



CASE STUDY

THE PCI GROUP: DELIVERING MISSION-CRITICAL COMMUNICATIONS

A national transactional printing leader enjoys continued growth and success, embracing Canon technology to support its commitment to fast, high-quality production, adherence to rigorous security compliance requirements, and maintaining near 100% error-free delivery.



PCI Group pros take pride in maintaining a 99.9999% error-free transactional printing track record.

A company that began as a small family business with a focus on data entry and collection letters, the PCI Group (PCI) now boasts decades of excellence as a provider of mission-critical transactional and customer communications for an impressive roster of top-tier clients. Its ability to produce TransPromo deliverables with razor-sharp color and image consistency—while preserving a staggering 99.9999% error-free track record for variable data letters, checks, and statements—keeps those customers loyal to PCI. In turn, insistence on this high level of quality and performance is why PCI remains deeply loyal to Canon.

More than 50 years ago, PCI Group began operations on Long Island, New York, dedicated to data entry, where client work brought them into the collections space. Originally an Océ toner shop printing black-and-white on preprinted shells with a rotation of just four different color backgrounds, PCI helped customers see collections letters as a marketing opportunity, creating more customer-centric mailings that were both informative and effective. Within a few years, as explained by President and Co-Founder Chris Kropac, PCI Group was known as “the home of the friendly collection letter.”

“For me, every envelope I send out is the most important envelope,” Kropac says. “I think we helped collections agencies recognize the humanity of the people they were contacting. Plus, we concentrated on quality. We took out the bad verbiage, we used colored paper. We helped our clients treat people like customers.”

That ability to both humanize and personalize collections mailings helped shape the company’s affinity for transactional printing.



PCI Group President and Co-Founder Chris Kropac.

Kropac, who moved the business founded by his father to South Carolina in 2008, takes tremendous pride in PCI's continued success, noting that it prints more than 4 million sheets and mails well over 1 million packages of transactional mail every day for a host of verticals such as financial services, public utilities, insurance, telecom, and healthcare. With each of those pieces—which include bills, checks, and collection notices all containing privileged information—content security and recipient specificity are imperative.

PCI's ability to excel in all aspects of transactional printing—bolstered by Canon production inkjet presses and shoulder-to-shoulder support from Canon—has fueled its impressive growth within the past decade. The onboarding of a large healthcare industry client in 2015 effectively tripled PCI's size. By 2017, Kropac and his team needed to open a new production facility in Dallas, expanding service reach across the United States.

A COMMITMENT TO INNOVATION

PCI leadership prides itself on embracing innovation. According to Kropac, PCI seeks to deploy cutting-edge technologies and implement breakthrough approaches to workflow management that help it optimize outbound document delivery, communications processing, and electronic as well as paper bill presentment. Setting up and sustaining a relationship with Canon, and making the move to production inkjet print solutions in 2015, has helped PCI thrive.

"We adopted Canon production inkjet because we realized it would become the industry standard for reliability, speed, and quality," explains Kropac. "We evolved from a toner-based roll-to-fold approach to the world of full-color roll-to-roll, and we never looked back. It allows us to print all backgrounds in full color at the same time as letter copy—capability that lets us give our customers nearly unlimited print offerings."



Canon production inkjet meets PCI Group demands for reliability, speed, and quality.

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— Chris Kropac, President and Co-Founder of PCI

The performance and reliability of Canon inkjet technology anchors one of PCI's strongest selling points: the ability to take what would be a time-consuming and intricate responsibility off the hands of a company's marketing department.

According to Kropac, moving transactional printing demands from an in-plant to PCI allows a company to stay focused on creating whatever messaging is critical to their customer outreach. Once the development and design are done, PCI takes on the printing, production, and preparation for delivery—all steps that typically consume considerable internal resources. Transitioning to this synergistic approach has proven to be smooth and seamless, he notes, especially for large organizations with high production volume.

“I tell people all the time,” says Kropac, “don't worry about producing folded mail. You're not a printer. You're an insurance company, or you're a healthcare company, or whatever business they're in. You stay focused on your business; we'll handle the mail. All we really need from them is a PDF or a data file, and we're good to go.”

REMARKABLE SECURITY AND RELIABILITY

PCI prides itself on rigorous document security and maintaining data integrity for each recipient. Kropac makes this point emphatically: “A big, big part of our job is to stay laser-focused on protecting delivery content, recipient identity, and a spectrum of sensitive information,” he says. To that end, PCI has a range of onsite surveillance and security protocols in place at both facilities.

Add the need to adhere to an ever-evolving list of regulatory compliance criteria, and everyday print production challenges become supercharged with extra levels of responsibility and accountability. Kropac is quick to note that PCI Group has a proven history of accurate personalization, variable data capability, production tracking, shipping, and delivery with an ironclad level of overview and security, staying SOC I, SOC II Type II, PCI DSS, HIPAA, and FISMA compliant.

And when attesting to the effectiveness of the highly specialized process for creating transactional mail PCI has implemented, Kropac is understandably proud. Confirming his company's reliability, he proudly explains that, “Last year we produced over 450 million pieces of mail, and we only had six errors. That's right, six out of 450 million. That's six-sigma quality.”



