

CASE STUDY

An integrated workflow with Tharstern,
Prinect, Citrix ShareFile and BigIceBox.



To see an interview with James and watch
his automated workflow in action, visit
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Tharstern 

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ELLE MEDIA GROUP

Elle Media Group started life in 1982 as a printing company called Falder Printing Limited. They had just three employees based in Seax Court in Essex. Today they have nearly fifty employees and are proud to boast an in-house design studio, a publishing house and a print company equipped with the very best of modern technology - all under one roof.

WHAT THEY DO

Elle Media Group is a high quality commercial printer, with a niche product of variable charity Christmas cards and they service around 300 charities throughout the year. They strive to be the most bespoke publisher out there and so give their customers the opportunity to change everything about their design. Customers can either supply their own artwork or select from standard and variable parameters - using a stock image but adding additional foil, for example. The cards are multi-packs and often contain different cards in each pack, so it's not a straightforward operation.

WHY WAS IT TIME TO CHANGE?

The company previously operated an estimating system with an MIS bolt-on and this set-up was working well until the introduction of a new Heidelberg Speedmaster XL106 in February 2014. Having made the decision to link the Speedmaster to their MIS using JDF, and knowing that their previous MIS wasn't capable of doing this, they began to investigate other suppliers.

James Cuthbert, Managing Director at Elle Media Group says that Tharstern were the obvious solution: **"It was clear from the demos we had that Tharstern could provide what we wanted; it was clearly the better product."**

THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Elle Media Group put together a working team of 3 to handle the implementation process, with one person concentrating full-time on the installation.

The estimating part of the MIS went live in August 2014. This was followed closely by job booking and the system was fully operational by October.



James Cuthbert

Managing Director, Elle Media Group

LESSONS LEARNT

"I'll be honest, there was a fair amount of disruption during the implementation phase because we knew from the beginning that we wanted to achieve something exceptional. As such we knew that the system had to be built in a very precise way and that the data we put in it had to be the right data. So honestly, if I had my time again, I'd make my life a bit easier and pay for additional resource to support us during the data collection and implementation process."

WHAT'S CHANGED?

By purchasing the Heidelberg Speedmaster, Elle Media Group have been able to increase turnover by 40% and, although Cuthbert says that their old MIS would probably have been able to cope, the head count would have been immense. Instead, they've been able to move valuable members of staff into areas that were in need of extra resource following the increase in turnover. The reprographics studio and job handling function have been reduced from a team of 5 to just 2 (with the other 3 moving into creative and other roles within the company) who are both now managing that extra turnover too.

Capacity reports are run every day and are emailed to management on a regular basis. Cuthbert himself receives 3 every day - one for the current day, one to the end of the working week and one for the next 7 days. They show how much capacity there is on each machine and give him the opportunity to adjust pricing on a daily basis to react to that. Tharstern's selling band system for pricing allows this to be done in a matter of clicks.

Cuthbert says that traceability has also improved and he can now see what's being produced, where it's being finished and how long it's taken. **"We can accurately manipulate the rates and running speeds in our estimating system so that when a job's been produced, we can compare estimated and accurate costs and see if we need**

to make any changes to improve profitability."

He adds: **"It's the information that you get out of Tharstern that makes it so good. We're working on a manufacturer's model rather than a printer's model so the output is paramount. Unless you know what**

you're outputting and can access that information readily, then it's not going to work. Having Prinect linking back to Tharstern allows us to monitor and see exactly what's been output. It also allows us to have incentives in place based on productivity for our press and finishing department."





MY BEST BITS

“My favourite part is the bespoke work we’ve carried out on the card system. The way we’ve worked with Tharstern to create a workflow between our MIS, Big Ice Box and Heidelberg, and how we’ve linked that into Citrix Sharefile is very exciting. It’s hugely powerful and it’s something that didn’t exist previously. I’m obsessed with automation and (according to Heidelberg) the levels that we’re pushing automation to here are far beyond what everyone else is doing in Europe. Yes, we’re giving everyone a few headaches, but everyone agrees that it’s worth it.”

GENERAL EXPERIENCE

“It’s very refreshing to work with people that will listen to your ideas, recognise ones that will benefit their customers, and then actually make the necessary changes to make it work. We were worried that moving from a small MIS provider to a large one would mean that we’d have to miss out on that kind of flexibility. But we didn’t at all! It’s refreshing to see that attitude in such a large MIS provider.”

THE FUTURE

Cuthbert reports that they’re now using the system close to its potential

throughout the business, though he still believes that they can do more. His next job is to carry out a review of each department, scrutinising any manual tasks and assessing whether or not they can be put through the MIS or even automated. **“We’ll always be pushing things to the next level,”** he adds.

THE BOTTOM LINE

“Our investment in technology and relationship with Tharstern and Heidelberg has allowed us to grow the business by 40% in under 18 months with no additional staffing.”

James Cuthbert, MD

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