Mainstream Printing Services *

Give yourself the edge with Mainstream's speciality products

CORNERS in short or long runs
Corners have many applications

Use them for:- Publicity - Neatness - Administration
Advertising - Promotions - Easy binding - Identification

New Personalised Corners
your own name on your corner
Corners even for corn! How corny can you get?

Mainstream is our Litho business name being integrated with Ivor Solution Limited

Now Ricoh is at it!

Surely digital press manufacturers should be extolling the virtues of beautiful printing in all its hard copy glory. What better way to show off print's potential to convey a personal message than a traditional Christmas card?

But guess what? Yes you are right we, alongside we presume, all their other customers have received an ELECTRONIC greeting!

Ricoh now join Xeretec as two digital press suppliers extolling the virtues of non physical print. Shame on them!

This edition is printed (not emailed) on our Ricoh C901S GA

EVOLVED iN PRINT

Ivor Solution's Technical and Marketing Bulletin

YOU HAVE MOVED US TO MOVE AGAIN!
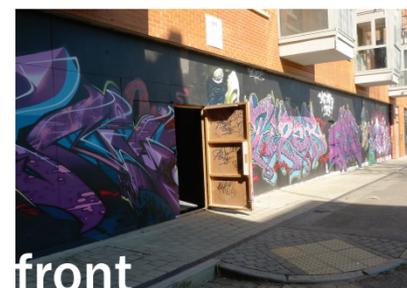
front back inside

Pics: March 2012

With the expansion that Ivor Solution has witnessed recently and with the Northburgh Street lease soon to end its term it seemed appropriate to look for new premises.

Ivor Solution is very pleased to report that it has signed a new lease on 8,000 sq ft of ground floor premises just two miles from where we are now and on the City fringes, just out of the congestion zone!

Telephone numbers will remain the same, service will be even better as we are the first tenant in our new home and have been able to plan and design for a really efficient work-flow. More on our move soon.

Watch this space for the transformation!

Our new address will be

**Units 45-50
10 Hornsey Street
Islington, London N7 8EL**

GET BEHIND THE CODE: to stop you getting behind the code

Jeff Birch, Technical Director, explains QR Codes and Ivor Solution's innovations in this area

So what exactly are QR codes?

There has been much hype over the last few years about QR codes, but what exactly are they good for and why should you care?

Dreamt up by Toyota in 1994 as a way to track vehicle parts, this quirky pixel grid has since taken the marketing world by storm. Barcodes have always been a convenient way to scan in small amounts of data, like SKU numbers. However unlike standard one dimensional barcodes, these 2D barcodes can hold a great deal more information. This has been the key to their success.

Nowadays many forms of advertising harness QRs to draw potential customers deeper into the sales funnel. By embedding key stages of the sales process in these codes, you can gain a double hit from any marketing piece.

Examples of the marketing information that can be stored in QR codes include:

• Taking the customer to the web address

of your company site or a page displaying an offer.

• Adding the information of an event to the customer's calendar.

• Writing the contact information for a member of your sales team into your customer's address book.

However QR codes are not just about selling, they can also be used to simply enhance a customer's experience.

In this issue

From Print Customer to Printer...

Whether it was a good or a bad thing is another story, but I entered the printing industry many years ago as a customer of Kenton's printers when the owner asked if I wanted to enter the new world of 'Instant Printing'. Technology in the form of paper plates was enabling plates to be made instantly and I was excited by the massive potential this innovation had for the sector and I accepted the invitation.

It is thus true to form that a relatively recent recruit to Ivor Solution is a former customer excited by the possibilities of our technology-driven business model: Cicely Brown, a well-known figure in the industry, having been Deputy Chief Executive of the BPIF and Business Development Director at Williams Lea, invested in us, after working as a consultant for several months. She has now been appointed Commercial & Development Director. Cicely's story, as a customer of ours, is featured in this edition of Evolved In Print.

In these uncertain economic times we are working ever more closely with customers to introduce new web to print systems for their clients. Web to print is an ideal solution for companies striving to save costs and obtain their printing faster than ever, as well as cementing the customer-client bond. Indeed one of Cicely's main roles is to develop with customers, sales and implementation tools to make it easier for our customers to win web to print business.

