THE MARKETING RESOURCE CENTER
Taking It To The Next Level

By: Cary Sherburne

"A Marketing Resource Center (MRC) is the next generation of multi-channel web services and marketing solutions and offers centralized control and distributed execution of marketing initiatives."

Abstract:
Marketers continue to be under pressure to contribute to the bottom line. Key to achieving these goals is a need to realign operational processes to better support sales. This white paper defines a new class of web-based services that is designed to help marketers streamline the marketing and sales collateral process while at the same time opening new business opportunities for providers of printing services. Learn how a Marketing Resource Center™ can revolutionize your business while making life easier for your marketing executive customers.

Marketers continue to be under pressure to contribute to the bottom line. In fact, according to the CMO Council's 2009 Marketing Outlook, senior management in most companies is mandating that marketing contribute to the bottom line by retaining and growing market share and lowering costs through greater go-to-market efficiencies. Key to achieving these goals is a need to realign operational processes to better support sales.

One way marketers can begin to achieve these goals is by streamlining the marketing and sales collateral process. This opens up new opportunities for print service providers, print brokers or distributors to become valued partners to marketers and others responsible for the production and distribution of sales and marketing collateral.

Example: MRC Landing Page

By implementing a Marketing Resource Center™, providers of printing services can offer sophisticated single-source services that help marketers increase operational efficiency and reduce costs. A Marketing Resource Center (MRC) is the next generation of multi-channel web services and marketing solutions and offers centralized control and distributed execution of marketing initiatives. A Marketing Resource Center can address many of the needs of a modern marketing organization without requiring a huge investment. With a MRC, marketers can minimize the need to risk the displacement of the customer focused activities they are increasingly wishing to engage in as they strive for a better understanding of what shapes, influences and impacts purchasing decisions and intentions to do business[1].

More Than Marketing Collateral

Marketers will likely be attracted to the ability of a Marketing Resource Center to help them more effectively manage marketing and sales collateral on a national and even global basis. However, as they gain more experience with the process, they will be delighted with the additional capabilities a Marketing Resource Center can provide.

In addition to storing static materials for ordering, either from inventory or through print on demand, an effective Marketing Resource Center also offers the ability to dynamically create and modify a wide range of templates and materials online, and to instantly link to a production facility (or range of production facilities) for electronic or printed output, fulfillment from inventory, kitting, and other services.

This allows marketers to control content centrally but push the administrative aspects of ordering and payment to the field. Marketers have full administrative control over all elements of the page, determining precisely what can—and cannot—be modified. This ensures brand integrity and full compliance with corporate identity guidelines, regardless of where materials are actually produced.

In order to effectively meet these requirements, a Marketing Resource Center must have a robust asset library capability.
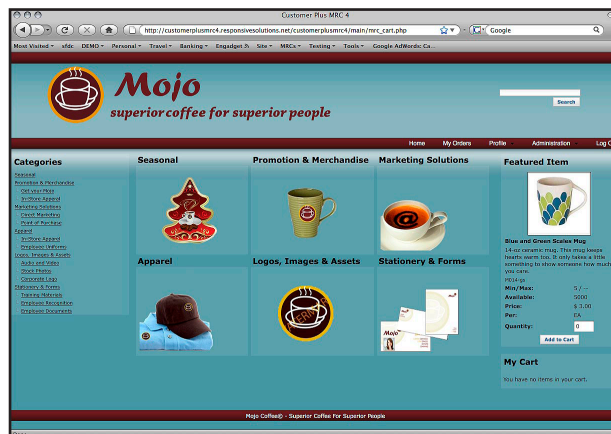
This database component of a Marketing Resource Center allows marketers to make a wide range of materials available in addition to conventional marketing collateral, and to track the usage of these materials. This can include approved images, photographs, logos, web banners, application files, and even audio and video files.

A Marketing Resource center can also be used to present promotional items and versioned branded apparel to stakeholders for ordering. These can be maintained in inventory and tracked by the system, or ordered on demand from a third-party provider.

