The facts ABOUT Variable data printing

Variable data printing (VDP) is a form of personalised digital printing which enables customised specific text, graphics and images in a single digital print run, resulting in unique and personalised printed items.

The variable data uses information from a database or external file to automatically change from one printed item to the next without stopping or slowing down the digital print device, enabling the one print job to reach each individual within a target audience, directly, by name, by company name, by specific message or image.

For example, a set of personalised letters, each with the same basic layout, can be printed with a different name and address on each letter. VDP is mainly used for direct marketing, client relationship management, advertising, invoicing and applying addressing on mailers, brochures or postcard campaigns.

Why VDP?

Increase responses	**Increase ROI**	**Greater sales**	**Repeat sales**	**Economical**
VDP campaigns generate as much as 500% more responses.	The return on investment (ROI) on VDP marketing campaigns is 200% higher.	VDP campaigns attract motivated buyers.	VDP sends an effective message to bring back previous clients.	Each printed page delivers a higher ROI.

VDP enables the mass customisation of documents for individual marketing as opposed to the mass production of a single document to a mass market.

Instead of producing 10,000 copies of a single document, delivering a single message to 10,000 clients, variable data printing can deliver 10,000 unique documents with customised messages for each of the 10,000 clients.

There are several levels of VDP.
› The most basic level involves changing the greeting or name on each copy much like a mail merge.
› More complicated VDP uses 'versioning', where there may be differing amounts of customisation for different markets, with text and images changing for groups of addresses based upon which segment of the market is being addressed.
› Finally there is full variability printing, where the text and images can be altered for each individual address.

All VDP begins with a basic design that defines static elements and variable fields for the pieces to be printed. While the static elements appear exactly the same on each piece, the variable fields are filled in with text or images as dictated by a set of style rules and the information contained in the database.

PROJECT

Producing or procuring sustainable custom-made print and mail, on a project-by-project basis. More info visit - finsbury.com.au/product/project

Preparing files for VDP

A client relationship management (CRM) database is critical to any marketing effort, but particularly to a VDP direct mail campaign. Knowing the clients and prospects is key to connecting one-on-one with them. The more that is known about them, the easier it is to deliver relevant messages to them in a personalised way.

Database file formats for VDP are typically Excel spreadsheets and comma separated (.CSV) files. In a simple VDP mailing, the minimum required fields are Name, Address, City, State and Postcode and each of these fields must be separated. With this type of information, the direct mail piece can be personalised by using the person's name or by their location.

For a more complex VDP direct mail piece, providing the information has been obtained from the CRM, personalisation can be taken much further. Data collected can be anything from greetings, first name, middle initial, last name, sex, age, previous purchases (for clients) or products and services of interest (for prospects), birthdays and much more.

How well the client is known determines how personally one can connect with them.

Deciding the goal or outcome of the marketing campaign should always be the first step. Making sure the results are actually measured is even more critical. Results can be measured in a variety of ways, like response rate, leads generated, traffic increase on your website, retention rates, increase in sales and many others. This can easily be measured by tracking results through the CRM system.

Feel free to contact our Digital Print Manager about preparing database files for a variable printing campaign.

Six ways to increase the ROI with VDP

1 Segment the mailing list
Don't just personalise the direct mail piece, stretch the marketing budget even further by creating segments and develop a targeted message for each one.

2 Drive traffic to a website
Including a Personal URL (PURL) or landing page on the direct mail piece can help drive traffic to a website. It can improve response rates by making an individual feel like they are being spoken to directly. If it is an ecommerce website, driving traffic to the site can ultimately lead to sales. Personalise the offers by segmenting the mailing list into groups of products purchased.

3 Drive traffic to store locations
Include a personalised map of the closest store to your prospect or client and include a coupon with an expiration date. Coupons can be variable, based on annual spend at the store.

4 Create a rapid response system for handling enquiries
Responding quickly to enquiries can help reduce costs and increase accuracy.

5 Send a follow-up direct mail piece to anyone that visited the PURL
The prospect is showing some interest by making the effort to visit the PURL. Following up with a more compelling personalised message.

6 Track the direct mail campaign
Sometimes prospects go to the PURL in response to the direct mail piece and then leave. They are obviously interested, but maybe it was the wrong offer. Because the contact information has been captured a follow-up email with a better offer will increase response rates further.

REAL ESTATE – A VDP Case Study

A simple example of how a real estate agent can use VDP to increase sales by finding new prospects, increasing the size and quality of their database and developing leads for their sales team.