THE EQUIPMENT THAT MAKES PERFORMANCE POSSIBLE

Kropac is quick to tie that competence to the company's relationship with Canon, specifically the inkjet advantages delivered by ColorStream 3900 and 6900 web-fed inkjet presses.

"The Canon ColorStream is simply the right platform for transactional mail," he explained. "We have four roll-to-roll ColorStream presses in our Fort Mill location, all with perforators on the back end. Our Dallas facility has three ColorStream presses."

The benefit Kropac praises specific to the ColorStream is the welcome combination of efficiency, flexibility, and quality of color. "Inkjet simultaneously streamlines and accelerates transitions from monochrome to full color," he said, "and the DigiDot (in the U.S.) multilevel dot modulation process consistently produces a sharpness of detail and halftone smoothness that means amazingly crisp image quality. We printed more than three billion

images last year, and the quality and color consistency made possible by Canon just speaks for itself."

In addition to the ColorStream presses, PCI also runs varioPRINT i300 and varioPRINT i300 MICR presses, as well as a varioPRINT 6250 MICR press. These powerfully versatile presses combine the efficiency of production inkjet with the media and application flexibility of sheetfed production. "The varioPRINT i300 presses are just complete workhorses. They open up more digital print possibilities for our clients," says Kropac, "Plus, we can run monochrome and color jobs at once."

A big part of why Kropac and his team really appreciate the varioPRINT i300 is that the press runs automated maintenance routines to help ensure security and maintain uninterrupted production. This helps reduce unplanned service and makes routine maintenance much faster and more efficient. "For us, uptime is everything. I never hear that the press is down, and you don't need me to explain how great that is. We don't need to reserve a space in the parking lot for the tech, you know what I mean?"



The PCI Group facility in Dallas features three Canon ColorStream inkjet web presses.

SUPPORTING A LEAN WORKFLOW APPROACH

As part of its commitment to continued awareness of what its customers want, PCI complements the use of Canon production inkjet technology with a lean manufacturing approach. This entails maintaining ongoing communication and interaction with vendors and partners, so much so that, according to Kropac, he often becomes good friends with Canon representatives and leadership. This level of connection lets PCI develop a deeper understanding of the complete life cycle of their services and optimize workflow efficiency within that life cycle. It also allows PCI production to be driven by customer demand instead of available inventory, a much more efficient, cost effective approach.

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“Canon, in terms of production uptime and accelerated workflow, has ensured a level of performance and reliability that complements our commitment to lean manufacturing,” Kropac explains.

And while the equipment and workflow integration earn praise, PCI leadership puts service at the top of the list in terms of what sets Canon apart.

“Canon does an exceptional job keeping the presses up,” says Kropac, explaining that there’s a Canon technician working directly out of the PCI Fort Mill facility, as well as a Canon parts depot right on site. “We’re one of the largest facilities in the area, so that just makes sense.”

There’s a similar dynamic in Dallas, with a technician who stays dedicated to that facility and a smaller on-site parts depot that is expanding in step with that facility’s capacity.



Ensuring an industry-leading accuracy rate of 99.9999% is a PCI Group team effort.

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– Chris Kropac, President and Co-Founder of PCI

“The thing that keeps me with Canon,” he concludes, “is the service. Keeping the presses up is essential of course, but we also have a local Canon analyst on deck ready to help us resolve production issues.”

According to Kropac, PCI clients often send files that require extra effort to make them print ready. “Maybe we have to flip an image, or clean up something from an old application, whatever. We leverage our Canon techs a lot. The specialists on the Canon side can step in, solve these challenges, and keep the presses running.”

When asked to elaborate on why PCI is so confident in its relationship with Canon, Kropac explains that he sees it as more of a partnership. “I’m not on an island. If I have a problem, I can call them up, we get it resolved, and we’re back to it. It’s always one team, one goal.”

A STRONG FUTURE TOGETHER

That sense of one team, the strong relationship Kropac has often characterized as giving him the peace of mind to sleep well at night, continues to be a cornerstone of PCI success. With operations in Fort Mill, SC and Dallas, TX running strong and its roster of satisfied customers continuing to grow, PCI is again eager to expand. Another facility, outfitted with the same reliable Canon equipment, service, and support that has excelled at both current PCI locations, is slated to be operational in the Southwestern US soon, further cementing PCI’s place as one of the nation’s transactional printing leaders.



Canon ColorStream presses in action at the PCI Dallas facility.

ABOUT US

Canon recommends forward-thinking strategies to help achieve the highest levels of information management efficiency for your unique business needs. Using superior technology and innovative services, we then design, implement, and track solutions that help improve information flow throughout your organization while considering the environment, helping to result in greater productivity and reduced costs.

Canon Provides End-to-End Solutions Like These:

- Paper Program
- Media and Solutions Lab
- TrueSupport
- Training and Experience
- Escalation Procedures
- Preventive Maintenance
- Canon PRISMA Workflow Software

As a company that is dedicated to your needs, we support our solutions with highly skilled professionals and advanced diagnostic systems to maintain peak performance. And with ongoing consultation, we can further your document management capabilities to help ensure the highest level of satisfaction and productivity.

As of January 1, 2025, Canon Solutions America, Inc. merged into its parent company, Canon U.S.A., Inc. The relationship described in this case study initiated with Canon Solutions America and continues with Canon U.S.A.



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