

RSDB Communiqué

quarterly edition for shareholders

January 2005

1

Ready for battle in 2005!



During the traditional RSDB New Year meeting with Management, held on 5 January, Hans de Jong looked back at 2004. He then zoomed in on the challenges that face RSDB in 2005.

Each of the three RSDB brand names was faced with a considerable financial task at the start of the year, partly due to the price erosion that had been allowed for in their budgets.

Whether or not the economy recovers, the fact is that the paper industry, both domestic and international, both web and sheet, achieved a greater volume than in 2003. That was good news.

FORCE FIELD

The competition maintained a previously unexperienced intensity, despite bankruptcies, serious financial difficulties and even plant closures in the industry. The rotary industry announced more investment plans in one year than ever before. This is the force field in which RSDB works, in all companies and at all levels. And a great deal was achieved. The existing undervaluation was largely compensated by a nearly 35% increase in the share price.

In concrete terms, the group's strategic development involves:

- concentration on industrial rotary printing, including chain optimisation in pre-press and afterpress / pre-distribution;
- concentration on communication and creation as well as project management and marketing automation;
- moving from a profile with the three brand names Roto Smeets, PlantijnCasparie, Media Partners to the introduction of the business lines 'Print Productions' and 'Marketing Communications'.

One consequence of this is the decision to divest the sheet-fed offset activities of PlantijnCasparie. Naturally, this resolve involves

more than just emotion. Only time will tell whether it was the right choice, one that will sustain the market position of all the companies involved. As a result of unavoidable rationalisation, the staffing level was carefully reduced by 275 full-time equivalents. The strength of the concerned, open culture of discussion between management and the works council was demonstrated once again.

Many great commercial successes were achieved and major investment projects were set in train. The commercial success in the market, right across the three brands, received additional impetus from the Total Action Team.

Operational performance per brand can be summarised as follows:

Media Partners achieved a first-rate result last year, powered by:

- the hunt for new business, partly thanks to the new brand SLiM;
- strict cost control;
- a fourth-quarter recovery in advertisement volume for existing title contracts.

PlantijnCasparie had to achieve a recovery in their results. Close attention to the implementation of radical reorganisations remained unreduced. Heerhugowaard was downsized according to plan and reorganisations were announced at Ten Klei. Despite a pressure on prices that was more intense than estimated, PlantijnCasparie largely succeeded in achieving the targetted operational result.

Roto Smeets achieved a volume growth mainly in the first half of the year. Further growth of market share in the second half was hampered by capacity limitations. Hungary achieved



Contents

- 2** RSDB opts for business lines
- 4** Transparency Benchmark
- 5** EPGA-awards
- 6** DiMS! Enterprise
- 7** Total Action
- 8** CRM
- 9** Showroom
- 11** Interview Media Facts

Financial Calendar

Press Release Annual results 2004	10 March 2005
Shareholders meeting	6 April 2005
Press Release half year results 2005	18 August 2005

RSDB Stock development



continuous volume growth after fresh capacity was successfully taken into production. Preparations for the introduction of DiMS! Enterprise enjoyed high priority. This application has since been successfully implemented at the first sites. The Roto Smeets operational contribution was well above target in 2004.

When consolidated, the financial results of the individual components strengthen us in our conviction that RSDB will achieve a considerably higher business outcome in 2004.

2005

The market, both national and international, has changed for ever. Yesterday's mechanisms either work differently now, or not at all. Customer loyalty has vanished, relations with both buyers and suppliers are chiller.

RSDB must see these aspects as new certainties, certainties that will have to be approached with energy, great alertness, without routine and in a state of permanent flexibility. Using our own power and strength, with appropriate business sense, we shall use the means available to us to influence those factors that RSDB can influence.

