chain*

“Marketing tends to be preoccupied with staying on track with individual tactical executions or traditional marketing fundamentals like lead generation, campaign execution and content or creative development.”

– Donovan Neale-May, executive director of the CMO Council

10 Steps to Make Fulfillment Part of a Marketing Strategy

Fulfillment can provide a terrific market advantage when incorporated into a campaign strategy. Here are 10 steps to help you move fulfillment from tactical to strategic:

Think Fulfillment First. No one argues that staying on top of marketing tasks such as lead generation, campaign execution and content or creative development is important. But fulfillment, warehousing and distribution can't be an afterthought either if you want to lower costs and optimize results. You need to think through issues including:

- Who will be accountable for the order fulfillment process?
- How will materials be ordered to reduce time and costs?
- How will materials be packaged for optimum impact, cost-efficiency and environmental sensitivity?
- Within what timeframe will orders be delivered and at what associated costs?
- How much inventory will be maintained—if any—and how will supplies be replenished?
- What reporting will be required and how will program performance be measured?

Create a Fulfillment Team.

Establishing a program that embraces best practices in fulfillment, warehousing and distribution is complex. It also generally involves multiple internal departments and outside vendors. You need someone to take overall responsibility for coordinating the effort as well as participation from all the parties involved. Creating a fulfillment team with a qualified leader is essential to consistently accomplishing marketing campaign goals.

Get Demand Driven. Carrying big inventories that are too often based on faulty forecasts adds nothing but expense. That's why there is so much emphasis today on demand-driven fulfillment

programs. One of the most effective steps you can take is to create a custom-branded digital storefront that provides anytime, anywhere Web-based sales and services to you and your authorized

Consolidate the Demand Chain.

Almost half of respondents to the CMO Council study viewed demand chain procurement and fulfillment as a compilation of individual vendors.

FTP transmission to fulfillment



users. It also delivers quality variable-data print capabilities, templates and formats to meet your creative requirements.

Storefronts are particularly effective for companies with a geographically dispersed sales force or distributor, agent or retail network. Essentially, a storefront allows authorized users to access an online catalog 24/7, view documents and then order either inventoried materials or create on-demand, variable-data print from pre-approved templates.

The storefront can accept payment, if desired, and transmit the order into the printer's system. A fulfillment center then handles any physical aspects of the project—pulling inventory of static materials, printing on-demand pieces, binding, wrapping and distribution.

Typically, companies ask each vendor to bid on individual elements. While that might appear on the surface as a prudent way to drive down costs, it ignores the benefits of eliminating steps as well as the concept of total cost of ownership.

For example, a decision to inventory printed materials based on forecasts might lead to purchasing those materials from multiple qualified vendors based on the lowest per thousand costs. Yet an on-demand solution from a single vendor could result in higher per piece costs but lower overall costs by eliminating waste and inventory expense. What's more, it opens the potential for more personalization while eliminating stock outs.

*“Ripon makes sending files & everything else so easy.
Once I know a file is delivered, my job is done.”*

– Debbie Brown, Manager, Bulk Sales and Good Sam Network

Improve Demand Chain Visibility.

Desired by many but achieved by few, your fulfillment team needs to have near-real time visibility into the status of orders, shipments and in-transit inventory to optimize program performance. Simply put, greater visibility into the demand chain gives you the information you need to manage your marketing campaigns from a demand-based perspective. You need to be able to generate real-time inventory reports that trigger reorders as well as track your shipments from the time they leave the shipping dock until they arrive at their destination.

Develop Rapid Response

Capabilities. Channel partners like retailers—and especially big-box retailers—no longer want to be your warehouse. So if you're providing anything from books or periodicals to point-of-purchase materials, they expect to receive the exact quantity they want when they want it. This means that you must have the experience, automation and supply-chain knowledge to fulfill orders at the speed and frequency your customers require. You must have the systems to deliver complete, accurate orders in rapid cycle times customizable to meet their needs. Combining print and fulfillment in one efficient facility can cut cycle times while reducing costs.

Acquire Logistics Management

Expertise. Fast, cost-effective fulfillment requires skillfully managing your critical inbound and outbound shipping events to attain the optimum balance of cost and speed. Systems should have the ability to “rate shop” alternative carriers by different Zip Codes as well as identify opportunities to consolidate shipments for even greater savings.

Distribution is definitely an area where bigger is better. A larger fulfillment operation often has the ability to negotiate lower freight rates than either you or smaller service providers. Transportation is a price-per-pound-and-mile world, so teaming up with a company that has volume and negotiating clout is much to your advantage.

Seek Stability and Commitment.

Fulfillment operations tend to come and go. If you outsource fulfillment, warehousing and distribution, look for a partner with a longstanding track record and the resources to invest in new capabilities. Your goal should be to acquire a partner that has best-in-class capabilities suited to your specific needs.

