

Aspermont Media - Taking ADvance Audience Management Platform Global

Aspermont's global operations publish a suite of successful B2B magazines for the global mining, energy and agricultural industries. Titles published in London include Mining Magazine, Mining Journal, Geodrilling, Trenchless World and World Tunnelling with other publications run from Australia and Brazil.

Although its oldest publication, Mining Journal, is some 180 years old, Aspermont is an innovative and forward looking business. They are not only investing in digital, but changing their processes to take the best advantage of one of the best available digital technology platforms. In fact, Aspermont followed Centaur Media in adopting Abacus' game changing ADvance platform.

Such has been the success of this approach for the company's UK titles that the same system is now being rolled out to Aspermont's publications in Australia and Brazil.

Combined with process and personnel changes within Aspermont's UK subscription and marketing team, ADvance has delivered over the last year:

- 25% growth in the number of subscribers
- 40% growth in revenue
- 15% point increase in renewal rates
- A significant increase in the number of continuous credit card payments
- A reduction in invoices from 60% to 10% delivering a significant lift in cash receipts and collections
- The ability to automatically handle any type of subscription or payment type
- The confidence to move Mining Magazine to a subscription-based model for the first time in its 180 year old history

↘ Founded in 2000

↘ Aspermont is a media group listed on the Australian Stock Exchange

↘ Offices in London, Perth, Sydney, Hong Kong, Manila and Belo Horizonte

25% Growth in the number of subscribers



40% Growth in revenue



Shaking up subscriptions

Aspermont moved onto the ADvance platform in 2013, partly as a result of Abacus' acquisition of the Alliance subscription house, which had been their fulfilment supplier. Aspermont management was keen to move to a platform which could support their evolving digital strategy.

Robin Booth arrived at Aspermont UK in April 2014 to act as the General Manager, responsible for the ASX-quoted company's publications in London, becoming Group General Manager in October of that year with Australia and Brazil being added to his responsibilities. ADvance had already been implemented but the system was not being used anywhere near its full potential. Six weeks after taking up his new role, he commissioned Abacus to carry out a rigorous 'people, process and technology' review of the company's subscription operation, which resulted in a, **"completely new approach. We beefed up telesales with a dedicated focus on new business and renewals, we instigated a whole new approach to marketing and customer engagement, replaced our CMS (content management system) and completely overhauled our web sites"**.

The results have been impressive. The subscriptions team now understand what ADvance can do for them and, combined with improved processes, have achieved a 25% growth in the number of subscribers over the past year.

Aspermont is also beginning to use ADvance to ramp up its multi-user and corporate subscriptions. The flexibility of ADvance will enable Aspermont to offer any combination of products and entitlements, such as print only, print and digital, and print, digital and tablet – all with different pricing plans – across the globe. **According to Robin Booth, "We have yet to find a subscription type that ADvance cannot deal with."**

Moving from a free to a subscription model

Mining Magazine, the company's only free circulation publication, has been moved to an entirely subscription based model, based on the confidence amassed using ADvance to manage subscriptions for the other publications.

"Making the decision to charge subscribers for access to the re-launch of the Mining Magazine worked so well using ADvance. Moving Mining Magazine's website to subscription has allowed us to monetise its digital content, with immediate effect, for the first time in over one hundred years."

Once the roll-out is completed, ADvance will run Aspermont's entire subscription business which is **"critical application for a critical part of the business. We are totally reliant on ADvance being efficient and robust."**

Renewals: the beating heart of the publishing business

A successful renewal strategy must sit alongside any subscription business and this was the next focus for the Aspermont team. ADvance enables Aspermont to run an entirely automated subscription renewal process, which has resulted in a 15% point improvement over the past year. Five or six marketing

communications are automatically triggered by ADvance over a period of months prior to the date of renewal. Only if the subscriber does not renew is it then passed to the telesales team.