Example: MRC Apparel Ordering

Thus, a Marketing Resource Center offers marketers the ability to manage a wide range of printed, preprinted and non-printed items through a single interface, including email marketing campaigns and online surveys. It includes a robust reporting capability that allows marketers to track and control who orders what. It can also be a central point from which marketing campaigns can be launched, tracked and measured.

Opportunities for Providers of Printing Services

Print service providers, brokers and distributors who implement a Marketing Resource Center can take advantage of a wide range of new business opportunities. First and most importantly, a Marketing Resource Center promotes an ongoing customer relationship that transcends the bounds and inconsistencies of a traditional transaction-by-transaction relationship. It drives a predictable recurring revenue stream to print service providers, brokers and distributors who engage in MRC-based relationships with marketers and other customers.

A Marketing Resource Center also elevates the relationship beyond a commodity print purchase, introducing more price elasticity into the model. Marketers are willing to pay more for the convenience, control and back-end savings that such a solution offers them. In many cases, the operational efficiencies provided by an MRC allow marketers to reduce internal headcount or direct resources to more productive work. Almost without fail, savings and increased efficiencies take the focus off of cost-per-piece and allow providers of printing services to protect eroding margins.

Finally, a Marketing Resource Center allows purveyors of printing services to aggregate products and services that are produced in a wide variety of locations by a range of manufacturers into a single order in a seamless and efficient manner, with all of the requisite reporting and measurement that is required to manage a sophisticated set of resources of this nature.

In its broadest implementation, a MRC allows a provider of printing services to expand services beyond traditional web-to-print by:

- Taking orders for materials to be produced in-house
- Managing the assembly and distribution of these orders, which might include items in inventory as well as items printed on demand
- Making digital assets such as photos, images, audio, video, ads and web banners available for controlled use by customer sales reps, agents, franchisees and other authorized personnel
- Expanding services to include printed and non-printed items not produced in-house. For example, a commercial printer can partner with a digital printer to add ultra short run and personalized materials. The customer has one source for all ordering and where the items are actually produced becomes largely irrelevant.
- Adding fulfillment of promotional items such as pens, cups, apparel, signage, ads and more, all managed from a single interface and sourced through a variety of manufacturing locations.

For print brokers or distributors, a MRC makes it easier than ever before to aggregate a wide variety of sources to meet the full range of customer needs. Production partners can easily be connected to a broad and flexible network in a way that benefits all aspects of the marketing supply chain.

MRC in Action

A franchise network of upscale coffee shops provides a good example of an MRC in action. In this scenario, the franchisor takes responsibility for developing content and materials and for establishing brand guidelines. This leaves franchisees free to focus on growing their businesses by executing corporate-approved campaigns and turning to a consolidated online portal for access to all types of materials provided by corporate, including marketing materials, operating procedures, employee-related documents, apparel, point-of-sale items, and even the coffee itself.

When a franchisee wishes to initiate a marketing campaign targeted at customers participating in its loyalty program, the franchisee simply logs in to the MRC and selects Marketing Campaigns. She is presented with a number of campaigns and chooses the one entitled "free cup of coffee." She uploads her customer list, including information about when they last visited and what they ordered. Once the campaign is proofed, paid for and set to execute, the franchisee need take no more action. This enables automatic production of a highly relevant personalized mailer (direct mail or email) that includes a personalized URL.

When the customer logs on using his personalized URL, he is presented with a personalized web microsite that reflects the offer received in the mail. After completing a brief survey, the recipient is presented with a coupon for a free cup of his favorite coffee. When the coupon is redeemed, its barcode is scanned at the point of sale, closing the loop on campaign results, as well as updating the customer database. Meanwhile, the franchisee can check back frequently to view campaign results, while the franchisor can monitor activity and utilize reporting to modify campaigns, develop new campaigns and to help in mentoring franchisees.