Practice Continuous Improvement.

The marketplace constantly changes, and you can't afford to accept status quo. You should periodically review pre-established fulfillment and distribution metrics, which provide an ongoing

opportunity to evaluate performance and to better meet your changing business strategies. Keep in mind that the CMO Council study said that only 15 percent of marketing executives audit and assess their marketing supply chains' performance. That presents a big opportunity for you to get a step ahead of competitors simply by paying more attention to improving the fulfillment side of your marketing program.

Consider Asset Allocation.

Many organizations struggle with the issue of whether to provide fulfillment, warehousing and distribution services internally or through an external partner. Outsourcing to a carefully qualified partner instantly gives you world-class fulfillment services without incurring the infrastructure costs. You can focus your financial and human assets more strategically in areas such as product development, marketing and customer service as opposed to investing in a non-core competency. Many experts say the litmus test is whether a future president of your company would likely come from a given area. If the answer is no, then outsourcing is a legitimate consideration. Outsourcing also moves fulfillment from a fixed to a variable expense.

Digital Storefront Advantages

- Streamlines order entry and approvals
- Manages the use of content
- Monitors individual departmental budgets
- Controls the approval process
- Enables customization while maintaining brand control
- Defines promotions and campaigns for specific user groups or regions
- Discourages independently created marketing materials by channel partners
- Reduces obsolescence and inventory costs
- Provides cost- and time-efficiencies for all parties



Source: *Digital Publishing Solutions*

Case Study: Trailer Life Directory Publications

Background

Good Sam Enterprises describes itself as America's champion for the fun, freedom and adventure of Recreation in Motion—and with good reason. The company is one of the nation's largest providers of outdoor recreation media and clubs, all of which serve America's recreation vehicle and outdoor recreation enthusiasts. If there's a North American enjoying the outdoors, there's a Good Sam Enterprises' club, media outlet or event dedicated to that consumer.

Challenge

Such a diverse offering requires a lot of literature fulfillment services. After experiencing unsatisfactory performance from other outside vendors that resulted in errors, lack of timely response and distractions to Good Sam Enterprises' internal staff (which includes Trailer Life Publications), the company entrusted several major components of its literature fulfillment program to Ripon Printers. Those included the Good Sam Network (the RV equivalent of five-star rated campgrounds) fulfillment needs as well as bulk and direct-to-consumer orders.

Solution

Ripon Printers' IS department streamlined the order process by taking it online and automatically routing Good Sam Enterprises' FTP transmissions directly to fulfillment. Twice daily fulfillment specialist LuAnn Packer and her team check for electronic notifications indicating order requests. The fulfillment team then prepares and ships custom multi-component kits that include letters, stickers, logos, certificates and a number of other items the campground properties use in promoting themselves as Good Sam's Parks.

Results

"Ripon Printers has provided both fulfillment and book printing services for Trailer Life Publication for more than a decade," says Kim Souza, who manages the program. "We do not consider them a vendor. We consider them a partner in our business. They are responsive, respectful and they always go the extra steps to support our changing business needs. From printing, to storage, to efficient and cost-effective fulfillment, we can count on them to keep us and our customers happy."

Bulk Sales and Good Sam Network Manager Debbie Brown puts it this way, "Ripon makes sending files and everything else so easy. Once I know a file is delivered, my job is done. It's not so much what Ripon does, but how they do it. I can't praise Ripon's fulfillment specialist, LuAnn Packer, and her team enough for contacting me whenever there is the slightest thing out of whack. So many fulfillment houses are willing to just let things slide."

And that gives everyone, including Debbie Brown and Kim Souza, more time to put Recreation in Motion.



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About Ripon Printers

Ripon Printers provides cost- and time-efficient fulfillment and distribution solutions that reflect the high-level performance and attentive service you require. We have the capability to handle virtually any volume requirements, and our central location offers advantages for national distribution.

What's more, we offer a complete range of print solutions that includes coldset and heatset web printing as well as sheet fed and digital printing. Whatever your needs, Ripon Printers has the right fit.

Our market focus is on small to mid-size catalog marketers and publishers, producing catalogs, directories, manuals and soft-cover educational products. Linking our capabilities together is an obsessive devotion to customer service that places your satisfaction above any other business goals.

Establishing a fulfillment and distribution program with Ripon Printers is easy and hassle-free. To learn more about our fulfillment and distribution services, please contact your representative or send an email request to sales@riponprinters.com. You can also find Technical Information Sheets about our services by visiting www.riponprinters.com, or see the Mailing & Fulfillment section of our new video at <http://riponprinters.com/fulfill.jsp>.

Ripon's Fulfillment Services

- Demand-based strategy
- Offset & digital hybrid print solutions
- Warehouse management
- Online order processing & management
- Digital storefronts
- Real-time reporting
- Print customization
- Logistics management
- Packaging & kitting
- Returns processing



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