While most real estate agents have a customer relationship management (CRM) database, to make best use of VDP, it is important to grow the size and quality of that data by capturing as much information as possible about new prospects and increasing traffic to your website.

Step 1

Design a promotional piece that invites prospects to win a prize or offer a service by registering their details on a website. Critically the questions that you will ask on the website help to build a better database by qualifying what interests them. Who they are? Are they thinking of selling or buying? What do they think their property is worth? Is it an investment property or their residence.

Step 2

Target the most relevant postcodes to your business and send out a promotional piece via an unaddressed mail out to all addresses in these suburbs that points prospects to the website. Of course there are other ways to build a database, such as procuring data lists; however, the return on investment is greater with print as it generates more successful leads than any other option.*

Step 3

Typically there will be an initial rush of responses to the unaddressed mail out, so it is highly likely that within a month you're in a position to execute your new data for a direct mail campaign.

As a professional sales organisation you know your industry better than anyone, so armed with a new improved database of prospects determine what information goes to whom. By segmenting the postcodes, for example, prospects can get a good feel for properties that have sold in their area, their own property value, and not just the ones you've handled – potentially generating more listings. On the other hand, if they have shown an interest in knowing about nearby properties, they can get a good feel for what is available should they want to move – potentially generating sales.

All of the following elements for the direct mail piece come together in a VDP template, which can contain but is not limited to:

- Images of properties
- Consultants' details, background, experience, photos and signatures
- Industry market reports
- Targeted letters and reports about specific activities like listings, properties sold, commercial properties and general market information for the area
- Contact information and office locations

Step 4

Once the design template has been completed and data supplied, Finsbury Green generates all the different VDP versions for you to approve. They are then condensed into one digital print run to get the best postage rate and lodged with Australia Post.

Step 5

Within days your new VDP direct marketing piece will start working for you and your sales team. There is no doubt that it is a proven marketing tool that gets the best results.

The sales leads generated from this campaign will not only increase activity but also continually build the database and in turn demonstrate how successful this activity can be.

Finsbury Green can make this process easy for you to manage. We can help you with:

- **Database strategy and internal process management for VDP**
- **Design concepts, finished artwork and VDP templates**
- **Cost effective print for unaddressed mail outs and promotional pieces**
- **Return mail management**

RETAIL – A VDP Case Study

A simple example of how a retail business can use VDP to boost traffic through their stores, raise brand awareness through loyalty programs and increase the size and quality of their database.

Let's face it; in the current economic climate, retail is a very challenging sector. Despite that situation, developing a customer relationship management (CRM) database can allow you to access the power of VDP. VDP can make a huge difference to how new customers perceive your offering, bring back previous customers, and is particularly powerful in driving traffic to your stores and website.

Step 1

Design an entry form that invites customers to win a prize by registering their details on a website. Remember the bigger the reward the greater the take-up. By placing these entry forms in every store you are not only increasing the volume of responses but also increasing your understanding about what customers want or think of your offering.

Critically the questions that you will ask on the website help to build a better database by qualifying what interests them. What products are they most interested in or most likely to buy? What is their favourite store and why? Are they happy to receive information about other promotions? Do they want to join a loyalty program that offers tangible benefits?

Generate a unique number and QR code on each entry form as this can be used as an entry code and track what store the entry came from.

Source: Rochester Institute of Technology 2011

There are others ways to build a database; however, the return on investment (ROI) is far greater with print because it generates more successful entries than any other option.*

Make sure all sales staff encourage shoppers to fill out the entry form at every opportunity.

Step 2

Design in-store promotional pieces such as ceiling hangers, shelf talkers, posters and t-shirts that create a buzz about the competition.

Step 3

Expect a steady flow of responses over the competition period. Keeping up the buzz in-store is also critical and when the big day arrives to announce the winner, create a special event and make sure news of this is maintained on your website.

Step 4

It's likely that within a month or two, depending on the competition period, you will have collected a significant amount of data from new and existing customers. Because of this you're in a position to execute even more targeted VDP campaigns that in turn increase your database and continue to grow sales.

For example, by segmenting clients by store location you are able to match product or promotional offerings in a VDP campaign and generate more sales. Consider targeting customers to join a loyalty program with minimum spend requirements that helps to maintain sales and send traffic to your website. A loyalty program has the added benefit of tracking what they are buying so the possibilities are endless.

Finsbury Green can make this process easy for you to manage. We can help you with:

- **Database strategy and internal process management for VDP**
- **Design concepts, finished artwork and VDP templates**
- **Cost effective print for entry forms (with unique numbers) and in-store promotional items**
- **Return mail management**