“ADvance has allowed us to fundamentally change our approach to subscription renewals and introduce what we call our ‘customer lifecycle journey.’ Prior to using ADvance, we were forever being reactive and only contacting subscribers just before their subscription was due to expire. Now with ADvance we can see how often they are logging in and whether they are making good use of their subscription, send different marketing messages according to their usage and only use telesales for so-called problem renewals.”

Reporting and Business Intelligence

Like most B2B publishers, a key strand of Aspermont’s digital strategy was to maximise the value of its audience database, and the reporting strengths of ADvance are one of its core advantages according to Robin Booth. For Aspermont, the ‘solid and very reliable’ financial reporting is used to produce the company’s month end accounts, but it is the BI (business intelligence) tools which enable Aspermont to run any query they wish, to segment their audience and then using the marketing functionality of ADvance to trigger targeted marketing campaigns.

Cash collection

The payment process was another part of the business to be reviewed.

Prior to the reorganisation, some 60% of Aspermont subscribers were choosing to pay against invoice. For the publisher, this was an entirely manual process, prey to slow payments and difficulties in tracking when payments had been made. It also complicated the timing of activating subscriptions.

Since implementing the ADvance e-commerce module, offering sales and renewals online, only about 10% of subscribers pay by invoice. All others pay through ADvance using debit or credit cards, bank transfers or by phoning customer services. This has resulted in a massive lift in cash receipts and collections as well as a much improved service for the subscriber, who gain instantaneous access to the web site and content.

“By using the e-commerce functionality within ADvance, we are able to offer a much better subscriber experience, for example, being able to instantly provide new passwords and user names. This aspect of ADvance has proven to be one of the main drivers for deciding to roll out ADvance across the Aspermont Group. Obviously the time taken to process subscriptions is reduced to zero when you have an efficient e-commerce system.”

Revenues and resources

Using ADvance to automate so many processes in the day to day business of a publishing organisation has enabled Aspermont to reallocate resources, previously involved in routine administrative work, and to apply them to revenue generation. The results speak for themselves: a 40% revenue growth in the last

twelve months. Staff in the subscriptions department are now able to actively sell subscriptions, rather than spending their time administering them. Their roles have moved to one of account management away from pure transaction processing. And armed with the intelligence provided by ADvance, the sales team are able to focus on those prospects that will be more rewarding rather than simply wading through lists of hundreds of names.

“We have substantially increased our sales capacity without having to increase head count.”

Although most ADvance clients run the fulfilment elements of the system using its self-service functionality, Aspermont continues to use the Abacus bureau to manage all aspects of print fulfilment, including production of mailing lists, labels, database management and audits.

The international initiative

The decision to roll out ADvance to Aspermont’s global brands was taken towards the end of 2014. The first new web site using ADvance went live in March 2015 with the roll-out programme forecast to take nine months. ADvance replaces an in-house developed subscription system which has been used in both Australia and Brazil. The UK configuration of ADvance integrated with Audience Media (as the CMS) and other third party applications is being rolled out internationally. **“The integration of ADvance with other systems in the UK was very straightforward and very quick – and we can therefore just replicate it overseas.”**

Aspermont will be responsible for all the data reformatting from their old International systems into ADvance, using the newly released ETL module.

Robin Booth is confident that the benefits and results achieved in the UK will be more than replicated internationally, which increased renewals rates, growth in revenue and a reduction in the cost of transactions because of the improved e-commerce functionality, as well as much enhanced customer service and engagement.

An Aspermont ‘super-user’ has been trained by Abacus in the UK, and that user supports staff in Australia and Brazil who are being trained remotely, an approach which is working well. Implementation of ADvance in Australia has been surprisingly trouble free despite the time difference and distance between London and Perth.

“ We will be able to deliver a single subscription strategy across the globe, selling global packages with a single user name and the ability to access (and cross-sell) any worldwide Aspermont product – all fulfilled by the same system.

Abacus really understands our business. And this understanding has enabled us to form a close working partnership. ”

