

Georgia company's leading-edge workflow proves why "integrated marketing" is its name.

Challenge:

Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions had an ambitious plan focused on delivering best-in-class efficiencies – all part of the company's core philosophy of being an innovative marketing service provider offering disruptive solutions to corporations. The company, a long-time user of EFI's legacy PSI MIS software, recognized that EFI had the programming talent and focused print production expertise to offer a much better, high-end and integrated MIS platform to accommodate Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions' aggressive and strategic growth.

"We sell integrated marketing solutions, and it just happens to include products that a print service provider (PSP) would offer," according to Brian Benson, who founded the suburban Atlanta company in 1992. "In my opinion, EFI is the only vendor that can serve companies looking to go from a production-oriented business to the type of marketing services model we offer."

The marketing, branding and visual identity activities Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions manages for its clients include a wide range of products and services, from design, textile products, cross media marketing, apparel, promotional products, marketing collateral, digital signage, permanent signage, kit packing and project management.

After discussing streamlined estimating and ordering options with EFI several years ago, the company began transitioning its PrinterSite Fulfillment and PSI MIS to an EFI Pace™ MIS integration with EFI Digital StoreFront® web-to-print and eCommerce software.



"We're on track to grow by 30% year over year the next three years, and with our EFI integrated workflow, we can do that while adding little to no additional staff."

BRIAN BENSON, FOUNDER AND CEO
BENSON INTEGRATED MARKETING SOLUTIONS



Founded in 1992, Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions is the only fully integrated marketing solutions company serving the residential real estate industry. Through its custom online portals, the company collaborates with over 8,000 customers nationwide. The company has expanded outside of its original offset print offerings with expanded marketing service offerings that include; design, textile products, cross media marketing, apparel, promotional products, marketing collateral, digital signage, permanent signage, kit packing and project management.

The company's approach to business involves close partnerships with customers to help them save money by eliminating fragmented marketing approaches, common in many industries. Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions achieves those goals by inventing new models for efficiency.

"We like to be first to develop and first to market with new innovations," according to Founder and CEO Brian Benson. "We believe we solve business challenges with disruptive innovations. If it is not something we can get into and disrupt how customers do it today in an innovative way, we don't want to get involved. That's not inspiring and it is boring."

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"We started with a PrinterSite Fulfillment system that had minimal integration with PSI," says Courtney Sumners, Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions' senior vice president of operations. "We would manually enter jobs, and then a typesetter would create a printable file and send an internal proof."

Solution:

After the company started moving to Pace and Digital StoreFront in 2014, those processes became much easier. "Estimating is significantly better with the conversion to Pace," Sumners explains. "And the web-to-print offering reduced the number of touch points in our process. It is great when your highest-volume customers reach the point where they are creating printable files in Digital StoreFront."

Last year, the company made the significant decision to replace its offset equipment with a 29-inch sheetfed digital press. That shift eliminated the many process steps that come with platemaking, but the company wanted to maximize how nimble it could be as an all-digital operation to ensure it continues providing the best value possible to customers, which, in Benson's view, is speed to market.

That strategy led Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions to become the first company to add enhanced integration between Pace and EFI Metrix impositioning software. Benson made this investment, following its conversion from offset to digital, as part of an overall initiative to reduce touch points and automate workflow. As a result of this advanced workflow configuration, Benson's customers can order print, signage, apparel, kits and inventory online and their files and jobs will be automatically delivered to any of Benson's digital devices via a single touch point, thus increasing Benson's speed to market. Benson's goal is same day production.



Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions' Rachel Wall tracks progress on work in the company's Pace MIS.



Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions conducts regular training sessions on Pace for its employees..

Results:

"The switch to digital printing eliminated a lot of prepress work, but we needed a better way to get jobs to press without having multiple touch points from customer service to art," Sumners says. "Now, orders come in from EFI Digital StoreFront to Pace, where they are ticketed and pushed to Metrix, which imposes, creates imposed export files, generates JDF cut files and exports to the appropriate hot folder, based on the type of production job. We are very happy with our investment and the returns."

With its EFI Productivity Suite of connected Digital StoreFront, Pace and Metrix technologies, seamless integration is a key factor giving Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions a competitive edge over marketing agencies and print service providers alike. And new single sign-on (SSO) features in EFI Productivity Suite products can make those tools much simpler to use for the company and its customers.

Brian Benson has long had an interest in adding DirectSmile Cross Media Marketing software as a way to create an even more robust content platform for customers. When EFI purchased DirectSmile Benson jumped on the opportunity to leverage the potential for integrating it into their portals. In working with EFI and DirectSmile's development teams, Benson has developed a custom user interface accessed by its customers via the Digital StoreFront portal. And with a simple click, customers are able to leverage DirectSmile and have all their credentials passed through via SSO. "Our acceptance of DirectSmile was predicated on the integration EFI is bringing about," Brian Benson says. "And not having SSO would have been a deal breaker."

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"You can't build smart technologies if all your systems aren't working together," he adds. "When I'm talking to senior level executives at a prospective customer, and we are offering them many technology services, as soon as we mention that each one is a different platform, with a different log-in and user name, they're not interested."

"If a technology doesn't integrate, to me it only makes your business model more complicated. The benefits, both to us internally and our customers, get trumped by the disruption all the new systems make to your organization."

In addition, Benson Integrated Marketing Solutions is working with EFI to integrate a third-party software into its workflow to establish a business-to-consumer (B2C) offering and create a new, consumer-facing business. When launched in late 2015, the B2C technology will be yet another key differentiator. Also, it continues to allow Benson to leverage technologies to be the first to deliver solutions to the market.

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