More Confidence in Variable Direct Mail Proofing and Production Quality

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Compart's custom comparision apps help Japs-Olson to achieve a higher level of quality control that exactly fit their workflow, along with greater speed and reliability.

Japs-Olson Company is an industry leader providing direct mail and commercial printing services. Founded in 1907, Japs-Olson has been at the forefront of the direct mail production and commercial printing industry for over 100 years. Today the company employs more than 600 people and operates a modern 512,000 square foot facility around the clock to meet clients' deadlines. Based in Minneapolis, it is one of the 10 largest direct mail and commercial printing production firms in the country, thanks to its highly skilled work force and ongoing investment in equipment and technology.

The company had been searching for a better way to handle proofing and approval for customers' variable direct mail communications. Japs-Olson also wanted to simplify the information used in production and to add to their uptime during the variable imaging process.

With today's highly complex, targeted and personalized direct mail, it's hard to predict where changes can occur from one file version to another or from one piece to another. Even simple software upgrades can cause unexpected challenges downstream.

The magnitude of the Japs-Olson operation required a powerful and flexible solution. Compart

was the only provider that offered this flexibility. A combination of Compart's DocBridge Delta document comparison tool plus four custom applications based on the Compart SDK has eliminated hours of effort and added to the accuracy of the review and production at Japs-Olson. The Compart applications add value as overall efficiency tools by catching even small changes in files that could affect pressroom production.

"The Compart tools make our operations more reliable and we can give customers full assurance that their jobs are produced accurately. With these tools, we can reduce the QC overhead of every job," said Douglas Carl, Director of

Data Services for Japs-Olson Company.

Custom Applications Enhance Proofing and Production Processes

"Because the core DocBridge engine was flexible enough, we could accommodate their custom requirements. As a result, Japs-Olson achieved a higher level of quality control that exactly fit their workflow, along with greater speed and reliability," said Mark Maragni, Vice President of Sales, Compart North America.

Executive Summary

Japs-Olson has been at the forefront of the direct mail production and commercial printing industry for over 100 years. They needed a better way of proofing and approval for customers' variable direct mail projects. They also wanted to simplify the information used by production and to increase uptime during the variable imaging process. As direct mail has became more complex and personalized, it is harder to predict where changes occur from one file version to another or from one piece to another.

The DocBridge engine was flexible enough to accommodate Japs-Olson's custom requirements. They also achieved a higher level of quality control that fit their workflow, along with greater speed and reliability.

More Efficient Variable Direct Mail Proofing

Custom Application: Highlighting

When the production floor gets a mail piece for printing, the staff must know what will be variable on the document and what remains static. With clear visual cues from color-coded highlighting, operators can spot which regions should be static and where they should expect variable content. Before the custom automation from Compart, this quality check was done manually. Now Japs-Olson can produce variable data mailings with greater accuracy in less time.

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The highlighting tool has another key benefit. "Eventually we will provide highlighting for our customers when they approve work. This will make the process easier for them because they can see all personalization scenarios in one easy-to-understand view," said Carl.

Custom Application: Hot Spots

With variable imaging applications, it's difficult to communicate the areas where variable print can occur on each piece. There can be subtle or drastic differences in what is printed from one piece to the next. With the Hot Spots solution, Japs-Olson can now concisely show where all print lands throughout an entire press run allowing them to confidently position print heads in a way that is best for their customers' content.

"Imagine putting the ink from every record on top of each other all on one page, so as the letters change, you can see where the spacing and flow change. When we know where the imaged areas are going to be, it's easier to set up the inkjet print heads that will spray on that information. Compart's automated comparison is far faster than manually paging through the file output to check the suitability of planned inkjet head placement," said Carl.

Custom Application: Pixel Compare

The custom Pixel Compare tool lets users identify specific regions to compare between two documents. For example, the client may see a one-up PDF document for approval, but the job may actually run on press in a four-up format. The tool compares the one-up document against the corresponding portion of the four-up form. While the two documents may not be technically identical, this tool verifies the personalized regions are the same. "It is absolutely critical that what we produce matches our client's approved proof. This application helps us ensure we do that," explained Amy Blodgett, Data Processing team leader.

The comparison happens automatically in the background at the end of the workflow. If a difference is found, the Pixel Compare application sends an alert, so technicians can investigate. "Even though system upgrades happen all of the time, Pixel Compare gives us the confidence to program even the most complex variable document content," said Blodgett.

Custom Application: IJPDS Line Segments

The IJPDS Line Segment application is related to the Hot Spots function. While Hot Spots identifies a printing area pixel by pixel, the line segment application gives users a numerical value to find starting points for imaging. Production personnel use this information to precisely position print heads. Before, this was done manually by visual inspection and repeated adjustment. Now the Line Segment application automatically determines the correct print region, conserving precious time with press crews and capital equipment.

"There are other PDF compare tools, but no one had the specific capabilities we needed, which is why we chose Compart to build them," explained Carl. "Compart was already close to what we wanted with DocBridge Delta, and it was a small step from there to reach our custom solutions. The software operates at the command line level for streamlined integration with our workflow automation." In March, Carl launched a full production roll out of the custom applications at Japs-Olson following a joint software development and integration process.

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