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— Kathy King, Staples Promotional Products

## Company Profile

Staples Promotional Products was formed in 1998 to consolidate three companies that specialize in the development, promotion and extension of corporate and brand trademarks through logoed merchandise, including a line of American-made products. While there are literally thousands of promotional product companies in the United States, Staples Promotional Products has been the industry leader for more than 50 years, particularly in terms of its managed program business. From creating the first eStores in 1988 to developing its own proprietary line of apparel and headwear in order to bring cost savings to its customers, Staples has changed the promotional products landscape.

The company counts more than 350 of the Fortune 1000 companies as customers who have chosen Staples Promotional Products to create and implement their branded merchandise for special events and managed programs. Staples Promotional Products' senior management team is one of the most knowledgeable in the industry, offering its customers in excess of a century of combined experience. The company employs more than 800 people.

## Business Challenge

When the three companies—K-Products Headwear, Swingster and Boise Marketing Services—were merged to form Staples Promotional Products, the new company examined ways in which it could consolidate operations to achieve synergies from its new, larger scope. One area of opportunity was the management of digital assets, which were stored on multiple servers in multiple departments without a clear view of all of the assets under management. Not only did that mean that assets could be difficult to locate, but it also resulted in a significant amount of duplication and redundancy, consumed excessive storage space, and increased the amount of time required to locate specific assets.



According to Kathy King, Staples Promotional Products' Digital Asset Manager, "We had a specific set of requirements for a corporate digital asset management solution. Chief among those was the need for a robust, enterprise-level solution because we knew that no matter how many assets we had accumulated, the database was only going to keep growing and any solution we chose had to be able to grow along with us." Another critical requirement was ease of use. King points out that, like many companies, employees of Staples Promotional Products have a wide range of technical skills and everyone needed to be able to gain access to digital assets as required in the performance of their job functions.

Staples Promotional Products, was also looking to provide electronic access to catalog items for its sales associates, production staff, suppliers and partners, who were using a costly and time-consuming paper-based process to acquire and disseminate information about specific assets. King comments, "This paper-based process resulted in a lot of printing and waiting for the mail or delivery trucks to arrive. We wanted everyone to have electronic access to a single repository from their desktops so that we could ensure the highest level of customer service as well as increased staff productivity." For this to be successful, the solution needed to offer the ability to add and manage metadata, including asset history, and to offer a robust search capability for fast execution of both simple and complex searches.

"As we transitioned to a more digital workflow," King adds, "we also did not want to bog down our email system, and we wanted to eliminate the practice of storing digital assets in multiple places on the network without the ability to ensure that we were working with the most current version. Our top priority was to protect brand integrity for our customers."

### **The Solution**

Following an exhaustive review of digital asset management solutions available in the market, Staples Promotional Products chose to implement MediaBank from WAVE Corp. King says, "MediaBank met all of our requirements. With MediaBank, not

only do our power users have access to a very high level of capability, but the rest of our users, including our partners, suppliers and clients around the globe, have access to a very easy-to-use web interface that provides them with all of the necessary information they need to participate in the management of their digital assets.”

Staples Promotional Products implemented MediaBank over a period of two years, starting with its Marketing Services Department, who is responsible for producing the company’s catalogs, including both generic and customer-specific online and printed versions and also the Graphic Art Department who is responsible for producing the identified artwork for each garment/ad specialty requested by a customer. Over time, other departments were integrated into the MediaBank workflow.

## Results

The MediaBank implementation has exceeded Staples Promotional Products' expectations, according to King. She says, “As of last month, the number of items we have cataloged through MediaBank has topped 700,000, and our workflow has been revolutionized.” As we enter our 5th year of working with MediaBank, we’ve a standardize set of naming convention rules which allows for ease of training for new users, according to King, and she reports that there are now over 500 MediaBank users on the system, including power users and web users, internal and external to the company.

“From our president all the way down the organization, the folks at American Identity say they can’t even imagine life without MediaBank.”

— Kathy King, Staples Promotional Products

“We even have users in the warehouse and accounting who have benefited from access to MediaBank,” she adds. “MediaBank has become the digital hub of our company.”

## Benefits

- ◆ Easy access to a single, integrated repository of digital assets has eliminated significant cost and time from Staples Promotional Products' end-to-end workflow, including interfaces among internal groups and with suppliers, partners and customers.
- ◆ There is increased synergy between departments, and multiple people can be working on the same project in parallel, including art directors, copywriters, prepress and more. Previously, these tasks often were conducted in a linear fashion, resulting in extended cycle times.
- ◆ Sales personnel are able to be much more agile in gathering and communicating customer requirements. Turnaround time for availability of new assets has gone from days to hours or even minutes.
- ◆ Staples Promotional Products can now manage rush requests more easily, with items able to go into production in as little as two hours from receipt of order regardless of where, geographically, the order originated.
- ◆ Full return on investment was achieved in less than five years, and savings of thousands of dollars per month continue to accrue.
- ◆ Sales associates, customers and suppliers can now easily convert assets to required file formats; in the past, this activity required intervention from the Graphic Arts or Marketing Services departments and resulted in workflow disruption for the departments.
- ◆ With the new, more productive workflow, Marketing Services capacity increased by a factor of four. Paper usage and the number of required physical filing cabinets have been reduced significantly. Staples Promotional Products is also making significant use of MediaBank’s LightBox capability.

King states, "In the past, significant staff time was consumed with finding and disseminating assets, via email or FTP, as a result of customer, supplier or sales associate requests. We had one client for whom we were making 60 to 70 CDs per catalog release. Now it is a simple matter of a ten-minute task to create a LightBox and assets are immediately available." King reports that over 122,000 assets were downloaded from MediaBank Web during 2006, with a combination of LightBoxes and individual assets.

King concludes: "I can't say enough about the engineers at WAVE. No matter what happens, they are right there to help us, whether it is a simple request or a more complex issue that requires software customization. They are one of the best teams I have ever worked with." ♦



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