The change from the existing RSDB market profile with the brands Roto Smeets, PlantijnCasparie and Media Partners to the two business lines Print Productions and Marketing Communications is a tremendous challenge! Chiefly continuing to do what you're demonstrably good at, after you've proved that the market offers sufficient opportunities for it, that's Print Productions. In parallel, we are working to expand our production services in

areas where we have built up a position. As the market recovers, this will achieve a greater yield than printing. That's Marketing Communications. In fact, this second business line faces an even greater challenge than the first.

RSDB has a solid basis in the communications and creativity area as well as in project management and marketing automation. That, at least, is the firm conviction of management and staff, who daily do their utmost. It must be our ambition to strengthen this position in the coming years, both on our own and via acquisitions. A clear view of this has to be gained by the end of 2005.

Long before then – in mid-2005 – we expect to have taken steps to divest the PlantijnCasparie sheet-fed printing businesses. During the last consultative meeting of 2004, the Central Works Council indicated its support for these developments in the group, which means that the divestment process can be set in train with all due care and speed. Obviously we shall keep those involved informed of the progress of this operation.

INFRASTRUCTURE

RSDB's core business comprises Print Productions. Roto Smeets is conditionally strong enough to take on the expected increase in competition in the North Western European market, certainly if the consumers remain reserved in their buying. Finishing and pre-distribution services are gaining in importance. It is in this area that the Roto Smeets printing plants, together with the Roto Smeets Graphics Finishing businesses, possess the best

conceivable infrastructure, especially after the installation of the new adhesive binding train at De Wit.

Database and workflow management systems are managed in pre-press by Roto Smeets, which is increasingly successful in placing them on the market. All these activities, combined with the necessary capacity growth, will allow financial results to be achieved that will offset declining profitability.

Investments in a second 3.68 meter wide rotogravure press and a second 48-page rotary offset press will allow Roto Smeets to expand its market share. The 48-page press will come into production in 2005, with the gravure press following in mid-2005.

Capacity growth in 2005 will also have to come from improved process management, for which programmes have already been implemented. The same holds for process rationalisation activities, both direct and indirect. As DiMS! Enterprise is rolled out yet further, it will become both a precondition for as well as a contributor to this activity.

The concept of fit-for-purpose gravure and offset businesses fits seamlessly with the developments in the market: retail sector volume growth, segmentation in magazines and catalogues.

RSDB has a realistically healthy, combative attitude to 2005. The challenges that confront us are great. Everything indicates that we can meet them well.

Hans de Jong

RSDB opts for business lines

October 2004 saw the introduction of the term 'business line' within the group. In this shareholders' bulletin we go further into the two types of business line.

FUTURE MARKET

Regular studies are done of the supply and demand relationships in the market, technological developments and our own strengths and weaknesses. These revealed that RSDB's customers are increasingly starting to adopt different approaches: purchasing purely

with an eye to production, or in line with a jointly developed marketing communication strategy, or a combination of both. It also appeared that RSDB's strengths, partly for historical reasons, lie on the one hand in producing rotary printed material, with the editorial development and design of marketing communication concepts on the other.

CHOICES

The current status of the graphics industry and the unusual economic climate have forced us to make choices, one of which is that RSDB will

concentrate on expanding its position both as rotary printer and in the development of marketing communication concepts.

The consequence is that the current organisational model with the three brand names Roto Smeets, PlantijnCasparie and Media Partners will be abandoned and the core activities will be grouped into two business lines, viz., Print Productions and Marketing Communications.

This does not mean that the brands will disappear, because the branding policy is

functional. The focus in the market will be changed to the term business lines.

PRINT PRODUCTIONS BUSINESS LINE

The core of Print Productions will be formed by Roto Smeets with a sales organisation maintaining offices in seven EU countries, four Roto Smeets rotary printing plants in the Netherlands, together with Senefelder Misset and Antok printers in Hungary. The scale of the production sites, a lot of simultaneous capacity, modern equipment and a flexible, motivated organisation will allow the printing businesses to offer optimum service to the customer. The printers have available an exceptional range of production facilities, available in the form of efficient, simultaneous production capacity that is virtually unparalleled in Europe. Their strength lies in short throughput times, reliability of supply and low cost prices.

