



# Pages for the Future

In less than a year the Local Printing & Distribution service has become a total success, meriting international attention. Vasp innovation has been praised by national and international publishers. This is where the future lies



► Cristina Radulescu, Director of Actualitatea Romaneasca, praises Vasp for making the newspaper available to the Romanian community living in Portugal

solve a complex problem: how to distribute foreign newspapers in real time and at a low cost? Until recently, the only way was to fly them in from their country of origin - the only drawback was that they arrived in Portugal too late for most readers. In the case of Local Printing & Distribution, publications send the contents of each title in "pdf" format immediately after closing their edition. Printing is done by the distributor who then places the newspapers at points of sale at the same time as national publications. Readers gain access to their favourite titles early in the morning and the sales points gain a stream of new customers.

"It's a brilliant idea of Vasp, printing and distributing international media" praises Cristina Radulescu, director of Actualitatea Romaneasca, a Romanian newspaper targeting emigrant communities which has been using the service since September 2007. "Vasp helps me to stay close to Romanians who live outside their country".

One of the first four papers to take up the new service was the Washington Post. Impressed by printing quality and the progression of the service, Margaret Kaplow, Education Sales and Services Manager at WP, sees here an opportunity for the future: "Making the most of different means for a global presence makes good sense from a business point of view and opens the door to international business" ▶

**D**uring a recent executive meeting of the De Persgroep board, one of the most important media groups in Belgium, someone threw across the table a copy of De Standaard, the group's leading daily newspaper, and asked: "Does anyone know what this is?"

It was a copy almost exactly like the newspaper's normal edition, except that it was printed in black and white by Vasp, in Lisbon.

One of the group's executives had been on a trip to Portugal the week before and was amazed to see his paper on sale early in the morning, instead of having to wait for the first flight from Brussels. De Standaard is one of the 22 international titles that Vasp prints and distributes by means of an innovative

solution that is drawing the attention of media publishers all over the world. De Persgroep signed up at the end of last year to get its newspapers De Standaard and Het Nieuwsblad distributed in our country. At the meeting, the question buzzing around the table was: "Why are we doing this only in Portugal? Why not everywhere? This is the solution to make the paper available outside Belgium in the future!"

The enthusiasm is quite justifiable. Vasp's Local Printing & Distribution project, which was launched in August 2007 with four news titles (featured in Quiosque 26) has grown tremendously: it now serves 22 international newspapers and is still rapidly expanding. It boils down to taking a simple idea to

expansion and attracting new readership," she comments.

## New challenges

How did Local Printing and Distribution come into being?

"In recent years, we became aware of the disinvestment in Portugal of some international publishers, to the point that their presence in our market, if at all continued, was restricted to the summer months" explains Vasp General Manager José Carlos Lourenço. Vasp's reaction to that was to create distribution solutions that are more efficient and cost effective and make the Portuguese market more attractive.



► Digital printing done at Vasp makes it possible for foreign papers to be on the newsstand at the same time (and occasionally earlier) as in the country of origin

**"We had a feeling we could do it, so we just went ahead"**

VASP DIRECTOR GENERAL JOSÉ CARLOS LOURENÇO

► **Vasp has committed to developing business for foreign newspapers. Is that an ongoing commitment?**

Totally! To launch a project with the innovative and differentiating character this one brought (and is still bringing) to the market was no easy matter. There is always an initial feeling of distrust both from publishers and points of sale. We have answered all those doubts through the success of our project: a portfolio of 22 titles in less than a year, backed by increasing sales and testimonials - from readers, publishers and vendors - who make us believe this is not just a road to keep to, but in fact a road to explore still further.

► **What lies ahead now? More titles? New functionalities?**

More titles, surely. We have had solicitations that we have been unable to meet immediately; with a single production line and the proximity of summer, we realized we could not take on more printing. Taking into account the constraints of having our capacity fully committed and the feeling that the project would gain much if we could also provide colour printing, we added the two together and came up with the decision that will solve both limitations.

In early July the second production line will go into operation which will practically double our print capacity and will open to us the desirable field of colour.

► **What is the secret of your success?**

There are some words that define this project and the road we have taken so far. To start with, daring and ambition - we did what no one had done before, in this scale and dimension, but we had the feeling we could and so we did.

Humility, to learn and adjust when we feel there is room for improvement - and that has been very important along the way. And a key-word to success has been partnership - involving our



publishers and points of sale, our equipment suppliers and our international partner for contents, PressTerra. Finally, honesty and credibility - even in difficult moments we have always spoken truthfully, although sometimes that has proved to be a difficult road. But it pays, because if we stick to it, people double their confidence in our work and believe that, through us, they will have the best probability for the success of their business in Portugal.