Even though our software is highly developed and as good as, or, some say, better than any on the market, it's clear in this market that it's the service, rather than the software alone, that's the competitive advantage. And to get perfect service delivery, you need full control. This took us into print production and we now operate a unique "hybrid" model, where we combine our own software and print to offer customers a trouble free seamless system from order placing to delivery. This issue of Evolved in Print illustrates the way that we have added further enhancements to both software and production that our print manager customers can in turn offer to their clients. We are also shortly to move to purpose built premises where all facilities will be on one floor.

Fact: there is no other way to succeed in our sector today than to have a second to none service offering. This includes helping our customers to win new business and retain existing business, to painlessly set up new client accounts, and process orders right through to final delivery. And we trust that our customers know that we will do anything for them that provides them with the time, training and expertise needed to sell technology based print services. Do take advantage of us!

All the best,

Ivor

(continued from page 1)

For example:-

• Taking the customer to a web page personalised specifically for them (PURL).

• Automatically setting up the user's mobile phone to connect to your WiFi. This is commonly used in hotels and pubs.

What about the effect barcodes have on the aesthetics of your artwork? This is an important question as the visual impact of your designs is half the battle when attracting customers. By keeping codes as small as possible or integrating them with your design (e.g. incorporating in your logo), it is easy to add value without detracting from the piece's original purpose.

Readability and compatibility are essential when QR marketing. With such a large variety of mobile phones out there, it is essential that you create codes that can be read by the widest possible audience. From the capabilities of a phone's camera to the functions of its QR code apps, there are certain best practices that you can follow to ensure success. You can achieve this by using tools like tiny URL generators, so that your codes only have to house the minimum information necessary, then serve the remainder of your marketing data via the web.

Whether you are looking to promote yourself or helping your clients find new and innovative ways to market themselves, QR codes are now a well established way of getting more from your marketing materials.

NOW ONLINE WITH COG.SO

cognitu breaks **new QR Code ground**

Cognitu's QR Code Tools

To help you and your clients get the most from QR codes we have built a suite of tools that include our template driven QR code generator and our white-labelled tiny URL engine. Combining these facilities it is easy to create and embed visually integrated QR codes within your personalised marketing materials.

Ordering a QR piece is simple, as the barcode itself is generated automatically using the data entered by the user or automatically pulled from their profile data. Data entered during ordering can appear on the final printed item and in the barcode, without the need to key in twice, as in a business card with a downloadable address and contact. Information entered could also be used exclusively within the data downloaded from the QR code. For example a personalised web page. However you want to capture and use order data, our system is designed to be very flexible.

Our tiny URL generator uses our domain 'cog.so' by default. This domain is provided free of charge and has no home page to ensure anonymity. If required we can use a version of your own domain, however in some cases the extra length of the domain can be undesirable.

As it is common to download contact details from these URLs, some barcodes require enhanced security. In these cases we offer secure URLs that combine a security passcode into the URL itself.

Data can also be embedded directly within the QR codes for areas where internet connections are less likely e.g. underground tube stations. However not all mobiles and QR apps can read these types of barcodes, so we suggest that wherever possible you stick to the more common URL type.

To see some examples of QR codes in action go to the QR code category of our online demo:

www.cognitu.com/demo

Or if you have any questions regarding QR codes, their possibilities and what we can offer, please get in touch.

Within reason, any format of data can be used in QRs and our generator allows users to create and store templates so you can get maximum reuse from your efforts. Example formats are:

• **vCard** Address book contact information, good for business cards

• **vCalendar** Calendar events, great for event posters such as exhibitions and seminars

• **URL** Redirect Simply points at another web page

• **PURL** Personalised web page

Three Way Hybrid

First there was software only Then we added digital print And now full litho facilities

These days, when it is so important to be able to offer trade customers an advanced service that gives them the edge, Ivor Solution have discovered that it has to provide far more than the software to truly satisfy its customers.

So moving into our new studio and factory we will be further equipping with Heidelberg single and two colour presses, a second very high quality computer to plate system, additional lamination facilities as well as a second Indigo 5500.

Over the last few months our web to print software-based work has extensively increased. Whilst the software is continuously improving, this growth could be put down to the fact that the market is, at last, becoming aware of the great business and quality reasons for changing to web to print. But it appears also that most print managers prefer to have one party looking after all of their short run work where it is the result of the Cognitu software that Ivor Solution develops.

