

Peruvian Connection Combines CommercialWare & Formtastic for Maximum ROI

Luxury fiber apparel marketer, Peruvian Connection, was founded in 1976 by the mother and daughter team of Bidy and Annie Hurlbut. It was Annie's anthropological research on women in the Andean marketplaces of Peru that inspired their premier clothing designs and continue to inspire the three internationally known collections that they market and ship all over the world today.

To stay successful in the ultra-competitive direct marketing industry, Peruvian Connection has to stay on top of their paperwork. That includes importing merchandise and taking and shipping orders to individual customers all over the world.

Peruvian Connection processes approximately 1,200 orders per day between their operational facilities located in Kansas and the UK, according to Diane Toby, Chief Operating Officer. They also mail thousands of postcards each week – those

being FTC notifications, return acknowledgements, sold-out notifications, and other customer service correspondence.

To handle this document-heavy workload, Peruvian Connection currently uses an System i (iSeries 400) running CommercialWare retail business solutions. But that wasn't always the case.

"We were working with an individual programmer and an order management system that was fairly restrictive," says Toby. "We pre-printed a few base forms and fed them through a dot-matrix printer. The Progress software/database printed data onto those forms."

In addition to the difficulty and expense of designing forms for dot-matrix production, Peruvian Connection had problems utilizing their own data. "It was a software/database combination that did not easily allow end users to get their hands on a lot of the data," says Toby. "So we had to ask for assistance to get information formatted correctly."

To help fix these problems, Peruvian Connection decided to install an System i (iSeries 400) and upgrade their core business order processing and data management application to CommercialWare. It was during their conversations with CommercialWare that they started talking about customizing output and creating professional, flexible forms. Here was the catch though: At the time, Peruvian Connection had zero IT staff. They needed a forms design solution that would be highly functional but also user friendly for non-technical staff.

CommercialWare promptly pointed them toward Quadrant Software's Formtastic



P E R U V I A N C O N N E C T I O N

solution for designing and producing electronic forms. Because they were new to the System i and CommercialWare, they were also unfamiliar with the different forms vendors in the market.

"We hadn't heard of Formtastic until CommercialWare mentioned it," says Toby. "The product was presented to us basically as 'You're going to need to use this to make the appearance of your output more professional and personalized after you convert to CommercialWare.' They had a dot matrix solution, too. Our options were either to find out how to use the dot matrix solution and find someone to create the necessary forms, or purchase Formtastic with the ability to customize a lot of output. Our operation required 3 different versions of invoices, on 3 different sizes of paper, and the ability to print multiple currency symbols and multiple address formats. To be very, very honest, I don't think I understood the flexibility Formtastic would bring to the organization at the time."

So, Peruvian Connection took on the challenge of implementing a midrange server and a new business application while also switching over to electronic forms. The results could have been unpredictable or even disastrous under other circumstances. Fortunately for Peruvian Connection, Quadrant Software's electronic forms integrate seamlessly with CommercialWare spool file data. This made life much easier on Suzie Israel, Peruvian Connection's



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graphic designer. "Installing Formtastic was very easy," says Israel. "Their sales staff made sure we had all the information we needed ahead of time."

Peruvian Connection also took full advantage of Quadrant Software's extensive training options and 24/7 technical support. "Professional Services came out and spent two or three days training, and it was very good," says Toby.

After training was complete, Israel also worked closely with tech support while she explored using Formtastic as well as the System i (iSeries 400) and CommercialWare. "Tech support was excellent," says Israel. "They not only helped with Formtastic, but they also helped bridge the gap with the AS/400 knowledge."

"I love Formtastic because I like being able to control how things look," continues Israel. "Also, I think the most surprising and unique thing about Formtastic is that I can do what a programmer would do without having to be one. I love everything about Formtastic. I recommend it to everybody I know."

In addition to Formtastic, Peruvian Connection also purchased the Formatter spool file pre-processor, which allows customers to cut document page counts by

50 - 75% and concatenate spool file data. "We were wasting a lot of paper, because we had two page invoices with only one line printed on the second page," explains Toby.

"Using it to consolidate pages for our invoice was perfect," says Israel. "For instance, if there were ten lines of content, then the total would always go on the second page. There would be no content on the second page, just the total. So, those kinds of things were awkward. I thought Formatter would be a worthwhile investment and I really recommended it to my team."

Using Formatter to automatically pre-process the spool file before it gets delivered to Formtastic allows Peruvian Connection to easily move that single line of content back to the first page. This cuts back on paper usage while also giving them more dynamic control over how their data appears on the form. The final result is forms that are both shorter and more readable.

In another example, Israel notes that Formatter has helped them format international addresses. "We also use it to concatenate address lines using nested tables, which is something that we can do in conjunction with concatenating the body lines and consolidating pages. So, in the same template we format our European addresses so that they're correct for European postal system protocols, and consolidate the pages, and make sure that the information we're giving is what we want the recipient to see."

Once everything was implemented, including the System i (iSeries 400) and CommercialWare, the benefits of using Formatter and Formtastic began to show immediately.

"Formatter and Formtastic has allowed us to make qualitative improvements to just about every piece of correspondence that we send to customers or vendors," says Toby. "When I'm asked about changing our forms, I always say 'I'm sure we can do that.' As long as we can get the output from CommercialWare, then we can figure out how to get it on a piece of paper or whatever else we might need to do."

"I'm not even sure that Quadrant Software is aware of how flexible their tools can be," adds Israel. "We can take

CommercialWare's output, put it on any sized paper, and distill it down to only those pieces we want. We don't have to take all the spool data. It's extremely flexible. We use note card sized paper through a laser printer and that's been great."

From a design perspective, Israel also appreciates the ability to modify forms on the fly without worrying about wasting pre-printed forms. Any edit, ranging from a modified zip code to a whole new presentation of form data, can be implemented immediately without wasting time or physical resources.

Formatter and Formtastic have also helped Peruvian Connection eliminate numerous inefficient processes and expensive hardware. "We used to print from dot matrix printers onto large, continuous-feed invoices, and then we would sit and manually split them apart," says Toby. "To print 500 invoices took approximately 2.5 hours and then splitting took another 1 - 1.5 hours. We now print invoices on 3 different sizes of regular paper through a laser printer and it takes about 10 minutes to print 500 invoices. There is no splitting time involved."

Not only did the switch to Formtastic and Formatter save time, it also saves money. Using their old document production system, it cost Peruvian Connection \$108.20 to produce 1,000 US version continuous feed invoices. Using Formtastic and Formatter, it costs only \$69.42 to produce 1,000 8.5 x 11 invoices. That yields an annual savings of over \$6,000, based on production of 600 invoices per day. The savings on the European versions of the invoice are similar.

All in all, Peruvian Connection's use of Formatter and Formtastic illustrates perfectly how easy it is to implement electronic forms even without a large IT staff. Even better, Peruvian Connection achieved significant cost and time savings while improving the appearance and flexibility of their mission-critical correspondence.

For details on Quadrant Software's solutions for CommercialWare, call us at 508-594-2700, email quadrant@quadrantsoftware.com, or visit our Web site at www.quadrantsoftware.com.