This is a powerful tool in and of itself, but it barely scratches the surface of the capabilities of an MRC. For example, when a franchisee wishes to hire new employees, the first stop is the MRC, where sample employment ads and employment applications can be found. Once the employee is hired, another visit to the MRC provides access to the employee benefits package, operating manuals and other new-hire materials. The franchisee is even able to order customized tee shirts with the employee's name and a selection of corporate-approved tag lines.

Example: Redeemed Coupon from Online Survey

Franchisees can also choose from images, corporate-approved music tracks and/or playlists to play in the shop, video for display screens and much more from the MRC's asset library. The MRC is the first stop as well when a new coffee flavor is released or the franchisee wishes to restock on coffee mugs and other coffee accessories for sale.

Example: Digital Asset Conversion & Download

For the print service provider offering these services, print volume is generated when brochures, point-of-sale materials or direct mail campaigns are ordered. In addition, the print service provider garners new sources of revenue through hosting and maintenance fees, as well as by consolidating orders from a variety of sources to meet all of the needs of the franchise chain.

While the coffee franchise scenario may sound complicated, it is actually quite simple to execute with a robust MRC.

To see an online demonstration of MRC, please visit:
www.videos.rsi-mrc.com

Customizing a Closer Relationship

As marketers continue down the path of optimizing operations, they are also increasing interest in integrating solutions from external partners with internal systems such as customer relationship management (CRM), enterprise resource planning (ERP), enterprise content management (ECM), sales force automation (SFA), Accounting, and Marketing Performance Management (MPM). An effective Marketing Resource Center will make this easy as well.

As providers of printing services gain more experience with deploying Marketing Resource Centers for their customers, they will also find that it is easier than expected to work with customers on these types of complex integrations as well as in the development of

custom portals that allow access to all relevant enterprise data and information. This substantially expands both the power of the MRC and the value of the provider of printing services as a marketing services partner. An effective MRC will be constructed on an open architecture that provides application programming interfaces (APIs) that simplify systems integration. Most providers of these solutions also offer fee-based professional services that make it easier for providers of printing services to engage with their customers at this level.The Marketing Resource Center should also offer a modular approach with an ease-of-entry model that can grow in sophistication as customer needs and business demands continue to grow.

Example: Postcard with Versioning Options

Nothing Short of Revolutionary

For print service providers, print brokers and distributors, a Marketing Resource Center is nothing short of revolutionary. It allows service providers to quickly and affordably reinvent their businesses to address dynamically changing market needs and requirements, driven by both the structural change which the industry is undergoing as well as the stresses of the current economic situation.

Where once print was a primary means of business communications, companies now have a myriad of options to choose from in lieu of print. The current economy is driving them to those alternatives faster and accelerating the rate of change the industry is undergoing. To survive and thrive in such an environment requires out-of-the-box thinking and rapid adjustment to market realities. A Marketing Resource Center is the key that can open the door to business growth, tighter customer relationships, and a strategic path that will carry the business successfully far into the future. The MRC is a new genre of web-based multi-channel web services and marketing solutions that allows a marketer to manage events and tradeshows, direct marketing, sales support, online marketing, internal procurement and retail from a single browser-based application. The results that can be delivered by a MRC are revolutionary.

Cary Sherburne is a well-known author, journalist and marketing consultant whose practice is focused on marketing communications strategies for the printing and publishing industries. Sherburne has written six books, including Digital Paths to Profit, published by NAPL; and most recently, No-Nonsense Innovation: Practical Strategies for Success, written with Bill Lowe, the Father of the IBM PC and available from Amazon.com. In addition to writing regularly for Printing Impressions and Printing News, Sherburne is a Senior Editor at WhatTheyThink., the leading news and analysis resource for the printing and publishing industry. Sherburne can be reached at Cary@SherburneAssociates.com.

This white paper was sponsored by Responsive Solutions, Inc. For more information about Marketing Resource Centers, visit www.responsivesolutions.com or call +1.727.456.1250.

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