

Getting Past the Hype of VDP

“A Practical Hands-on Training Class for Producing Variable Data Printing”

Supported by:

VDP Hands-on Laptop Training Consortium



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Why create a one-day hands-on seminar on VDP?

There are many conferences and seminars available to teach you how to sell and market printing with variable data, but when you are trying to learn something that requires different design considerations, different computer applications and an entirely different approach to preparing the images for print, a one to two hour lecture on selling and marketing does not give a lot of practical knowledge. This one-day hands-on seminar is supported by many of the major industry players marketing software and hardware for VDP. The VDP Hands-on Training Consortium was organized by Clemson University to apply the successful “learning by doing” philosophy of Clemson’s Department of Graphic Communications to VDP training. Consortium members include Atlas Software, Canon, Creo, EFI, Heidelberg, NexPress, Hewlett-Packard, Pageflex, Xeikon, Xerox, XMPie. Software sponsors include Adobe, BCC, Datalogics, Meadows Publishing Solutions, Enfocis, Group1, Lexigraph, and Quark.

Who should attend?

This hands-on seminar *is not* designed for the veterans of VDP—operators from printing and design companies already deep into working with VDP. It *is* designed for print owners and/or operators just entering the VDP market or considering adding VDP to the company portfolio. It is also ideal for designers, printbuyers, salespeople for printers or suppliers, and actual print customers who will be working with the printer. There is a big difference between learning the rules of golf, tennis or ultimate frisbee and actually playing the sport. This is also true with VDP. You can sit through a seminar on sales and marketing with VDP, but understanding how all the pieces fit together to make VDP work is best learned from firsthand experience. In learning the foundations for applying variable data in print production, you actually see how the tools work together for organizing and retrieving the variable information to optimize the effectiveness of the process and the final product. A **practical hands-on understanding** of the approach as well as the uses of VDP will help all who are involved accelerate the evolution of variable data printing forward to the level so many industry experts have predicted.

What does it take to travel & train hands-on?

You may never have thought about what you would have to have to teach a hands-on class in VDP, but we have. You need 10 laptop PC computers and several Macintosh computers to demonstrate the software available only on the Mac platform, 10 mice, 10 power packs, two 25' extension cords, one 10' extension cord, 3 power strips, CDs, a computer projection unit (with all the proper cables and a backup bulb), a small inkjet printer, cables to network the computers (when appropriate), an emergency harddrive backup of the images on the computers if they need to be rebuilt, printed samples, handouts and towels to wipe the sweat off your forehead as you wheel all this around the airport!



You also need to make sure that you follow the rules of the airlines as far as carry-on luggage. The airlines will not cover the loss of one laptop computer in checked luggage; therefore, they will not cover the cost of 13 laptop computers in checked baggage. When the computers travel there is a Clemson faculty member and a Clemson senior in Graphic Communications traveling, so the computers are divided between two people. Each carries one standard carry-on and one laptop bag. The rest of the material listed above is in checked baggage.



The FAA would not allow photo of bringing 13 laptops computers through the airport security. It is an experience.

What is Variable Data Printing?

Defining variable data printing (VDP) is dependent upon who you talk to and the type of customers they serve. A mail merge in Microsoft Word could be enough for some printers to be satisfied, but the bar has been raised with new black & white and color digital printing devices that hit the market in the last few years. Some people think VDP is new, but when you consider a phone bill, a bank statement, or a credit card bill, VDP has been around for decades. What has happened in the last 10 years is the cost of software and hardware options have come down to make VDP printing practical for virtually any marketing and sales promotional piece. Some forms of VDP change only the text on preprinted shells, while others change images based on general demographic information about the print consumer, such as yearly income or the area of the county they live. (This is called versioning). The highest levels of VDP are based on extensive database information regarding the print consumer incorporated into the text throughout the document along with changing graphics and photo images throughout the printed piece. This type of printed product takes the most planning and time, but also can be the most profitable of all of the VDP options. Resource materials will be included in this seminar to provide a better understanding of these options. Samples and case studies will be on display to give an overall understanding of the range of VDP options.

Seminar Presenter:

Dr. John Leininger is a Professor in the Department of Graphic Communications at Clemson University. He has been teaching for over 25 years and made over 250 presentations at industry tradeshow and conferences. He has taught courses in flexography, lithography, digital printing, inks and substrates as well as the department’s management class dealing with estimating, planning, equipment purchasing, cost analysis, and plant layout.

Hosting a Training Session:

This training has been used as a pre-conference session at several trade conferences. Local trade associations have hosted the event. College graphic programs have hosted industry attendees and then offered the training to their students. Companies entering the VDP market have used this training to orient sales personnel/designers/es-

The Seminar Outline Option 1:

8:30 AM to 9:00 AM—What is Variable Data Printing: Case Studies from suppliers and printers will be discussed so as to create a common starting point for all participants. This is the orientation period to bring all participants in line with a common language and perspective of the basics of VDP.