Also we have witnessed that there is greater appreciation that web to print is not just for business cards that are digitally printed. Indeed the market is waking up to realising that great systems, efficiencies and control are paramount and that the printing itself is the result of getting everything else right. Printing is becoming more and more a scientific process and not simply dependent on the skills of press operators, high as they may well be. They have to receive the jobs the right way, in the right order, linked in to the end customer themselves who are actually doing all the pre press work, job booking in, pricing and control!

For instance our largest single end customer, obtained through a very progressive print manager, has over 900 outlets. The system capturing hundreds of orders a month has taken years to build due to the complexities in establishing a solid corporate design. It was not to be watered down as was previously the case with individual outlets doing their own print purchasing. The final printed products demanded litho based production and the whole process has been automated to the nth degree, so much so that Ivor Solution has never missed a deadline.

This is hybrid printing par excellence. There are great opportunities for highly motivated and technically savvy print managers. Ivor Solution are here to be challenged and provide the solution.

Swatch out, there's new papers about

Many more standard papers and boards have been introduced to our range and we are producing a new swatch which will be made available soon.

If you would like one please email William@ivorsolution.co.uk.

If you would like your own personalised covers that's fine and we are delighted to offer this service – just send William your artwork to be printed on a panel 80mm x 25mm. There is no charge for this.

Carbon Smart Silver Award

Doing our bit, and then some

We are delighted to announce that we have now achieved Carbon Smart Silver Award status, recognising our achievements in positively reducing any detrimental impact on the environment and futher implementing good practice when dealing with production and waste.

Never ones to rest on our laurels, having achieved the Blue Award only six months ago, we approached the increased expectations with the determined resolve you expect from Ivor Solution when faced with any challenge.

But what have we achieved? In order to gain Silver status we were presented with the following objectives:

• Ensure regular and accurate collection of data

• Ensure responsibilities are clear

• Update the environmental policy

• Improve labelling of waste streams in the office

• reducing our carbon footprint by 3%

Under the stewardship of our Environmental Co-ordinator, Nikki Brin, we exceeded expectation. Taking into account our growth, we achieved a 34% reduction in usage against turnover.

Any we won't stop there. Like so many elite performers in the summer of 2012, Ivor Solution will be firmly focused on going for Gold!

Focus on Cicely Brown

Newly appointed Development Director

I came across Ivor Solution because I needed some business cards the same day. I have ordered business cards online before but they always took a couple of days to produce plus delivery. This time I had the urge to print the cards in the morning and needed to pick them up from somewhere in central London so I could get to Stationers' Hall by St Paul's at 6.30pm in time for the Company's Autumn Forum on 'Copyright in the Digital Age' which was due to be opened by James Murdoch.

I typed 'business cards' into Google and was delighted when the first, non-advertised link was CardsMadeEasy, not just in central London, but in Clerkenwell, only 15 minutes' walk from the Hall.

When I arrived at 9 Northburgh Street later that afternoon to collect my immaculately printed cards in their handy little plastic box, I got chatting to the company's directors. I soon realised that Cardsmadeeasy was a subsidiary of the aptly named 'Ivor Solution' which I'd first discovered in 2003 when its online ordering system transformed both the price and turnaround for the BPIF's own business cards. After catching up, one thing led to another and I found myself helping the company with its business strategy.

As I learnt more about the company, I've been asking myself: is it a missed opportunity?

Ivor Jacobs developed the CardCorp 'web-to-print' software in 1997, a full two years before the term itself came into popular use (9 February 1999, according to Wikipedia). CardCorp was his solution to making print easier to buy. It was a good idea. Powerless to resist the pun, Ivor named the company 'Ivor Solution'.

Since then, others have recognised the winning combination that the internet, digital printing, and a vast audience can offer, and a couple have taken the Amazon path to fame and success: big seed funding, large up-front investment in technology, and global promotion via the world wide web. You will know (some of) their names.

Was Ivor Solution lucky or unlucky to have been too early for the serious dotcom boom with investors handing over unfeasible cash to fund good, online ideas? Did it miss an opportunity?

