



Transforming advertising
and marketing production

Leading U.S. retailer rings up major savings and speed with offshore and onsite pre-media services

One Affinity Express client is an S&P 500 company with more than 140,000 employees that operates 2,400 retail food stores in the United States, offering grocery, general merchandise, health and beauty care, pharmacy, and fuel products. The company also offers supply chain services such as wholesale distribution of products to independent retailers and provides logistics support services. It is not only a leader in the grocery segment, but is also in the top ten of all retailers in the U.S. and the top 50 worldwide.

Challenges

In an innovative move designed to reduce costs, the company centralized production for its retail chains so all requests would come through its headquarters for better control and standardization. Yet the retailer still needed a better way to provide support, reduce turn times and improve communication with external customers and internal design functions.

The organization was outsourcing to a U.S.-based provider, but the service was expensive and not meeting all its needs for creative services. More importantly, the investment in outsourcing hadn't justified itself in increased productivity, lower costs and greater ROI.

As a result, the company made another breakthrough and decided to become one of the early adopters in the retail industry of business process outsourcing for advertising and media. It selected Affinity Express—a provider known for transforming production for its clients—to build and operate an optimized onsite, onshore and offshore

delivery platform, customized to meet their unique requirements.

The Affinity Express Solution

Key managers from the client and Affinity Express joined forces to define efficient processes and develop an approach that would blend offshore, onshore and onsite resources.

Based on this partnership, today Affinity Express has a team of ten dedicated designers offshore, executive account management onshore and two traffic coordinators onsite. The placement of teammembers onsite improves communication, facilitates gathering of complete information and delivers schedules that are essential to the production team. Traffic coordinators serve as a bridge between internal and outsourced resources.

To integrate easily into the production workflow, Affinity Express became a working node on the client network. The traffickers and offshore production employees log into the client's systems. No technology purchases were needed to support connectivity and on-boarding was quick and seamless within the existing operating environment.

The Affinity Express onsite staff trains the client team and requestors to provide detailed instructions and use the workflow effectively, which results in high levels of customer satisfaction.

Currently, Affinity Express handles page assembly for in-store signs, marketing communications and shelf tags. Approximately 90 projects are created per day, which amounts to



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Results:

- Saved 65% in operating costs
- Cut pagination turn times in half
- Managed seasonal peaks and valleys
- Freed up staff to concentrate on core competencies

approximately 1,000 pages per week (a project can range from a simple ad to complex multi-piece product).

The Results

In the past two years, the client has realized operating savings of 65% by using the Affinity Express BPO model compared to the past practice of sourcing to an onshore-only provider. Furthermore, Affinity Express cut turn times for pagination in half—from four to two days. In addition, the company leverages the scalability of Affinity Express to address seasonal highs and lows. For example, in the months of March through May 2011, the average monthly utilization was at 129%. Affinity Express can absorb the excess volumes and the client has no need to staff up for these busy times, which caused management and cost control issues in the past. The company has achieved cost savings, faster turn times, lean processes and flexibility. Affinity Express has earned a happy client.

The Future

The relationship continues to grow as executives of Affinity Express and the client partner to drive even more benefits and expand to support

additional areas. Because these services are core to the company's business, they are visible to the entire client management team up to the president of the organization. The client and Affinity Express are engaged in discussions around expanding print pre-media services and interactive production services, an area that is growing rapidly.

Specific projects include:

- 1) Combining production of marketing communications and in-store with the same functions for the independent retail group to achieve additional synergies
- 2) Blending and streamlining circular production for the independent and retailer groups to enable the company to achieve 40% more in savings
- 3) Testing design of a range of interactive services for the client such as HTML emails

Ultimately, these two leaders companies are committed to paving the way and driving continued innovation in pre-media services for retailers. The rest of the industry is watching.

About Affinity Express

Affinity Express is the leading onsite, onshore and offshore provider that is 100% dedicated to high-volume advertising and marketing production solutions. Headquartered in Chicago, Illinois, Affinity Express maintains production centers in Pune, India and Manila, Philippines. Affinity Express delivers services 24 hours per day and six days per week, producing products in more than 30 software packages and multiple platforms. The company manages its unique creative process with a continuous improvement approach based on Lean Six Sigma, so that clients receive reliable output with fast turn times for their mission-critical digital files. The comprehensive, customized advertising and marketing production solutions of Affinity Express help clients lower production costs, generate higher profits and gain a competitive edge, without having to invest in establishing and maintaining these capabilities internally.

For more information, contact Affinity Express at
(847) 930-3205 or visit www.affinityexpress.com