



Thomas Grossen

Why Transactional Printing is Still Very Important in Switzerland

Trendcommerce Group processes an average of 300,000 transactions daily – with peaks of up to one million. Read our guest blog by CEO Thomas Grossen to find out why transaction printing is still highly valued in Switzerland and why Trendcommerce has become an important partner for Muller Martini.

We process a wide range of regular communication and transaction data from a wide range of delivery systems for various customers – banks, insurance companies, retailers, communications and energy companies, administrations, digitization service providers. Most of the time, this is so-called batch processing, which is transmitted to us once or several times a day. The content and format can vary greatly, but the format is mainly limited to A4. These include invoices, contracts, correspondence, account statements and much more. Thanks to the technology used – we have the latest digital printing machines – the documents can be printed in full color and then packed in C4 or C5 envelopes. However, the processing is not only designed for printing, but also includes output via e-mail or as an archive file back into the customer's systems.

Great growth potential for personalized direct marketing

When receiving data, we manage a wide variety of data streams. Most of the data is already formatted and is delivered fully layouted. Other data, on the other hand, we receive as so-called raw data, which we layout and format ourselves. For one of our largest customers, we also add highly personalized advertising elements to the transaction data – a typical transpromo-application. As far as personalized direct marketing is concerned, I see great growth potential for the future anyway. In combination with regular communication, the customer can be accompanied right up to the point of sale and a response generated to the client. In my opinion, we should definitely make better use of this potential opportunity in the future.

Up to one million transactions per day

Transaction printing presents us with a whole series of challenges. For one thing, we have to be able to process very large volumes of data. On average, 300,000 transactions are processed as output every day. However, the peak values – especially at the end of the month or year – are close to one million outputs. Then we work in 24-hour mode, while on normal days we have one and a half shifts on duty.

Secondly, adequate monitoring is important – in other words: Our processes must ensure 100 percent correct processing. That's why our 70 or so employees in a wide variety of professions (printers/logistics specialists/IT specialists/service managers/project managers) live and breathe quality thinking. Of course, the technologies used also play an important role. And last but not least, the entire process culminates in a secure, data protection-compliant, audited and certified overall environment that enables even highly sensitive data to be processed.

From digital to analog

Even though we process digital data and print digitally, we usually have an analog component at the end of the chain. This is because the vast majority of our transaction volume ends up in addressed letters delivered by the post office. In Switzerland, this amounts to a total of around 1.6 billion items per year. For years, this volume has been declining by around 5 percent. But we also have customers with an annual volume decline of 25 percent.

Digitization plays a major role in this. But a system change in data processing at customers can also trigger major changes in the volume structure. The fact that the decline is not higher has a lot to do with two Switzerland-specific features. First, digitization in our country is nowhere near as advanced as in the Scandinavian or Baltic states, for example. Second, Switzerland is practically the only country where QR invoices are used en masse.

At the end of each month, thousands still make a pilgrimage to the post office to make payments. In view of the low annual rate of switching health insurers, the suspicion quickly arises that the Swiss are rather sluggish, very loyal and not particularly cost-sensitive. It also fits into this context that the user rate for e-banking at banks has remained between 35 and 65 percent for years. In my opinion, the introduction of an E-ID for Switzerland would break the digital dam.



Partner of Muller Martini for six years

Since digital roll printing is our specialty, we have also been working with Muller Martini for over six years. In 2016, Muller Martini presented its new SigmaLine II digital book production system at drupa and naturally needed several pre-printed rolls for the preparations in Zofingen and the demos in Düsseldorf. As we have a second plant in Aarau – just 20 kilometers from Muller Martini's headquarters in Zofingen – in addition to our own in Gossau, St. Gallen, a partnership was an obvious choice. Because the job proved to be extremely demanding, we made an update on our Canon ColorStream 6900 so that we could process a different print length. This was because the special challenge for us was that we normally „only“ print finished products in A4 format for our customers, but for Muller Martini we supply rolls with different overlength formats.



Rolls become personalized coloring books

Since then, we have been producing personalized coloring booklets in 30 different variants with 16, 20, 24, 28 and 32 pages in length with different print lengths as eight pages (once cross-folded) and twelve pages (twice cross-folded). Christoph Müller, head of the Muller Martini Print Finishing Center (PFC) in Zofingen, is often at our company to ensure that the data and PDF files he has imposed are correctly transferred to our press. The PDF files originating from the Connex LineControl contain various control codes, operator information and print direction arrows that do not occur in this way in our day-to-day business.

These products have been processed on the digital saddle stitcher in the PFC since drupa 2016 for customer demos. Over time, a new product, a 16, 24 and 28-page notebook in A4 and 200 mm x 200 mm format, was added so that Muller Martini can show its customers the full variability in the finishing of digitally printed products.

A roll contains around ten kilometers of paper, and each demo – which lasts just under three minutes – takes Christoph Müller around 450 meters of paper. One roll is usually in the press, and a second is available as a reserve.

And we have recently started printing rolls for the new SigmaLine Compact, so that Muller Martini can produce softcover and hardcover books for customer demos on the Vareo PRO face-feed binder, perfect binder with the Scan & Print unit, and InfiniTrim three-knife trimmer. For us, this is an extremely exciting challenge alongside our core business.

Your
Thomas Grossen,
CEO Trendcommerce Group