Today Ivor Solution has an annual turnover around £4 million with a healthy and consistent EBIT margin of about 14%. It develops and maintains its own web to print software (Cognitu) and has in-house digital print production and fulfilment facilities which deliver over 750 orders per day to both trade (print management) as well as 'pay on demand' retail customers through its Google number one ranking website, Cardsmadeeasy.

Virtually all orders are placed online using specifically branded platforms – Cognitu (trade) and CardsMadeEasy (retail). Whilst the 'shop fronts' are customised to the customer – including white-labelling Cognitu SaaS for its print management clients – all production follows the same digital route straight through to production, usually 'without touching the sides'.

80% of Ivor Solution's revenue comes from 50 UK trade customers that have been with the company for over five years who have collectively grown their turnover with the company by over 185% in that time. It claims to have never missed an SLA.

The acquisition of the CardsMadeEasy retail platform, which consistently maintains number one spot for business cards on Google (UK), supplements the company's traditional high volume, but lower margin, trade business. The retail business, with the joy of immediate payment, has been growing steadily since June with over 60,000 customers on its books as of December 2010.

In the digital stationery market, the production route for high volume low margin work is the same as for low volume high margin work. Ivor Solution aims to balance the two to keep the presses busy, the cashflow healthy and the bank manager happy.

Ivor Solution currently occupies two floors in Northburgh St, about a 5 minute walk from the Barbican. The offices upstairs and production downstairs. Both floors are hives of activity without the aggravation which I fear I've seen in a number of print companies where energy seems to generate from the tension between 'sales' and 'production'.

Sitting here, more important than the facts and figures, is being among a team of people that genuinely play as a team (regardless of what brand they're supporting). And there are all types - whether the production staff often coming from a traditional litho background, or the pure 'techies' reminiscent of air traffic controllers wearing oversize headphones as they sit in front of their multiple, huge Mac screens .

It's a solid, 'small' print company based on a good idea, a very loyal – and continuously growing – customer base staffed by a team of skilled and dedicated people.

But what if? A similar web to print entrepreneur based in France also saw the opportunity in the late 1990's after graduating from INSEAD. In 2000 he needed money and software talent and moved back to the US. Ten years later his company has a turnover of $670 million, EBIT of 11% and a NASDAQ market capitalisation of $2 billion (that's a market value multiple of 30).

But that one was the lucky one. Start-up failures far outweighed successes in the dotcom boom as once over-optimistic investors despaired of recouping their huge investments and cut and ran. Although Ivor Solution has never received any 'seed' capital that didn't come from Ivor Jacob's pocket or a bank, thirteen years later Ivor Solution is still here and growing at a respectable 30% year on year. Still innovating, still keeping all of its clients – new and old – happy, and still making money.

Cicely took two years out of the printing industry 2008-2010 to volunteer as a micro business advisor in Nigeria

Don't think out of the box, think out of the clouds

The current talk in computing is of the Cloud. Ivor Solution pioneered this concept almost fifteen years ago and its software has always been Cloud Computing for printers, print managers, and agencies.

Until recently almost all software that printers used in their businesses had come from traditional software suppliers that produced their products to work with local IT systems and infrastructure. These are, at last, seen as time consuming and difficult to manage and many software suppliers have seen the light and are moving to platforms in the cloud.

Cloud computing is a sea change in attitude and is made possible because of the huge strides in browser based communications that we have seen over the last few years. No longer is it necessary or even advisable to have specialist software held locally; when by opening up a browser on any computer, anywhere in the world, one can have access to the latest software and pay for it only as it is consumed. No longer do companies need to think of big capital expenditures or high maintenance costs because the services and applications run in the cloud are much more manageable. Cloud computing means one can technically get into operation with applications in a few days. This allows those in print and the media to focus on their core businesses and can concentrate on operations, driving up revenues and creating innovation. Reliance on internal IT is reducing. Global networks are almost as conceivable as local ones and at similar costs.

Cloud computing as a term is being used to describe next generation network architecture, utility computing and server virtualisations but what is of most interest now is how companies can use the web to utilise the web to deliver low cost, scalable, and secure business applications. That is exactly what Ivor Solution are providing. We are helped by the near ubiquity of broadband in the home and office, especially when these two areas are often one and the same.

