

Virtual Sampling as a Business Strategy

A Case Study

impelsys

Virtual Sampling Lowers Costs, Raises ROI for Leading PreK-12 Publisher

Many educational publishers in the U.S. offer product sampling programs, that involves distribution of product samples to state school districts or to individual schools, to promote the adoption of their programs. While often effective, the printing and distribution cost involved in this process is very high.

Our client, a leading educational publisher of books in PreK – 12 segments, wanted to reduce the cost of printing and distributing samplers to customers. The publisher consulted Impelsys to help them develop a virtual sampling program that would provide cost advantage without losing the appeal of print.

Challenge

The client aspired to be the first and best choice for educators and students, by delivering a more customized, diverse and innovative range of products to meet the changing needs of customers. As the first step towards this goal the client wanted to deliver 'Virtual Sampling' as opposed to 'Print Sampling' to support the adoption decision of the programs at schools. However, they encountered few key challenges in pursuit of their goal. These were:

- Initiating the virtual sampling process
- Managing the volume of content

APPROACH

Aware of the critical role that 'virtual sampling' will play in reducing the client's sampling cost, the client engaged the expert digital content delivery solutions provider, Impelsys. The project team at Impelsys studied the various aspects related to 'print sampling' and worked closely with the client's team to build a 'virtual sampling' methodology and to track the sampling process.

SOLUTION

Impelsys delivered a 'virtual sampling' solution which leveraged its VirtualPages™ Flipbook application. Due to the massive amount of content that would be included in the 'virtual sampling' application, Impelsys implemented an end-to-end work-flow from regular print files to online digital sampling books.

Features on this system include:

- Print book look & feel and pagination
- Robust full-text search and search faceting
- Page flip feature
- Close up view of pages
- Alpha channel video
- User personalization features like bookmarks
- A guided tour to provide the user with an experience similar to that of a sales person demonstrating the books
- Diverse administrator reporting on pages accessed, time spent on each page, searches carried out and web traffic

Initially four national and four state adoptions were targeted for 'virtual sampling'. The 'virtual sampler' URL was sent with the 'print sampler', directing users to register on the client's hosted site. Once the user was authenticated, the actual 'virtual sampling' was delivered from Impelsys hosted site.

This solution delivered a rich, high quality experience to the users and enabled them to evaluate the content at minimal cost to the client. After the success of initial few programs Impelsys is in process of adding more than 100 programs with more than half million pages of content.

BENEFITS

The 'virtual sampling' solution developed and implemented by Impelsys delivered a higher ROI compared to complex XML content deliveries. It also offered various other benefits like:

- Reduced production and promotion cost by enabling client to avoid providing expensive free physical copies to promote new or updated programs
- Enabled client to publish electronic samples prior to print
- Provided the flexibility to both internal editorial staff and customers to pick and choose chapters/content chunks from different 'products' and customize the product as per their needs
- Enriched the digital programs with virtual access
- Access to detailed usage reports which provided further evidence of market acceptance
- Fulfilled client's vision of an online application developed around their content

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