



How an Online Photo Site Uses Email to Drive their Business and Connect with Customers

Company Background

PhotoWorks was founded over 25 years ago as Seattle FilmWorks. Originally a company that marketed and printed photographs for consumers shooting traditional 35mm print film, with the advent of the digital camera, their business model shifted from analog to digital. While they still process and print film, their main products now are digital prints and related digital print products, such as custom photo cards and calendars. PhotoWorks' specialty is the custom production of photo books for their customers who would like a unique keepsake of a recent event. They also provide photo storage, sharing, and printing services.

The Digital Marketplace

As their customer base continues to move away from traditional print film to digital photography, the percentage of PhotoWorks' customers using digital photography has grown dramatically year over year. Communication with their customers is also moving online. From the digital images their customers shoot and then transmit to be printed, to the way they are notified when their prints are finished (via email) PhotoWorks'

business is an online, digital business, the one exception being the final products—the prints and other products which are not digital.

Goals and Challenges

The primary issue facing PhotoWorks' marketing and communications team was how to best communicate with their customer base. According to Lanae Weir, Email Marketing Manager, "Email was the obvious answer." Because PhotoWorks' customers use the PhotoWorks website to access stored photos and order prints and other products, PhotoWorks recognizes that the majority of their customers are comfortable with online accounts tied to email addresses. Email is therefore the primary method by which PhotoWorks and their customers both initiate and

complete transactions and provide other account-related information.

While email was the obvious solution to PhotoWorks' communication needs, it posed one challenge: since real-time account changes occur every hour of every day, how could email be used to provide their customers with information that is relevant and current on a real-time basis.

Prior to partnering with Lyris, PhotoWorks used an outsourced email solution. However, this became problematic because of the data transfer issues they continually encountered. As their database grew, they needed to update customer files in real time. Without the ability to do this, PhotoWorks' ability to provide relevant and accurate information was compromised.



.....
"Lyris overcame all the hurdles...Things such as database integration, an interface that was easy to use, content that could be easily edited, segmentation, and immediate reporting—Lyris was far superior in all these regards."

Lanae Weir,
Email Marketing Manager
.....

Even after bringing their email in-house, they still encountered data transfer and integration issues. Since they were still working with an outside vendor, they still

had to overcome problems with transferring email content. If the Email Marketing Manager wanted to make changes immediately to their email campaigns, to the content for example, the information was not immediately accessible. The user interface was very unwieldy, and because the solution was outsourced, PhotoWorks didn't have the kind of control they needed.

The Solution

PhotoWorks needed an email solution that would scale to accommodate their ever-growing customer base and one that could be integrated with their customer database. They required an in-house solution.

"Lyris overcame all the hurdles," says Weir. "Things such as database integration, an interface that was easy to use, content that could be easily edited, segmentation, and immediate reporting—Lyris was far superior in all these regards." With Lyris, PhotoWorks was able to do real-time integration with their database, scheduling data pushes on a daily or even hourly basis. Their immediate access to real-time segmentation enabled them to have plug-n-play conditional content and make other decisions without delays. Their campaigns could also be deployed and tracked in real-time. Lyris provided everything that PhotoWorks needed to drive their email communications along with their business.

As well, the automation functions that Lyris provided were a huge benefit. Prior to Lyris, PhotoWorks was sending out an email whenever a customer signed up, activated their account, or made a purchase—1,000 to 5,000 per day, all being sent manually, in batches! Another benefit was that PhotoWorks didn't have to use database resources because Lyris was already integrated with their database. They were also able to include conditional content even in their auto-generated emails.

According to Weir, instead of an extremely time-consuming manual process, with Lyris, "I can adjust content, split segments, deploy mailings, and view the results all within a single interface. This was a monumental improvement in terms of our use of resources."

Results and Future Plans

In July, PhotoWorks relaunched their monthly newsletter. They plan to start adding conditional content based on demographic data, customer interests, and purchase preferences. Their primary goal is to do highly targeted segmenting and highly targeted messaging based on their segments.

The relaunch of their newsletter will limit how often PhotoWorks communicates with customers (in this case, monthly), making the relevance of their content even more critical. PhotoWorks therefore plans to do extensive A/B split testing for each month's newsletter. PhotoWorks knows that if they are sending fewer emails per month, their message needs to be effective and meet the needs of the customer. So, they'll rely on Lyris' real-time reporting and tracking information to provide them with the crucial information they need to continually optimize their newsletter performance.

Take
Control
of Your
Email
Marketing

Founded in 1994, Lyris Technologies provides advanced software and services for email marketing and email delivery. Lyris' solutions are available as software or as hosted applications and are used by more than 5,000 customers worldwide, from Fortune 500 corporations to fast-growing startups.

LYRIS

Lyris Technologies, Inc
5858 Horton Street, Suite 270
Emeryville, CA 94608

USA and Canada: 800-768-2929
International: +1-510-844-1600
Fax: +1-510-844-1598

email: sales@lyris.com
www.lyris.com