



Controlling the paper trail

Large UK publishing houses are reaping the benefits of paper management system, which affords them cost- and time-saving, as well as reliable stock control

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Consider how the working day has changed in recent years and how many more tasks require completion within the same amount of time. More emails need answers, more meetings require attendance, more analysis is given over to sales and more future projections are required.

On occasion, developments emerge that free up time. One such development is paper management, offering firms a billable additional service. Yet increasingly, companies are beginning to take paper management in-house and manage these systems themselves via a bespoke system.

Many of the major firms involved in UK print have adopted a system called Paperman over the last few years. For some, it has made a huge difference to how they work. Paperman is a web-based application, which enables firms with very different paper management needs to work more efficiently and in a much shorter space of time. Publishers, print managers, printers and paper firms are all utilising Paperman to great effect.

“We’ve been using a modified version of Paperman for three months now,” says HH Associates paper buyer Tony Lawrence. “We use it to provide full analysis and breakdown on customer, grades, sizes and substrates. We also use it to keep track of prices and plan work a few months ahead.” Lawrence adds HH Associates did look at other paper management tools on the market, but felt real confidence in the team behind Paperman.

One of the key benefits for Lawrence is the time-saving offered and the ability to extract information that allows for effective and timely trend analysis and more accurate purchasing predictions. “By looking at these statistics, we can work more closely with our paper suppliers and procure more cost-effectively,” he explains.

John Stevens, director at JSA Consultants, is the brain behind Paperman. Prior to its launch, Stevens had developed a similar server-based system for a now defunct company. Quick to spot the flaws – installation of costly server equipment and the system at that time only able to manage the needs of one firm – Stevens knew exactly what to do when that company folded. The first change he made was to web-enable Paperman, allowing easy access and making the need for expensive server installations for clients completely redundant. The next change was to make Paperman a multi-vendor system, with varying degrees of access to information, to ensure those using it were only able to

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ELAINE BEVAN



5 benefits of paper management

- 1 Consistency – a standard format and procedure for paper management
- 2 Analysis – an accurate, up-to-date picture of the state of play within an organisation
- 3 Time saving – dispensing with the possibility of double-entering data, so queries can be answered quickly and accurately
- 4 Accountability – data entry ensures fast stock location and no more “missing” paper
- 5 ROI – initial investment soon pays off thanks to the savings in time and effort

access the information relevant to them. For Stevens, another key requirement of any multi-user paper management tool was independence. He argues that relying on the paper merchant, printer or publisher to use a non-independent service may quickly result in conflicts of interest.

Since the launch of Paperman at the end of 2004, several companies have adopted it, including Emap, Dennis Publishing, Haymarket Publishing, HH Associates and McNaughton Paper. “I even have users based in Australia,” says Stevens. “Thanks to the internet, I can have Paperman users across the globe.”

With a system capable of having that level of impact on the paper-buying of a publisher, print management firm or paper merchant and able to provide that standardised level of stock control, analytical tools, cost- and time-saving as well as eradicate ‘lost’ stock, you would anticipate a substantial cost. On the contrary, Paperman users’ licences cost £1,500 per user, per year. A typical publisher may spend £6m-£8m a year on paper, so even if Paperman saves just



1% in that year, it has more than paid for itself.

Printing World publisher, Haymarket uses Paperman. Elaine Bevan, group paper buyer at Haymarket, adopted the system following supplier consolidation at the end of 2005. "It gives us an immediate picture of all our titles and allows us to see stock forecasts and usage figures for every title, supplement and one-off publication we publish," she says.

Following consolidation, McNaughton Paper now acts as a third-party supplier for Haymarket, placing its orders with UPM. The move is proving beneficial for all involved. As McNaughton Paper sales director Jonathan Hunt explains: "We manage the stock and ordering for Haymarket on behalf of UPM. We are contracted to UPM, which, in this instance, is both our supplier and our customer. This month, we were able to make a number of suggestions to Haymarket on how it could reduce stock costs by standardising on reel widths." Hunt attributes Paperman's ability to give more detailed analysis of figures as the driving factor behind these suggested changes, adding that

these types of analyses were impossible using a simple spreadsheet system.

August is also the first month where McNaughton Paper will run the Paperman system as a method of obtaining invoices from UPM. It plans to run the two systems in tandem for another two months in order to adopt a 'belt and braces' approach to invoicing, but does not foresee the need to refer back to the old system.

Prior to the introduction of Paperman, McNaughton Paper kept a number of spreadsheets, specific to each customer, in order to track and report on paper purchases. Now, according to Hunt, the ability to manage the same or even more detailed information through a standard system is a huge bonus. Being able to adapt and amend data easily, depending on the needs of the specific customer, is also of benefit, he says.

While some paper firms make an additional charge for paper management services, Hunt is determined that McNaughton Paper will not charge clients for this service. "We use the Paperman system as part of the way we operate," he explains. "We don't charge extra for the service. Paperman suited our internal needs, and we are able to pass on the benefits of that to customers without the need to invoice for it. The time it has freed up has more than paid for the system and allows us to focus on other work, rather than the input or double-handling of data," he adds.

Paper management systems suits the needs of larger companies or those with multiple presses and suppliers, which need to exercise a greater level of control. With increasing demand for accountability, cost savings and more accurate reporting throughout the industry, coupled with the benefits a system like Paperman offers, the question for these firms is not whether they need paper management, but when. ■

Case study

Emap



Jeremy Bull

Two-and-a-half years ago, Emap adopted Paperman, moving over from an in-house paper management system that it felt was coming to the end of its usefulness.

One of Emap's main criteria was a web-enabled paper management system to communicate information across all parts of the supply chain and speed up the administrative process. Having an independent system was also important to Emap, so that,

should it alter suppliers, it could still retain its paper management system.

Group production manager, Jeremy Bull, explains how simple integration was between Emap's old system and Paperman. "We were able to copy over information from the old system directly into Paperman."

One of the key features used by Emap is its ability to export information on stock use and turnover and keep a tighter control over purchasing trends to ensure that stock is not over-purchased. Paperman frees up time from having to

collate this information manually and allows Emap to focus on stock efficiency. Bull states that Emap also uses the system to share data with paper suppliers, and is able to download order information directly after approval.

Emap is also able to use Paperman to monitor where stock is, how much there is and keep closer control on purchasing trends. For Bull, the only drawback as that when internet connectivity is interrupted Paperman is inoperable.

The system is run by two staff and now manages all of Emap's 100 titles.