Because of the specialist nature of companies like ours, security and up time, traditionally IT departments' bugbears, are becoming non issues as we invest heavily in scalable architecture that can out-perform virtually anything that corporate IT departments can put together. Ivor Solution was possibly the world's, certainly the UK's first web2print application and only supplied cloud computing applications. So having grown up in the technology Ivor Solution is not having to learn new disciplines and is motoring on with new modules at a very swift rate, responding to market needs. Customers are in good hands and the proof is the growing number of products now being asked for and made into templates.

Total Collaboration
Whether it's getting orders passed by accounts and compliance or sharing in the creation of a marketing piece, **cognitu** *makes collaboration easy.*

Once any order has been placed, Cognitu can guide it smoothly through a work-flow of your own devising. To make set up easy, our system comes with a variety of predefined work-flows that cater for 99% of most customer needs, such as artwork approval and financial sign-off.

To help streamline your business processes further work-flows can include automated tasks like report creation, MIS integration and artwork post-processing. If you need it, we can usually create it.

Example manual and automatic tasks include:

- Financial approval
- Artwork approval
- Artwork editing
- Automatic email notification
- Automatic cancellation

Tasks within a work-flow can wholly be performed in parallel to other tasks. This can radically reduce an order's time to completion. Cognitu's flexibility is designed for speed.

Work-flows can be applied to groups of users and individuals. If for example you require everyone in a company to need financial approval except the MD, you simply set one work-flow at company level and one for the MD's use.

From the perspective of a user, as soon as they are assigned to a task within a work-flow, a new main menu item becomes available to them. If they have only one task the menu item is named after its type, for example 'Approvals' and the number of current tasks for this type is shown next to the menu. If, however, they are responsible for more than one type of task the menu item is shown as a drop down called 'Tasks', hovering over this shows each type and the total number of tasks for each.

Completing tasks is simple! Simply click on a task type in the menu to see a list of all those currently pending. Then click the desired action link against each, for example approval and cancel for financial sign off or edit for artwork collaboration.

If your users only log in occasionally, they can opt in to email notifications. These emails not only act to inform users when they have a task pending but also inform them of key facts so they are armed with everything they need to act. A link within each email takes users directly to their task screen to help minimise the impact on their day to day workload.

A Typical Workflow

Edited by Marketing Assistant

Approved by Manager

Approved by Finance

Translation added

Host your web to print in the 'cloud' with confidence

This article by Ivor Jacobs is reprinted from Innovation – The IPIA magazine March 2012

"Cloud" computing is the current technology buzzword. As suppliers of Cloud Computing services for almost fifteen years we have witnessed many issues first hand. We have had to respond to so many that now is an appropriate time to think about what appears to be the current major concern – that of "ownership."

There are two main reasons for this. Firstly what happens if there is a falling out with the supplier and secondly what if the service deteriorates and/or the supplier goes bust?

But first a word about the basis to these discussions. We are here talking specifically about Print Managers. Those small firms to huge International business process outsourcing organisations who make their living out of providing their customers with the best systems and services available.

For Print Managers cloud computing solutions, especially for web to print, have proven to provide their clients with business winning attributes. In comparison, conventional closed systems that run on local servers are costly, inflexible, needy of IT staff for maintenance and difficult to develop.

Cloud solutions, especially those that can be branded to the Print Manager, have provided everything a Print Manager could possible want at a fraction of the cost of other ways of doing the job.

Our research has shown that, whilst moving away from closed systems, for many years many Print Managers have been developing and running their own cloud systems. Many others have used third party software and full services. Very recently we have seen that end customers are dictating more and more to Print Managers that modern businesses need to be working with the web to be efficient. Print procurement is no exception. Applications for web to print in particular are, at last, rapidly moving from business cards to all manner of re-designed and engineered marketing materials specially tailored for web to print. These systems are by definition larger and more complex than before and have to contain not only good and easily usable front ends as used by the customers but full job routing, authorisation routines, work flow stages (for a job going say from a designer to a translator to an approver to an accounts budget controller), imposition for the printer, swift product additions, photo uploads, integration with MIS, automatic file checking and a whole host more.

Yet Print Managers are seeing the huge costs of their own systems running into hundreds of thousands of pounds when much of this can be saved by using a specialist software supplier.

