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## TEAMWORK

Companies investing and partnering to drive direct mail solutions.

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Mario Giorgio, CEO (left) and Frank Giorgio, president of Avant Imaging & Information Management Inc. (AIIM) of Aurora, Ontario

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Brothers Mario Giorgio  
(left) and Frank Giorgio

# Ready, Set, Go!



*By DOUG PICKLYK*

After years of developing an information management culture and building a streamlined operation, AIIM in Aurora, Ontario is positioned well for growth.

**H**e knew he was on to something years ago when he made the decision to include the words Information Management in his company's name. With a long history in the printing industry, stretching back over 30 years, Mario Giorgio, founder and CEO of Avant Imaging & Information Management Inc. (AIIM) in Aurora, Ontario, realized in the early 90s that his business was transitioning from a print provider to an information handler. By embracing that philosophy and building an infrastructure around information management, AIIM has positioned itself well to boldly target the growing direct mail market.

As far back as 1992 the company became involved with digital printing and print-on-demand applications. In 1995 it developed a database-driven tool for the Toronto Real Estate Board, and since 2000 the company has invested over \$3 million into what has become its Self Service Imaging (SSI) solution. This sophisticated suite of online tools is the cornerstone of the company's aggressive move into new markets.

"It differentiates us from competitors," says Lyman Jackson, director of marketing services for AIIM's eSolutions division. The company has already developed experience in online, web-to-print applications for major financial institutions in Canada and retailers in the U.S., and is anticipating strong growth in these areas.

One of the major banks in Canada is piloting a program to enable its branches across the country to order customized marketing collateral (event posters, table talkers, letterhead, etc.) online with consistent corporate branding and feel.

To make this work AIIM handles all data asset management, print and fulfillment. The web-to-print jobs flow directly to a digital print engine, or if the run lengths are justified, the projects can go on press.

The company has a Heidelberg DI for quick turnaround smaller format jobs, and three 40-inch Mitsubishi presses, from four- to seven-colours, and its newest press, installed in September (see Just Installed p.8), is a perfecting 10-colour 40-inch MAN Roland 700 featuring a roll-to-sheet unit at the feeder. This

highly-automated press with five-over-five capability allows the company to compete on jobs traditionally bound for half-web presses.

"We've almost reached 4 million impressions already," boasted Frank Giorgio, co-owner and president of AIIM, in early December.

The added capacity on the floor hasn't taken all the work off the company's existing 40-inch presses either. Most of it is new work.

**"Customers want their jobs done faster. If you have one entity looking after the entire process it becomes easier."**

— Mario Giorgio

The ability to build interactive online applications with variable data capabilities naturally lends itself to the direct mail market. In January of 2004 AIIM, along with two partner companies, launched a new business, OneSource Solutions Inc. to address this market.

One partner specializes in data processing and mailing services and the other in the envelope manufacturing business. "When we present to customers, it's not a sales job; we present complete solutions," says Darrell Field, the vice president, new business development, with OneSource.

The catalyst for getting this group together was a \$15 million contract from a major financial services company. The group's ability to offer the client one point of contact to fulfill all of its requirements is what enabled it to secure the business.

"Customers want their jobs done faster. If you have one entity looking after the entire process it becomes easier," says Mario Giorgio. Being able to bundle the services of printing, envelope manufacturing and mailing also presents a cost saving to the client. He also stresses the importance of the on-line capabilities as being a primary factor in the client's decision. "This customer has saved between 10 to 15% in the overall process," adds Giorgio.

OneSource has taken its show on the road, exhibiting at the U.S. Direct Marketing Association conference and

trade show in New Orleans this past fall, and according to Giorgio landed some promising leads.

AIIM, itself, is in the midst of a major 90,000 square-foot expansion to its facility, slated for completion in 2005. The new layout will further improve the efficiency of the plant's workflow, and its investments are ongoing. A new Xerox iGen3, being installed in early December, provides the digital colour capacity the company is anticipating will develop

from its SSI web-to-print operations.

The company's experiences are proof that customers are demanding more efficient and effective solutions and the need for personalized, one-to-one communications is growing. This is confirmed in a recent report from the Graphic Arts Marketing Information Service (GAMIS) entitled "Future of Direct Mail" that identifies two divergent business models for direct mail suppliers: either high volume, low cost-per-unit providers; or low volume, higher value personalized direct mail houses. With its most recent acquisitions AIIM has positioned itself to satisfy both long- and short-run demands.

The report also suggests, "Advertisers will increasingly look to their printers to handle most elements of direct mail production from commodity printing through to complex one-to-one direct mail campaigns including the accompanying distribution requirements. Thus, printers will have to become much better at supplier coordination and logistics management."

Again, AIIM has satisfied this requirement through its partnerships and the development of OneSource

In this Internet-driven age, organizations must continually review and adapt their technology and workflow to reflect new opportunities. Early to recognize and embrace its role in the communications business, AIIM has positioned itself well for years to come. **CP**