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Web-to-Print Product Spotlight: Propago

Most web-to-print software solutions are built inside software companies. Propago was built inside a large commercial printer. This is a unique origin story for a software platform and it tells us a lot about how and why features made it into the Propago product. Print Software Section Editor Jennifer Matt takes a close look at Propago's web-to-print solution.

By Jennifer Matt

This article is sponsored by Propago as part of WhatTheyThink's Print Software Product Spotlight series. In preparing this article, the WhatTheyThink Print Software Section editors conducted original, in-depth research on Propago's web-to-print product. This Product Spotlight describes what the editors feel are the product's strengths in the marketplace. Propago reviewed the final article for accuracy but had no editorial control over the content

Most web-to-print software solutions are built inside software companies. Propago was built inside a large commercial printer with 25 companies across the nation. When it split off to be an independent technology company in 2015, the platform already had 70,000+ active users and 50,000+ active products. This is a unique origin story for a software platform and it tells us a lot about how and why features made it into the Propago product. In this model, features had to be directly tied to return on investment to the print business because the print business was paying for the development. Before 2015, there was never a push for Propago to develop a feature that would "demonstrate well" at a tradeshow to entice a prospect to buy it.

This origin story continues to impact Propago's vision today; their stated mantra is, "Our success is tied to our customer's success, we grow together." Nothing is more frustrating than making an investment in a technology and not getting your return on investment (ROI). It's a partnership that requires work, trusted communication, and collaboration to make it a win-win for both parties. Your vendor partner wins and maintains your business; you deploy and drive adoption of the solution to your customers, increasing your value proposition and stickiness in your most important customers.

The origin story is a differentiator for the Propago web-to-print product and we should not even refer to Propago as just a web-to-print solution. Fulfillment is a huge part of the Propago platform. It includes a complete set of fulfillment features that essentially provides printers a complete Warehouse Management System (WMS) for finished goods. Many printers are moving into fulfillment and logistics to embed themselves into their customer's supply chain. Because Propago has been building on the fulfillment features for years now, they have advanced features like inventory forecasting that moves into strategic collaboration with your customer on the optimization of their business. In this expansion of your print business you need to be able to precisely control your customer's inventory and give them access to all kinds of data regarding the activity against that inventory.

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This leads to the next differentiating aspect of Propago: the access for customer users to the data about the business they are doing with the printer. Printers are inundated with requests from their customers for information/data. For most printers, these requests are fulfilled manually day in and day out; you have expensive labor finding data, massaging data, and then pushing that data back to your existing customers. Propago's platform addresses this insatiable desire for customer data in three ways: Option number 1 is configurable ad hoc reporting made available to your customers. When a customer asks for data; we generate a report. When a customer gets a report, their typical response is to dig deeper into the data and ask another question which generates the need for another report. This is a never-ending process that costs you real money. Propago lets your customers create ad hoc reports in a self-service manner.

What if your customer is not a data nerd, and they just want a visual of the more big picture trends? Then, Propago gives you option number 2 to visually see trends via a business intelligence dashboard. Each customer will be interested in different things and each individual at each customer may process information differently. Option number 3 of Propago's solution to the insatiable desire for data is "push/scheduled" reporting. This basically sets up recurring data delivery to your customers at predetermined times. The customer doesn't have to work to get the data they want when they want it and neither does your staff! Providing self-service access to lots of customer data doesn't just save you precious labor time, it gets the customer engaged in the adoption of the tool. Adoption of a web-to-print solution is a partnership between the

printer and their customers: get the customer engaged in tracking the adoption metrics by giving them access to all the data all the time.

The final aspect of Propago that you don't typically see in a web-to-print solution is basic digital asset management. It is shocking to me how many customers of printers do not have a centralized solution for storing and managing their digital assets. It almost always comes up when discussing online ordering/web-to-print with customers. Storing your customers' digital assets is one of the best ways to embed yourself into their communication supply chain. Customers have limited resources (time and money), although a printer might not be the ideal place to look to solve your digital asset challenge—if you get the opportunity to solve it, you should. Be very careful of "throwing this in for free"; managing digital assets provides real value and should have real revenue tied to it. Don't assume print volumes will pay for the resources you will have to deploy to do this. Having this option built into your web-to-print platform can be a real advantage for the right customers.

Propago continues to evolve according to their origin story: your success is their success. Their differentiation is clear in helping a printer move behind manufacturing to fulfillment and then giving the customer access to lots of data in lots of different ways in order to enlist the customer into the success of the overall adoption of the platform.

To learn more about WhatTheyThink.com's Print Software Product Spotlights, please contact Jennifer Matt, Print Software Section Editor at jen@whattheythink.com.

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About Propago

Propago is a cloud-based web to print and marketing asset management software firm headquartered in Austin, TX. Our solution helps commercial printers support their enterprise customers with private marketing portals. The platform makes it easy for customers to access, personalize and order marketing materials while controlling the brand, budgets and inventory.

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