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HVTO Q&A: Toby Cobrin edp *Director* INTERQUEST

OutputLinks talks with one industry expert, Toby Corbin edp, INTERQUEST director, to get the scoop on today's---and tomorrow's---industry trends. In the next year, says Cobrin, we'll see more of a blurring among the different types of company documents, as well as a focus on color, and HVTO and 1:1 marketing.

Question:
What's the biggest trend today for high volume transaction output (HVTO) professionals?

Answer:
In my estimation, the biggest trend is the blending of high volume transaction output with promotional communications and electronic delivery. Years ago, Xplor talked about the "marketspace" where three spheres of communication were converging: electronic, transactional and graphic arts. I think HVTO professionals must understand that today, this convergence is a reality. Another important trend to note is service consolidation which is taking the form of combining document service functions under one structure, and may also involve outsourcing or facility management.



Question:
Will companies have to re-think their HVTO because of this trend? Why?

Answer:
Many companies are already adjusting and unifying their communication strategy. We are seeing in-plants merge with data center print operations and Internet responsibility for customer communication being part of the printing and publishing establishment. Even when these mergers are not happening, the communication between departments is much more open so that the best customer touch-points can be achieved. If a company has not taken a strategic view of how to make this work, they will not be competitive in the area of service excellence for their customers.

Question:
What industry trends have not received the buzz they deserve?

Answer:
We are moving into a new infrastructure for information delivery. One of the challenges is to be able to build systems to support enhanced communications and make it happen efficiently and effectively. Trends in content management, workflow, and productivity must be part of the basic structure of any company's communication strategy.

Question:
What developments or changes do you see with bills, statements, invoices and 1:1 marketing in these documents? Will this trend increase?

Answer:

There are three trends in this area that I feel are important.

We all live with bills, statements and invoices every day. As a consumer, I probably pay more attention to these documents than most others. The easier the document is to understand and the more aesthetically pleasing, the more effective my use of the document will be. And, if some relevant marketing and promotional information is included, I will probably act on it. So the format of the document is important.

Second, all companies need to pay close attention to the bottom line and their operational costs. With further postal rate increases imminent, we have to do all that is possible to lower the cost of delivering a paper bill or statement. Page reduction, combining statements, and postal sortation efficiencies are essential.

Lastly, we need to look at the delivery vehicle. Our customers have to be able to choose the method of delivery for their bills and statements---paper, electronic or both.

Question:

Is color a top priority when it comes to industry trends?

Answer:

Definitely. We have heard from the leading vendors how important color is to the document. Now we are hearing of incredible success stories from companies and service providers. But the truth is we are all consumers when it comes to documents. I know how I respond to a well targeted, full color document. As we see the cost continue to drop and the reliability improve, color will continue to hold a top priority for HVTO professionals.

Question:

You're chairing a course at Xplor Document University on industry trends. Give us a snapshot.

Answer:

We have some of the leading analysts who will share their views of the current trends in the industry. Topics include color, multiple media, outsourcing, and document strategies. Attending the course will not only be an excellent opportunity to hear what the industry experts have to say, but to network with other HVTO professionals.

Question:

What issues or trends will be key this year...in five years?

Answer:

I think in the next year we will continue to see more of a blurring among the different types of company documents. HVTO, marketing literature and traditional offset documents will find a common ground in digital document delivery. Electronic delivery will play a synergistic roll with paper delivery and provide customers with a way to bridge both delivery methods and to enhance the buyer-experience.

In five years we will be much closer to the document that gives us the best information, in a timely fashion, anywhere we are located----the world is the limit!

Question:

Thanks for your time! What's your best advice for today's professional?

Answer:

Exciting technology enhancements are creating more value to the document and information delivery. Stay abreast of these changes by educating yourself on the latest trends. I recommend that HVTO professionals learn more about graphic arts issues and developments (design, color management, special finishing, etc.) as the two worlds of graphic arts and transactional printing are merging. Go to conferences and seminars, sit in on a Webinar, take advantage of some of the websites that provide the latest information about the industry, talk to other professionals--- there has never been a more exciting time for the HVTO professional!