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Advice to Aspiring MSPs: Ready. Set. ACTION!  
Pat Veverica, What's Your Plan

Action Mailing Services, Inc. opened its doors in 1967. Founded by John Roberts, a retired postal employee, the company originally operated out of his basement. All mail was hand-labeled and hand-inserted. Sorting was done by state. And the cost of first-class postage stamp was \$.05. Can you imagine?

Last year Action Mailing became Action, Inc. - Direct. Secure. Communication. They were one of the first adopters of the Marketing Service Provider model (MSP) as early as 2005. We caught up with Tony Zirnheld, owner, at Graph Expo this year. He was happy to agree to an interview to talk about their experience as an MSP.

WYP: I noticed from your website that you offer quite a range of marketing services and technologies. How do you position the company and all of your offerings?

TZ: We integrate a lot of forms of communications - print, email, pURLs, microsites. But direct mail is still the foundation of all of our work. We found that when we led with technology, the customer wasn't ready to absorb it. Marketers have a lot of communications choices to make, and it can be overwhelming. So we stick to our roots, and lead with the mailpiece, augmenting it with other forms of communications like cross media when the customer is open to the idea.

WYP: You seemed to have embraced the Marketing Services Provider model quite early, about 2005 with your email marketing services and then later with your SMS marketing services. What advice do you have for mail shops and printers who are still considering a transition to this MSP model?

TZ: First, I do think there is time to make the transition. Like I said, some customers aren't ready yet for some of the more sophisticated tools. Second, it really takes the right combination of people, software, and equipment. For instance, the cross media marketing platform we acquired, MindFire, did not in itself make us an MSP.

WYP: Could you elaborate?

TZ: You still need the right people. People who have the experience, and are savvy about the tools and how to make them do what the customer wants. Many times, the application doesn't even call for very sophisticated software, the equipment itself can handle it.

WYP: Can you give me an example?

TZ: Sure. In the transactional document business, the integrity of the mail piece is what you're selling. Clients need to trust that the right piece made it into the right envelope. A lot of the non-profit projects we do depend on our ability to match names on envelopes with personalized inserts. If a non-profit is soliciting donations with a personal request and there is a mis-match, the message the client paid to send out is obliterated. There is zero tolerance for error, and we count on MCS Perfect Match™ camera technology to prevent these expensive mistakes. Some clients don't even know this kind of technology is out there.

WYP: Tell me about your equipment choices. You have 10 inkjet printers, 6 digital presses and a handful of Perfect Match camera systems. You must be running millions of pieces per week. Where are you getting your best bang for the buck?

TZ: We're seeing good results with our Eagle UV inkjets. The drying is faster on many surfaces than a traditional water-based system. Our costs are way down, too. We're using a lot less ink, and the print quality is better.

WYP: That's pretty impressive. What would your operators say about the Eagle systems?

TZ: I can tell you they highly prefer running them, they're much more efficient. They're not stopping to clean heads and re-checking, and the throughput itself is noticeably better. We've increased throughput by 30% by rotating the

piece and feeding it long edge.

WYP: Let's take this back to the MSP model, how are you using your equipment to showcase your MSP capabilities?

TZ: I'm glad you mentioned that because I do think it's important to walk the walk when you call yourself an MSP. Customers need to be shown examples of what they can do with their data, and how some of our tools can help them. We use our MCS equipment for campaigns that we send out to promote the technology.

We've run high-gloss 4-color cards on the Eagle UV to add variable images and pURLs. We have tied in customer mail campaigns back to our web fulfillment site to personalize a gift that we then produce & ship. These give the customer the experience of interacting with integrated marketing and some of our offerings in a new way; ultimately giving them tangible ideas they can start to implement in their own programs.

WYP: So I guess your final piece of advice is, "walk the walk and talk the talk?"

TZ: That's right. And yes, there is still time to dive in. The water is fine.

### **About Action**

Action has been providing direct communication services to business-to-business and business-to-consumer customers since its founding in 1967. It successfully employs advanced technology to provide its customers with absolute accuracy, quality, data security, and on-time turnaround of small to large and complex projects. The company operates out of its headquarters in Plymouth, MN, and serves the European marketplace from its Peterborough, England, location. Contact: [www.actiondsc.com](http://www.actiondsc.com) or call 763.557.6767.

### **About MCS**

MCS is a leading provider of technology for the production mailing market. MCS' inkjet hardware and software as well as camera systems provide the integration cornerstone for high-speed mailing and hybrid inkjet printing, as well as matching systems for inserters. The new MCS Eagle inkjet platform combines the next-generation modular 4.25", 600 DPI print head technology with MCS' proven job layout and print proofing software. MCS systems can be integrated on a wide range of existing transports and inserters. MCS' new production color digital presses offer print-quality and VDP workflow solutions designed for direct mailers.

### **More information**

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