We are seeing Print Managers now questioning the strength of their own offerings and the very high costs of keeping them up to date. Why reinvent the wheel when there are companies out there that have the answers?

The big worry seems not to be the change but the change of ownership. Print Managers are reluctant to part with anything that might be seen to give a supplier the edge. Very rarely will any Print Manager, for instance, not have contingency printers in line if they are let down by their main suppliers. But a good cloud based web to print system needs to be company wide and having another waiting in the sidelines, just in case, is fraught with imponderables. If something goes wrong "how can we switch?" is being asked.

So what can the Print Manager do to safeguard his supply?

1. Falling out with a supplier.

The terminology is, these days, not quite right. The best suppliers are now partners, even fellow joint venturers. This is especially the emphasis that should be the yardstick when dealing with all long-term technical matters where both client and supplier increasingly rely on each other for mutual success.

Partnerships can be backed up by full legal agreements where all eventualities are aired, discussed and incorporated. Total openness with partners but within the same confidentiality constraints as on staff will ensure that anything going awry would be dealt with as soon as noticed. In the event of a severe falling out then a long period could elapse before the partner departs. Again fully part of the binding legal agreement. If the deal is properly worked out it is most likely that, paradoxically, not only will it remain in place permanently it will give the Print Manager more, not less, security than full ownership!

2. Service deterioration and Supplier liquidation.

So let's assume the Print Manager has a partner but the partner software supplier does not provide the expected service. It may be having financial difficulties that eventually lead to closure of the business. Actually these aspects would mainly be covered in an agreement as above but part of a disaster recovery plan may be to envisage these terminal possibilities separately.

Again, another paradox,

Print Managers are in a better position with Cloud computing than any other form of software supply if the worst happens.

That is because an escrow type of agreement can ensure continuity. If the worst indeed happens the software is still working in the "cloud." If ownership of the Cloud servers and back ups is passed to a company acting in escrow the appointed company simply legally takes on the account with the organisation managing the servers (usually even the largest cloud software vendors use major secure data centres who manage their servers). The escrow company substitutes for the software supplier giving time to sort out the business continuation.

If the Print Manager has been happy with the supplier's software and the demise of the supplier is its inability to profit then the Company will invariably be bought and a new owner would take on the software supply and, indeed, would be very eager to keep business. There are already instances of software firms collapsing but with the customers unaffected in their day-to-day service as there are software companies out there waiting to snap up software that might have cost millions, at a bargain price.

Should a situation arise where the software partner provides inadequate service escrow can also be used to cover this eventuality, With this should the Print Manager be let down he can invoke escrow and have the software migrated to the escrow company for it or others to maintain. The basis of this is that the code will only be able to be used for the business of the Print Manager and may not be sold in competition to the original provider.

All in all Cloud computing in printing is here to stay. Choosing a software supplier is all important in the first place. But once on board it is vital to have the confidence of working with the supplier but not at arms length as a conventional supplier but as true partners, both out to conquer new markets and customers together, with co-operation and understanding.

Mmm... Doughnuts... Pie...

Ivor Solution's new brand name for its signature platform
Web to Print - Web to Media

As much as Homer Simpson needs doughnuts and pie, businesses need their chart based equivalents even more. Charts are a key ingredient to visualising how you and your company are performing. Recognising this, we have built a flexible reporting framework into our Cognitu platform. This means that you can get to the data you need, wherever and whenever you need it, at any level within our system.

Our reporting framework gives you access to all data pertaining to your accounts and supports a wide range of chart types, such as pie, doughnut, line, scatter, candlestick, etc. Although the system is designed to accommodate your own bespoke reporting requirements, we have created an basic 'Client Spend' example so you can see reports in action within your own setup.

Each department in your company will typically have different reporting needs, plus information in the wrong hands can sometimes do more harm than good. In Cognitu access to reports can be controlled at a user or role level, ensuring that you and your clients' data is kept safe, whilst allowing authorised users easy and instant access to their data.

Many reporting requirements require you to be able to drill down deeper into your data. You may need to limit your information for a specific time period, type of purchase or sub-set of orderers. Cognitu allows you to get to the exact data you need through the combination of filters and the systems built in hierarchy.

If you would like to know more or have a specific reporting requirement, simply contact our technical team. In the meantime you can see an example report in the demonstration area on the Cognitu website.