

David Richards: a premium personal touch

If print management is sometimes considered a relatively fresh-faced new kid on the block, David Richards is certainly one print management company that has a long established track record to put before clients.

Founded in 1973, the Essex based company describes itself as a medium-sized player in the print management sphere, and one that is able to demonstrate a level of premium customer service that some of the bigger print management firms, restricted by their very size, might only be able to pay lip service to.

"We really put great emphasis on personal service rather than just a team of people that are anonymous, like many bigger companies," says sales director Peter McCarthy. "We are able, at a senior level, to be much more hands-on with clients."

A recent job for Nike, described in more detail elsewhere in this profile, is a case in point. McCarthy spent a very intensive four week period over Christmas personally working closely with the design agency Rosie Lee on a critical, high profile marketing launch that Nike was planning. McCarthy's role in advising on production issues and managing the process was crucial in the deadline being successfully met.

"The design agency in question likes to work with people that give them the right service," McCarthy explains, "and I spent an intensive four weeks working by their side. Not many companies would do that.

David Richards draws on more than 30 years of experience in the print industry in offering clients a highly personal and prized service.



Larger companies might just put an account handler on the job, but it warranted that sort of attention from us. That's the attitude we have here."

David Richards offers a full print management service, including warehousing, pick and pack and distribution. Mail fulfilment is proving to be a big part of the company's business, with short notice pick and packing involving a good deal of handworking. Customers are able to interface with the company through its bespoke David Richards Online system (see boxout), which the company has written itself and is able to tailor to the needs of each client. It includes ordering, re-ordering, management reports, stock control and PDF libraries amongst the various features.

It has clients across a range of market sectors, and is happy to work with any size of client – "we can manage a £500 job or a £1 million contract," says McCarthy. Many clients have had bad experiences with outsourcing print management or dealing with printers, mainly centred on the critical quality of service issue, and David Richards offers some sanctuary in this harsh environment, McCarthy contends.

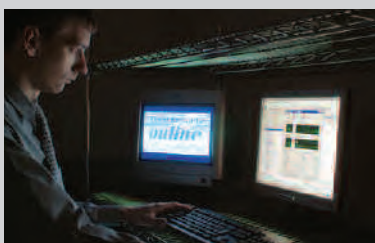
"All of our customers say we give good service, and we've built our business on that. We put a lot of time and effort into it. Not every print management company can say that, and some of the bigger companies just don't have our expertise."

Increasingly, McCarthy is finding that clients are looking for more than just cost savings when outsourcing print management functions. "It's not just about saving money these days, it's about getting the right price for the right job, because you don't want the quality to suffer.

"There are often great cost savings to be made from minimising stock levels by using our print management system. When you visit a company that doesn't have a print management system in place you would be surprised how many redundant print items you find. So, it's also about streamlining the processes, making it more efficient, and that's actually where some

DAVID RICHARDS ONLINE

Right: David Richards Online offers a range of invaluable services



David Richards Online is an essential tool for companies wanting to monitor stock lines, requisition stock and stationery, proof online and produce management reports. Clients appreciate the control it allows them over who has permission to request items through the system, and it uses the widely used "shopping basket" approach for the requisitioning process, with an approval facility for companies wishing to check stock and stationery requests before dispatch. Management reports can be produced online, and jobs such as business cards can be created online and sent direct to a digital printer.

savings can come.”

Print management can reach into many areas of a company’s operations that are traditionally dealt with in-house and David Richards has an evolving portfolio of services to meet the needs of clients. Recent additions that it has high hopes for are general office stationery ordered via the online system, and envelope management and storage.

This last service includes storage of secure envelopes – that is, envelopes with a monetary value – within a secure area of David Richards’ warehouse, which is equipped with video cameras and other security measures, and which Royal Mail has approved for this function. “It’s just another part of print management for us, but not many people can do it,” says McCarthy.

As well as standard envelopes, David Richards can produce, store and distribute high volume flexo printed envelopes, and high quality litho printed envelopes for direct mail and promotions, with customers retaining great freedom to be creative in their designs. Further specialised products such as polythene and plastic envelopes can also be supplied.

The office stationery service began as a direct response to a client’s request and

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has grown to be used by about half a dozen of David Richards’ customers. The company provides an online PDF or hard copy catalogue of 17,500 of items, which it sources from a major wholesaler, and the service fits neatly into the client’s experience of dealing with David Richards.

McCarthy explains: “It’s a growing part of the business that we’ve bolted on the end, and the clients like it. The prices are as good as anyone else’s, and the client is already logged on to the system, so why not buy stationery on there as well?”

Customers can take advantage of all the online management features the David Richards Online system offers, such as management reports, ‘favourites’ re-ordering, and cost centre usage reporting for spend analysis and cross-charging. Using the online tool, customers can enlarge the product image from the catalogue to ensure they order the correct item.

The future of David Richards will involve continually building on the strengths it believes have made it successful so far,

McCarthy says, namely its print production expertise and its commitment to customer service. It’s an outlook that he appreciates is not particularly fashionable in the modern print management world, where many people look purely at the size of a supplier as evidence of aptitude.

“People might say that it is naïve, but that really is how it is. I know some might say you need to be more radical, and more forceful, but I don’t agree. Our people have bought print and sold print throughout more than 30 years of business, whereas in a very big company with lots of staff, things get delegated. If we quadrupled in size tomorrow I can promise you that customer service would still be at the forefront.”

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NIKE

Sports equipment giant Nike was planning a major new campaign promoting a range of products specifically to women, across a range of media. With the strapline “Take Sport, Add Music” it married together dance and sport in a series of marketing initiatives including TV ads and POS materials.

David Richards was assigned by design agency Rosie Lee to manage a critical part of the process. Thirty-six rectangular window display panels made of 12-inch record sleeves (some up to 90 panels in size) were required for installation at JD Sports stores, as were 33,000 booklets in dispensers.

The window displays were incredibly complex jobs; put together correctly, the 12-inch sleeves created an image featuring many dark shadow tones, graduating into lighter tones. It was therefore vital to get the right sleeves in the right order for the image to work. In addition, the album sleeves needed the correct sticker for the centre label of the record to ensure the consistent look of the image. This also had to be replicated back and front.



David Richards played a key part in Nike’s Take Sport, Add Music campaign

As well as managing the print to ensure the image was correctly represented, David Richards was responsible for packing the various elements correctly with intricate yet clear instructions for the unpacking teams to put the POS displays up in-store accurately.

Added to this complexity was the time frame, which was exceedingly tight – there were three weeks for production through the Christmas period. McCarthy says: “Logistically, from a print point of view, it was probably the hardest job I’ve ever been involved in. Everything had to be done manually, shrink wrapped and boxed, and distributed to 150 stores.

“We followed up afterwards to make sure that everything was OK. That’s the kind of personal service that we offer. I think it took a lot of the agency’s headaches away.”

Rosie Lee, the agency concerned, certainly appreciated the effort that David Richards made to get a successful job done. “This project shows how good David Richards are,” says Russell Clayton, Rosie Lee’s project manager. “It’s not the kind of project many people can get their heads around, and we realised there was a lot of room for errors early on.

“We have a fair understanding of the materials we want to use, but David Richards’ expertise helped source the right ones, and managed it even down to how it was going to be cut and folded, so we knew exactly what was going to happen, and we knew it would come out the other end as we wanted it to. It was pretty intensive here as well during production, but David Richards helped us get there, and Nike has been very pleased with the results.”