

Digital Edge



From a small three-person shop to seven-figure sales in just two and a half years!

In an industry of wafer-thin offset margins and printers entering digital, wide-format and marketing services markets just to survive, Digital Edge Print & Media Services of Mississauga has seemingly emerged from nowhere to quickly become an industry leader, especially in variable data. If you had to sum up its remarkable success in just one word, it would be “accountability.”

As he sits in his office, now located in a modern 15,000-sq.-ft. facility in Mississauga (he and his staff of about 30 moved there on April 28 of last year), even Bob Shea, Digital Edge Print & Media Services' President, is often amazed at how far his company has come in such a relatively short time. A veteran of the printing wars, he started in the business with his father and brother when he was a teenager over three decades ago. Today his company is arguably one of the fastest-growing printers in Canada.

“I know it sounds clichéd and repetitious, but we've achieved our success by maintaining the highest possible quality of printing while giving exceptional service to our customers,” he says. “But more than that, our entire team is fully accountable. By that I mean many things. First, we answer all calls personally and promptly and we return all phone calls the same day. That goes for all e-mails we receive as well – they all get returned right away or on the same day, regardless of who calls us.

“Second, we plunged into digital in a big way – with machinery, software and some of the industry's best digital and data specialists led by my partner, Creative Director and our Vice President Jason Farmer. Third, because of this expertise, we quickly became more and more sophisticated and efficient in variable data. Our philosophy in this market, once again, was total accountability. While many providers in this business seem to accept the standard that as high as 5% of a client's targeted mail will end up as waste or spoilage, we absolutely, absolutely refuse to,” Shea insists. “Our approach is, and always will be, 100% in, 100% out.”

Today, Digital Edge mails approximately 1.5 million meticulously prepared and targeted pieces per week with varying degrees of variable data included. So when you consider this high volume, it's no wonder that Shea shudders at the mere thought of any of his clients accepting the loss of literally thousands of pieces – especially when just one direct mail piece could lead to a possible sale.

“Fourth, and a huge part of our success, has been our partnership with Insource and its President, Tim Wakefield,” Shea says. “It's safe to say that we could have not

come to this point without his help and knowledge. He has been our key supplier and our go-to person any time we want to take our mailing capabilities to the next level,” he adds. “Finally, we all work as a team here and we take enormous pride in our work – so our employees' dedication is undoubtedly another major reason for our ongoing success.”

Insource: A valuable partner

When it comes to new equipment, Shea turned to Tim Wakefield of Insource – not just for machinery such as inserters, inkjets and tabbers, but a strategic plan for future growth. Wakefield's partnership approach to the Canadian mailing marketplace also reflects Shea's partnering approach with his own customers – both continue to earn referrals and repeat business from existing clients.

“It began with Insource providing Digital Edge a basic tabbing machine to satisfy its immediate needs,” says Wakefield. “But after walking through their shop, I sat down with management and asked where the company wanted to be in a few years – what its vision and goals were. As a team, I was soon assessing the company's current processes and existing technologies and was able to facilitate a plan for future growth.”

In a nutshell, it has been Wakefield's proven ability to accurately evaluate his clients' requirements that has made Insource unique. “We're not just a machine reseller, we're strategic partners,” says Wakefield. This proven expertise has given Insource exclusive selling rights with some of the world's leading manufacturers – and in the process has transformed the company into a solutions-based consulting enterprise as well as a vendor of high-end mailing technology.

The other obvious attribute shared by both companies, as Bob Shea puts it quite emphatically.... “we don't lie. We tell our clients up front what the costs are and keep them informed every step of the way. If problems occur, we tell them – but we always stand behind our products. Our uncompromising honesty and integrity has resulted in referrals which, in turn, has resulted in acquiring some very large clients.”

Wakefield's echoes those sentiments. Our business philosophy is to understand the needs of our prospects and provide value-added solutions that will improve our clients' position in the marketplace. “I always advise our partners that Insource is here to help them out of a commodity market and guide them into becoming a value-added partner with their customers. Digital Edge has been a prime example of that philosophy at work.”



Teaming up for success. Left to right are Digital Edge's Vice President and Creative Director Jason Farmer, President Bob Shea and Insource President Tim Wakefield

The real “edge” in Digital Edge

Today, Digital Edge provides its direct-mail customers with some meticulous and cost-efficient variable data services. In fact, the company has managed to achieve an unheard-of 99.5% accuracy – and when you're dealing with 1.5 million pieces a week, that's eliminating a huge amount of waste. This is direct mail taken to an all-new level. The accuracy is due in part to Intelligent Read & Print and other high-end automation features of the machines provided by Insource. Intelligent camera systems can now track and verify the progress of each mailing piece during every step of the production process and immediately relay information to adjust the run if problems occur. When you combine this technology with superb digital inkjet printing and modified inserting, tabbing and folding features, the result is unprecedented accuracy – and down the road, a new level of customer satisfaction. In fact, Digital Edge recently purchased a mailing house of its own to ensure a smoother workflow and more control over customer service.

Digital Edge then, can accommodate the simplest of targeted mailing pieces to the most complicated – such as fully personalized letters and cards matched and inserted into personalized envelopes, with personalized post-it notes tipped on inline, all with complete tracking through each step.

Each unit, however, can be used for a single function or can be connected seamlessly to produce more sophisticated mailers. For Shea and Wakefield, the overall equation is simple – even one spoiled mailing piece is unacceptable. So (pardon the cliché), they keep pushing the envelope! “Just imagine if we were mailing out

\$100 cheques for a client,” they point out.

Digital Edge's high level of accuracy also encompasses proper updating of databases. This data management includes the ability to do all the standard sorting and address correction for addressed and unaddressed mailings to get the best possible rate from USPS/Canada Post, as well as more complex data management needed for today's highly personalized one-to-one colour pieces they produce. Gone are the days of black-only variable.

As you can see, it's more complicated than most printers think. All the more reason to have your services managed professionally if you're thinking of adding variable data mailing to your current services' mix.

Everything under one roof

Digital Edge's “accountability” benchmark also extends to its other services such as its state-of-the-art pre-press and graphic design, high-quality colour offset, digital and large-format printing (featuring colour posters up to 5 ft. wide by 150 ft. long), finishing and binding. In other words, with a full range of services all under one roof, the company can guide you through any project from concept to final printed product. The latest CTP technology plus a full range of presses (from 2-colour duplicators to 40-inch, 8-colour units) with inline AQ coating facilitate this. Many advertising agencies and designers also partner with Digital Edge and their clients are reaping the benefits both from a budget and quality standpoint.

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