9:00 AM to 10:00 AM—Creating a database from scratch with a plan for future growth

10:00 AM to 10:45 AM—Reformatting and merging existing databases

10:45 AM to 11:00 AM—Break and deep breathing exercises

11:00 AM to 12:30 PM—Cleansing databases and prepping the fields for VDP

12:30 PM to 1:15 PM—Lunch, (a working lunch): A discussion of the various software options available for VDP and the issues that should be considered in deciding which is the right software for your needs.

1:15 PM to 2:30 PM—Planning the VDP printed piece for low-cost VDP options/Preparing the VDP file/Merging database information

2:30 PM to 2:45 PM—Break (more deep breathing exercises)

2:45 PM to 4:30 PM—Planning the VDP printed piece for high-end VDP options/Preparing the VDP file/Merging database information Round Two

4:30 PM til the last participant leaves—Questions and Answers/Catch-up time

The Seminar Outline Option 2 (PDF Basics):

8:30 AM to 9:00 AM—See Seminar Outline one to the left.

9:00 AM to 9:30 AM—Creating a database from scratch with a plan for future growth

9:30 AM to 10:00 AM—Cleansing databases and prepping the fields for VDP

10:00 AM to 10:30 AM—The Basics of PDF files, the good the bad and the awful

10:30 AM to 11:00 AM—Creating PostScript files and establishing correct Distiller settings for the proper use of PDF files to use in print, on the web, or for proofing.

11:00 AM to 11:15 AM—Break and deep breathing exercises

11:15 AM to 12:30 PM—Preflighting and Certifying PDFs to use in printing commercial work, VDP, or web page images.

12:30 PM to 1:15 PM—Lunch, (a working lunch): A discussion of the various software options available for VDP and the issues that should be considered in deciding which is the right software for your needs.

1:15 PM to 2:30 PM—Planning the VDP printed piece for low-cost VDP options/Preparing the VDP file/Merging database information

2:30 PM to 2:45 PM—Break (more deep breathing exercises)

2:45 PM to 4:30 PM—Planning the VDP printed piece for high-end VDP options/Preparing the VDP file/Merging database information Round Two

4:30 PM til the last participant leaves—Questions and Answers and Catch-up time

Industry Support for VDP Training

This training program would not have been possible without the support from the printing industry. Education working with industry suppliers to improve the knowledge base of printers, designers and customers is not a new concept, it is a model that has been successful in almost every industry. The diverse support of the companies involved in this project, listed below, would only be possible if there was a coordinating hub; merging the hands-on philosophy of the Department of Graphic Communications at Clemson University with these companies became an ideal fit.

VDP Hands-on Training Consortium members contributed funds to purchase the hardware to travel around the country with this VDP training. They also contributed software or hardware to support the training project. Consortium members include Atlas Software, Canon, Creo, EFI, Heidelberg, Hewlett-Packard, NexPress, Pageflex, Xeikon, Xerox, XMPie, and software sponsors include Adobe, BCC, Datalogics, Meadows Publishing Solutions, Enfocis, Group1, Lexigraph, and Quark.

A Little About Clemson University

Clemson University is a state land grant university formed as a result of Thomas Green Clemson’s 1896 bequest to the state of 814 acres of land and approximately \$80,000 in cash and personal property.

In 1982 Graphic Communications became a separate degree program and in 1995 it became the Department of Graphic Communications. Today it has over 400 majors and is housed in two university buildings. The on-campus facility has over 27,000 square feet and the off-campus facility that houses several large flexo presses and will have a four color gravure press installed later this year. The department supports classes for traditional college students and for industry employees who need retraining or updating of skills and techniques. The department hosts symposia each year on topics dealing with color, process control, etc. The Department of Graphic Communication’s Mission Statement, “*To develop dedicated, practical, problem-solving people for the printing, publishing, packaging, imaging, and allied industries,*” relates to all of the activities in the department, including the VDP Hands-on Laptop Training seminar. **For more information:** check out the following webpages—<http://graphics.clemson.edu> <http://www.clemson.edu> or call (864)-656-3447.

timators to the workings of VDP so they can communicate with common terminology and a consistent understanding of everyone’s role in the production of a VDP piece. These groups partner with Clemson University to fill the 20 seats available in each training session.

The Cost of Hosting a VDP Training Session:

Training without trainees is not very effective, which is why the cost of hosting this training has been kept to a minimum. Through the assistance of the industry members of the VDP Laptop Training Consortium the startup costs of the training have been recovered. Thanks to this support the project can now cover its operating costs and maintenance/upkeep costs. The standard cost of hosting a session is \$1,500. This covers the travel for the Clemson faculty and student as well as

the upkeep support for the project. If the host group has 20 participants at the standard rate set by the consortium of \$200/person, there are ample funds for the cost of the meeting facility and lunch, both of which are the responsibilities of the hosting group. If travel time or location cannot be covered through discount airfare, there may be an additional travel cost. Canceling a training program once confirmed and airline tickets have been purchased will result in a \$200.00 cancellation fee. Brochures are available for imprinting the host group’s information and if desired, marketing can be handled by the Clemson staff for a fee of \$300. For specifics related to costs and to find out more about hosting a training session contact John Leininger at (864)-656-3447 or at ljohn@clemson.edu.