

Paperman for paper management

The National Magazine Company's production director Andy Parslow is using Paperman's technology to improve the accuracy and efficacy of the publisher's paper management

The struggles that print publications have had with declining revenues in recent years have been well documented. With the top line suffering, production directors at publishing companies are under ever-increasing pressure to keep costs in check.

The National Magazine Company (NatMags) is one of a growing roster of publishers that have chosen to address these pressures by using Paperman's online system, based on supply chain data collected using the Papinet standard for recording transactions in the wood and paper industries. NatMags, a subsidiary of Hearst, joins other big publishing names including The Economist, Emap, Bauer and Dennis.

"We had explored some other paper management systems that are out there," says NatMags' production director Andy Parslow. "The hook for us was to get a more transparent view of what we hold at the printers at any given time. Prior to using Paperman we had spreadsheet tracking sheets for all the different paper types we used." These spreadsheets were used to provide forecasts for volume requirements, as well as recording deliveries and actual usage.

"All this had to be collated," he continues. "It was accurate to a point but not quite as accurate as it could be. Sometimes it could take up to a week for a usage sheet to come through."

Now that deliveries and usage data are immediately entered by NatMags' print suppliers, it means that any necessary calculations can be carried out automatically. This is the case with every one of the publisher's print suppliers, with the sole exception of a small operation in France that prints only one section a month in one magazine.

Production planning sheets, which partly determine NatMags' paper usage forecasts, can also be entered into Paperman without the need to cross-reference spreadsheets. "We are about to start getting the magazine controllers to enter that information into Paperman so there will be a time saving up front," says Parslow.

That one-week wait for a report is also becoming a thing of the past as a result. All this is of particular benefit to Parslow since, where other publishers might employ a small team to manage their paper, he takes on all of the responsibilities involved himself.

Furthermore, NatMags has integrated Paperman with its finance system – the only one of Paperman's clients that does so. Paperman's John Stevens explains that NatMags' suppliers "are sending in Papinet electronic invoices and



Paperman is sending all financial transactions to the Hearst financial system, called Infinium, in the US". Thanks to this invoicing process, "straight away there is an overhead that has gone", says Parslow.

He is currently seeking further opportunities to "broaden the horizons of Paperman to other areas within the business", and also to increase automation. For example, Parslow hopes to extend the system with a print module that can incorporate print tariffs. In terms of pure paper management, his endgame is that printers simply scan barcodes to record deliveries and usage, thus reducing man-hours spent entering data. "As things stand, the printers are still manually entering usage and delivery information into the system. They are currently working with Paperman to automate that," he says.

Parslow is also planning greater integration with NatMags' business management software, including an MIS. "My vision is trying to get Paperman to talk to what we have here or vice versa," he comments. "As a publisher you don't want to go out there and spend hundreds of thousands of pounds on an SAP system."

NatMags has been able to achieve what it has with Paperman because there has been senior management buy-in to the strategy that Parslow has put in place. With the potential to obtain transparency in the publisher's paper costs and ensure that money is well spent, it is not too difficult to see why. As he seems to have ambitious and innovative plans for extending the capabilities of the technology within the business, he will hope that this support continues.

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