Eastern Michigan University Teaches Variable Data Printing With DesignMerge!

Eastern Michigan University is located in Southeast Michigan, approximately 30 miles west of Detroit. The College of Technology offers a course in Digital Imaging and Reproduction which is part of the Communications Technology major. Communications Technology is a multi-disciplinary major that prepares students to eventually move into mid-management careers in technologies of the communications industry.

The class, CMT 207, implements aspects of digital printing and variable data in the print industry. The 207 class was revised from the previous content based on film conversion and plate making to reflect new trends in the print industry. This was a direct result of attending the Teachers Conference sponsored by GATF and PIA in conjunction with Graph Expo. The future direction of the print industry was very clear based on the various presenters. Given the increased interest towards digital, it became clear that students needed practical experiences to meet the changing needs of potential employers.

Following is a short interview with David Gore, Program Coordinator, Communication Technology School of Technology Studies discussing how DesignMerge helped meet the needs of Eastern Michigan University's leading-edge print curriculum.

Why did you choose to teach DesignMerge as part of the Communications Technology major?

By virtue of being at Graph Expo it was possible to explore the many vendors' solutions in variable data printing. After listening to salespeople and watching product demonstrations, DesignMerge variable data software seemed to have the best interface with Adobe InDesign, and appeared to be more flexible than other variable data products. It also seemed less dependent on the user having to be a database and XML expert. It was a clear advantage to allow designers to design and still incorporate variable data without having to spend an excessive amount of time devoted to coding. DesignMerge seemed to be the best fit, especially for the educational/teaching environment.

What was the ROI for teaching this class using DesignMerge?

The expectation of exposing students to VDP in this class is that they will be prepared to meet the needs of employers by having had hands-on lab experience with variable data software in their class projects. The bottom line for us is that our students leave prepared and ready to compete for jobs. From a fiscal perspective, the ROI was the best we could find by working with the salespeople at Meadows to purchase limited professional copies of DesignMerge supplemented with less costly lab seats for instruction. This provided every student an opportunity to work with the program. Since our mission is educational/instruction and we do not see a traditional profit based on our investment, Meadows Publishing provided us a way to keep within the very limited budget of our university and still provide students with the best educational experience.

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