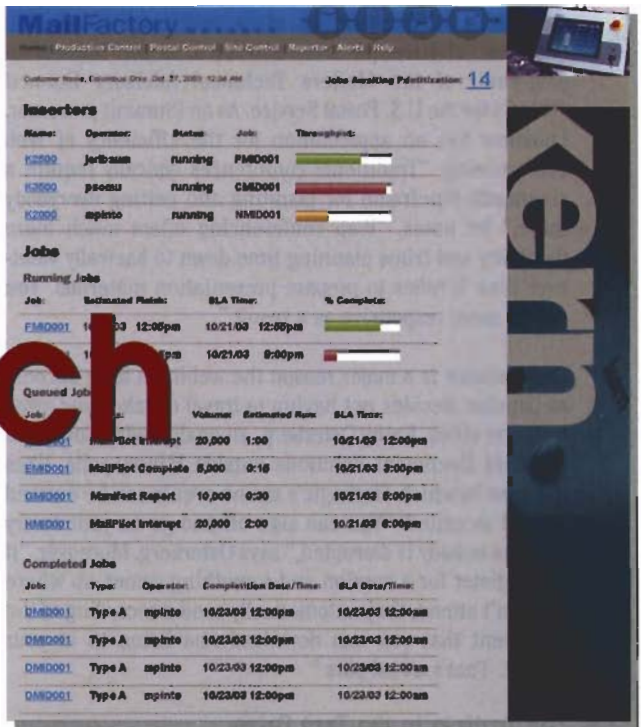


Embrace a Different Approach

Own your data

By Jeff Sutton



Kern's MailFactory

Businesses today have numerous options when choosing delivery mediums for communicating with their customers. These businesses understand that the documents they choose to send as First Class mail are increasingly valuable and play a vital role in their relationship with their customers.

Mail is a core function of their business: a critical link in their relationship with their customers and a key competitive advantage. As the value of mail increases, it is often as important to prove that a document has been mailed correctly as it is to mail the document itself.

Organizations committed to making highly effective, quality mail understand that the complex and interdependent systems which comprise document processing need to be integrated like a factory, an Automated Document Factory, bringing the processes under tight control to achieve the highest efficiency and ensure integrity.

Three distinct layers of functionality characterize a typical Automated Document Factory (ADF): the Mailroom Management Layer; the Device Management Layer; and the Machine and Operation Layer. The Mailroom Management Layer typically includes enterprise wide applications such as workflow and planning systems. The Device Management Layer includes tracking systems, print stream engineering, productivity reporting and postal control systems. The Machine and Operator Layer incorporates the man-machine interface of equipment and processes and their connection to the Device Management Layer. All of this functionality spans numerous complex processes from data creation and pre-print processing to printing, finishing and delivery.

While vendors have created an impressive array of offerings, adding innovative functionality within any given layer in an ADF, the customer is still left with the daunting challenge of fitting them all together. Despite a decade of considerable on-again, off-again efforts by customers and vendors in the document processing industry to establish standards governing data exchange and system interoperability in an ADF, no prevailing rules emerged. This situation has left customers bewildered at how it can be so complicated to make one vendor's "open" system work with another vendor's open system. To address this concern, Kern International has developed MailFactory, a comprehensive suite of Web-enabled ADF software tools to manage document production, verify document accuracy and easily interface with other workflow systems in an ADF.

In addition to creating MailFactory, Kern has also embraced a differentiating approach to doing business with customers. Simply put, we believe our customers own their data. They always have unique needs for using their data that go beyond standard product offerings. MailFactory provides them straightforward and total control over how they get their data, when they get their data and how they use their data.

This approach is resonating with customers growing weary of a vendor community whose automated document factory solutions include increasingly large professional services engagements for implementation, let alone customization. Developed as a Web-enabled application using Microsoft and C#, and incorporating an SQL database and standard SQL reporting tools, the MailFactory true open systems, open standards design bias provides a hub to enable many diverse ADF components to work together effectively.

We believe our customers own their data.

MailFactory is comprised of modular components, configurable to customer-specific combinations to address the enterprise's exact requirements.

MailFactory Manager is the link between your host and MailFactory; it collects and exchanges information for job scheduling, production and monitoring of connected devices or processes.

MailFactory Document Control communicates unique mailpiece finishing instructions to inserters and updates the processing disposition; the result is a robust audit confirming mailpiece integrity.

MailFactory Media Control makes possible complete component ID control at the job or mailpiece level.

MailFactory Output Control enables printing on closed-face envelopes and other customer-unique post processing requirements.

MailFactory Validation is a module incorporating cameras for customers whose requirements include extraordinary burden of proof of mailing redundant to the core Kern inserting technology.

MailFactory Workplace allows for repairing, reprinting or manual handling of individual mailpieces under database control. Also, MailFactory Workplace accounts for "hand-processed" jobs in the MailFactory environment.

MailFactory Reporter provides access to inserter, operator, job, mailpiece and mail recovery data. Both pre-defined and user-defined reports are available.

MailFactory Manifest Reporter integrates manifest mailing reports into MailFactory, maintaining maximum postage discounts and producing USPS required reports.

MailFactory Postal Control performs the postage accounting tasks within MailFactory.

Through near real-time reporting of all events that occur on inserters connected to the MailFactory network, customers are able to identify specific areas which need improvement and utilize the SQL reporting tool to drive organizational behavioral modification. Used effectively, this basic tool will deliver efficiencies that fund all enhancements the customer implements to improve quality.

As required and when required, customers may add any of the additional MailFactory modules to enhance their ADF functionality. For example, to minimize barcodes on documents for aesthetic purposes, customers will implement MailFactory Document Control. This module not only enables the retrieval of all finishing instructions for each mailpiece from the centralized SQL database, it also creates a complete audit of the status of each mailpiece processed within a job in the ADF.

The modular design of MailFactory makes it easy for customers to configure their implementation with only the functionality they need but also allows them to easily add modules in the future.

The MailFactory architecture simplifies integration with other ADF components. MailFactory modules include appropriate interfaces with the layers of functionality in an ADF: Machine/Operator, Device Management or Mailroom Management Layers. For instance, third-party

manifest reporting systems or postage accounting systems interface with MailFactory at the Device Management Layer while MailFactory interfaces with enterprise workflow systems at the Mailroom Management Layer. Additionally, MailFactory will interface with competitive inserting vendors' ADF products, removing any technical barrier to inclusion of Kern hardware and software in a competitive installation. MailFactory is implemented across standard network topologies and operates on a local area network within the customer's wide area network and may span multiple sites.

Responding to customers' needs to achieve the highest levels of quality and efficiency while simplifying the implementation of an ADF, Kern International is proud to offer MailFactory, a system that is extraordinarily flexible, extremely capable and completely extensible.

For additional information about Kern International, visit www.kerninc.com. ✉

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