

Success story

Efficient production and distribution of third-party orders at Ringier Print, Adligenswil



The production and distribution of third-party orders is an important part of the work of many newspaper printing plants and often makes up over half of the turnover. Business success depends on the efficient and error-free processing of such orders, but how can this be ensured in a time of increasing logistical complexity? How do you handle orders ranging widely in volume and at the same time ensure that complex distribution requirements such as those from national post offices are taken account of?

Ringier Print in Adligenswil, Switzerland, asked itself such questions. Their project manager, Christophe Müller, found the answer in a cooperation with ABB. He explains where Ringier Print was coming from: “Previously we used four or five different systems to handle third-party orders. We had just modernized our mailroom and wanted to improve our planning. Instead of a chain of systems we wanted a single integrated system. This system would have to support our many levels of approval and help make the processes and the responsibilities clearer. It was also important for us that we could avoid potential errors by entering data only once.

“It was not our aim to develop a tailor-made solution”, explains Müller, “we did not want a one-off system; we wanted to work with a strong partner and standard systems. We found the right solution in a development partnership with ABB.

“Both parties have benefitted from the synergies. ABB brought the know-how in the area of integrated IT solutions, we brought the mailroom know-how.” The result of this partnership is the new ABB product MPS DistributionDataPlanner.

Christophe Müller describes MPS DistributionDataPlanner, which has been in use in Adligenswil for several months, as very extensive and flexible, but what does it actually do?

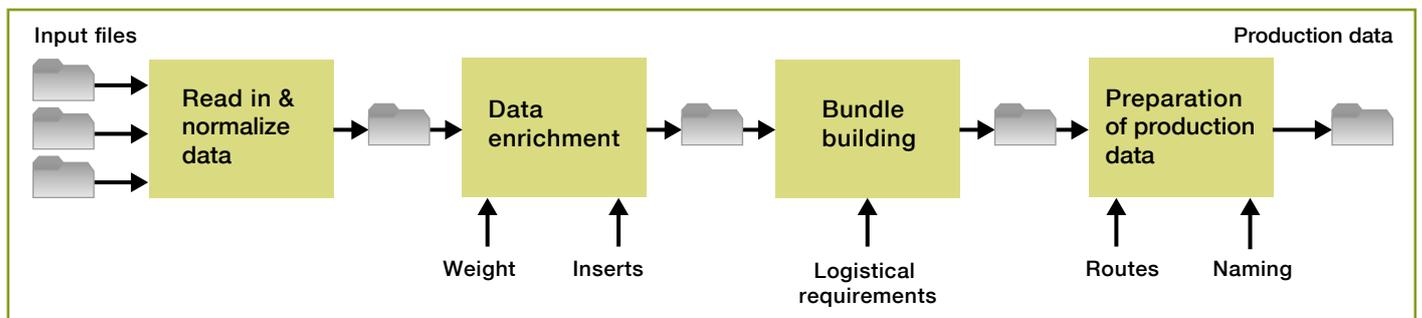
MPS DistributionDataPlanner is a solution for the importing, entry and processing of various forms of distribution data for the production of third-party products. It is available as a standalone systems, but can also be fully integrated with ABB’s production management system MPS Cockpit, as is the case in Adligenswil.



Christophe Müller at his workplace with MPS DistributionDataPlanner

The input data from the customers with information such as delivery addresses are completely heterogeneous. However, you cannot force your customers to change their IT systems so that they produce a standard format, you have to cope with it.

The data come in the form of CSV or so-called fixed length files, but the internal formats can be completely different. This is where MPS DistributionDataPlanner starts working. It reads the data in and brings them into a user-defined format. If the format of the data from a particular customer is not known already, the system uses various rules to identify the data fields. It can be that a manual action is required at first, but as soon as the format has been established the reading in and normalization of the data run completely automatically.



Overview of the functionality of MPS DistributionDataPlanner

Next the standardized data need to be enriched. The entire print run is divided into delivery positions depending on the form of distribution and the logistic channel required. Then information about any inserts and the weight of the component products is imported. The inserts can also be allocated manually.

In the next phase, titled “bundle building” in the diagram above, the data is extended with the logistic requirements. This is where the requirements of the national post office are taken account of. In Switzerland the Swiss Post has a predefined sequence of all possible addresses in the country, and the delivery addresses have to be sorted according to the list — a non-trivial job when there are several hundred thousand addresses to sort. Nevertheless MPS DistributionDataPlanner manages this in a few minutes.

Further configurable rules support the processing for other distribution channels like single sales and wholesalers.

The rules for the preparation of bundles acceptable to the post office, and also those for combining bundles into post sacks and container, are also applied at this stage. Of course the system also ensures the correct labelling on all packaging units. Sequence optimization also simplifies the later work on the delivery ramps.

Production aspects such as the delivery routes flow into the last phase, which generates the production data. In the case of Ringier Print, Adligenswil, where FERAG and SITMA mailroom equipment is in use the production data is in the form of FERAG and SITMA strings. At other sites with other mailroom equipment, e.g. from Müller Martini or Schur, the data is provided in the corresponding form.

Christophe Müller sees MPS DistributionDataPlanner as a transparent system over the whole production chain.



Fully-automated postpress production thanks to the integration of MPS DistributionDataPlanner with MPS Cockpit

At the time of writing it was too early for Christophe Müller to quantify the advantages of the system, but some aspects were already clear. “When using our old system the time required for preparing a large order, that means from the importing of the data to the generation of the FERAG string, was about 3½ hours. Now we have reduced that to 1½ hours”. He has also noticed that the effort for recording production data has been significantly reduced.

The recorded actual values of the production data have a great value for Ringier Print., as Christophe Müller explains: “the recorded data are exported to SAP for the invoicing. It is also a great advantage for us to have all the data in one system. That simplifies the reuse of these data and makes it much easier for other systems to access these data.”

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