## C The second production line will take off in July with new potential: the introduction of colour and broadsheet format ]

And that has been the key to continued market expansion. Up until now, printing of foreign editions has been strictly black-and-white. But as from July 1st a second printing line will come into operation which will not only allow colour printing but also the broadsheet format (up to 630 mm tall). Until now, the maximum format was the Berliner (480 mm tall, rather like the *Expresso* weekly) which required the reformatting some of the foreign newspapers to a size different than their usual edition.

"As from this summer our newspapers will look no different, at the point of sale, from those that are printed in traditional offset colour presses" assures the company's General Manager. "By this step forward Vasp is telling its business partners - those who have already entrusted us with their publications and those with whom we are at present negotiating - that we are here to stay. We want to build up our profile as a preferential partner for foreign news publishers."

The gamble has proven successful. For now,

and even with present limitations, print quality has been universally praised. "It's excellent, much better than I expected" admits Jessima



» Jessima Timberlake,  
Marketing Manager at Italian  
paper *Il Secolo XIX*, stresses  
the high quality of Portuguese  
printing



► William Oates, editor of Miami Herald International Edition points out the advantages gained by making possible the international expansion of his publication

Timberlake, Marketing Manager at Il Secolo XIX, an Italian paper who became a client in March. "Our art director was so pleased he began to question whether our printing was up to the standards of Vasp's digital printing!" At London's Evening Standard the evaluation is much the same: "Printing quality is top level, almost better than what we require", confirms a pleased Export manager, Matthew Bullard. "The print quality is superior to much that you get in offset."

For newspapers, this is an opportunity to open up new markets. "Traditionally, the Evening Standard did not have an international distribution," relates Matthew Bullard. Geographical and distribution constraints made export impractical. "However, since the introduction of Vasp's digital service we can print our paper locally, ensuring enough copies to cover many points of sale in Portugal."

On the other side of the Atlantic, Miami Herald seized that same opportunity. "Before, when we considered expanding

our international coverage, it seemed simply unfeasible to distribute the paper in Europe", admits William Oates, editor of the Miami Herald International Edition. "Now we are using this technology, which is practically instantaneous, to print and distribute the paper in Portugal. This limited print run for niche markets is now swift, economical and excellent in quality" he enthuses.



► João Palmeiro, President of the Portuguese Press Association is confident as to the expansion of Portuguese papers in the Portuguese-speaking market

## More and better business

Expanding market scope is one of the most enticing perspectives of this new technology. "What Vasp is doing in Portugal for the foreign press can also apply abroad for Portuguese communities", points out the President of the Portuguese Press Association, João Palmeiro. Stressing the fact that Portuguese is spoken and read by 250 million people worldwide, the promotion of new technologies for local



► Udo Schubert, Circulation Manager for Waz, Germany's largest regional daily, confirms that sales figures reflect the success of the service

printing and distribution can help Portuguese media, particularly the small newspapers, to win readership abroad. According to João Palmeiro, the Portuguese-speaking market "is essential, speaking in terms of the future" and this type of solution, if adopted on a worldwide basis, can replace the old system of postal distribution to subscribers that raises efficacy issues in many Portuguese communities, in particular those of Latin America.

For starts, the Portuguese experience could not be better. Udo Schubert, Circulation Manager for Waz, Germany's largest regional paper, is happy that he can reach his readers vacationing in Portugal. "Sales figures confirm that the service has been very well accepted" he declares. "And besides it also helps sales points to increase their sales to new customers, who generally buy Waz everyday when they are on holiday", says Udo Schubert, who adds a final comment: "No doubt about it, this really improves business for newspaper sellers." ☒

## "The printed newspaper is here to stay"

RALPH VOOYS, VICE-PRESIDENTE

► "Reading a newspaper has a lot to do with emotion. People like the look and feel of their newspaper. Sure, they'll go online and read some news items. But that's just it: a few news items. What Vasp is doing is producing exact replicas: newspapers that are printed and folded in their original format. Some say that digital news will be the end of the printed newspaper. But the truth is that less than five percent are read (and paid for) online. The printed newspaper is here to stay. Anyway, this death has been announced before: first because of radio, then television and now the Internet. Next will be cell phone news and PDAs. But have you tried to read a newspaper on the screen of a cell phone?

► The drop in sales all over the world is a good reason for publishers to look at alternative markets. That is PressTerra's business model. Together with our partners, such as Vasp, we offer an environment friendly solution that does not threaten the publishers. Is this the future for newspapers in foreign markets? Maybe not for all, but I am quite sure we are talking about a growing market."