All technical and processing activities related to the printing operation, such as database and workflow management systems, will be performed by LogicUse and Roto Smeets PrePress. The LogicUse services include on-site graphics specialists, image processing facilities, pre-flight checks and colour management. LogicUse also takes care of optimum distribution of digital data using Rototrax, its own broadband network. Roto Smeets PrePress scans and processes transparency / photographic material, processes digital images, does make-up and further processes the made-up pages. Afterpress and pre-distribution services in this business line are performed by Roto Smeets Graphics Finishing, including De Wit Graphic Projects, Nadruk and Rotopack. They look after the complete range of graphics afterpress activities for medium and large print runs, including trimming, folding, binding, stitching, addressing, sorting and packaging.

MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS BUSINESS LINE

The second business line, 'Marketing Communications', draws together the communication and creative activities of Media Partners and the project management and marketing automation activities of PlantijnCasparie. In terms of turnover and service, this business line belongs among the top in its area in the Netherlands.

Media Partners specialises in editorial marketing communication and is mainly active in the relational media (loyalty management) field.

They use a multimedia approach: Media Partners advises on and develops the most suitable media to attain the customer's (marketing) communication goals. This may involve a combination of media: print (such as magazine or book), digital (e.g. Internet or e-zine), and/or audiovisual (e.g. TV or video/DVD). These services are all on offer to medium and small companies via daughter company SLiM.

This Business Line also includes DM services and solutions that allow customers to use DM techniques to communicate efficiently and effectively with their business relations and prospects. These services are offered by dem communications and PlantijnCasparie DM. They focus on developing the optimum combinations of editorial media and direct marketing techniques to achieve the customer's communications objectives. Each customer and target group may be associated with a different

goal, but most are targeted at generating a response or interaction.

Other services that are inextricably linked with marketing communication are provided by 2Organize, which uses ICT information to analyse, automate and organise. Above all, though, this information is translated into concrete solutions, such as internet sites, printed media, CD ROMs, direct mail and call centres. The conception, design and implementation of effective communications solutions for media-rich, complex organisations lie in the hands of DesignDomain.

Finally, this Business Line also contains the full-service graphics media company GBP, which co-ordinates all paper and digital communications media for its clients. From art & copy to multimedia and from database management to project and purchasing management.



Roto Smeets Weert. Celebrates her 175th anniversary in 2005.

Transparency benchmark 2004

A large number of Dutch companies are not particularly transparent about their efforts in the area of socially responsible business (SRB). Many company annual reports make no statements about the impact of their business operations on the environment, their employees or human rights. Still less do they mention which stakeholders they are talking to, or the way that socially responsible business is embedded in their organisational structure.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs commissioned Berenschot EIBE / Nyenrode University to assess the annual reports of 100 stock-exchange listed and 75 unlisted companies in terms of their SRB transparency. The findings are published in Transparency Benchmark 2004, which is intended to establish a baseline for the way Dutch companies account for their SRB policy.

The Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, Mrs K. van Gennip, stated: "I believe that SRB should be a matter of course in business. That is why I want to remove the voluntary aspect of SRB. Transparency, company accountability, and a constructive dialogue between the various parties involved are for me key concepts in this area."

Many companies acknowledge the increasing demand for more transparency, but this does not always lead to transparent reporting of their SRB activities. The 175 businesses investigated published altogether 152 financial and 30 social reports. All these reports were assessed using an analytical model based on the Guideline 400 annual report and the Annual Reports Council's Helping Hand for Social Reporting.

ASSESSMENT ASPECTS OF THE ANALYTICAL MODEL

The annual reports were assessed against seven important aspects from the Guideline and the Helping Hand. They could score a maximum of 100 points.

Company profile (max. 19 points).

Turnover, profit / loss, personnel, geographical reach, brands, products, organisational structure, ownership, corporate governance.

Social influence of business operations (max. 21 points).

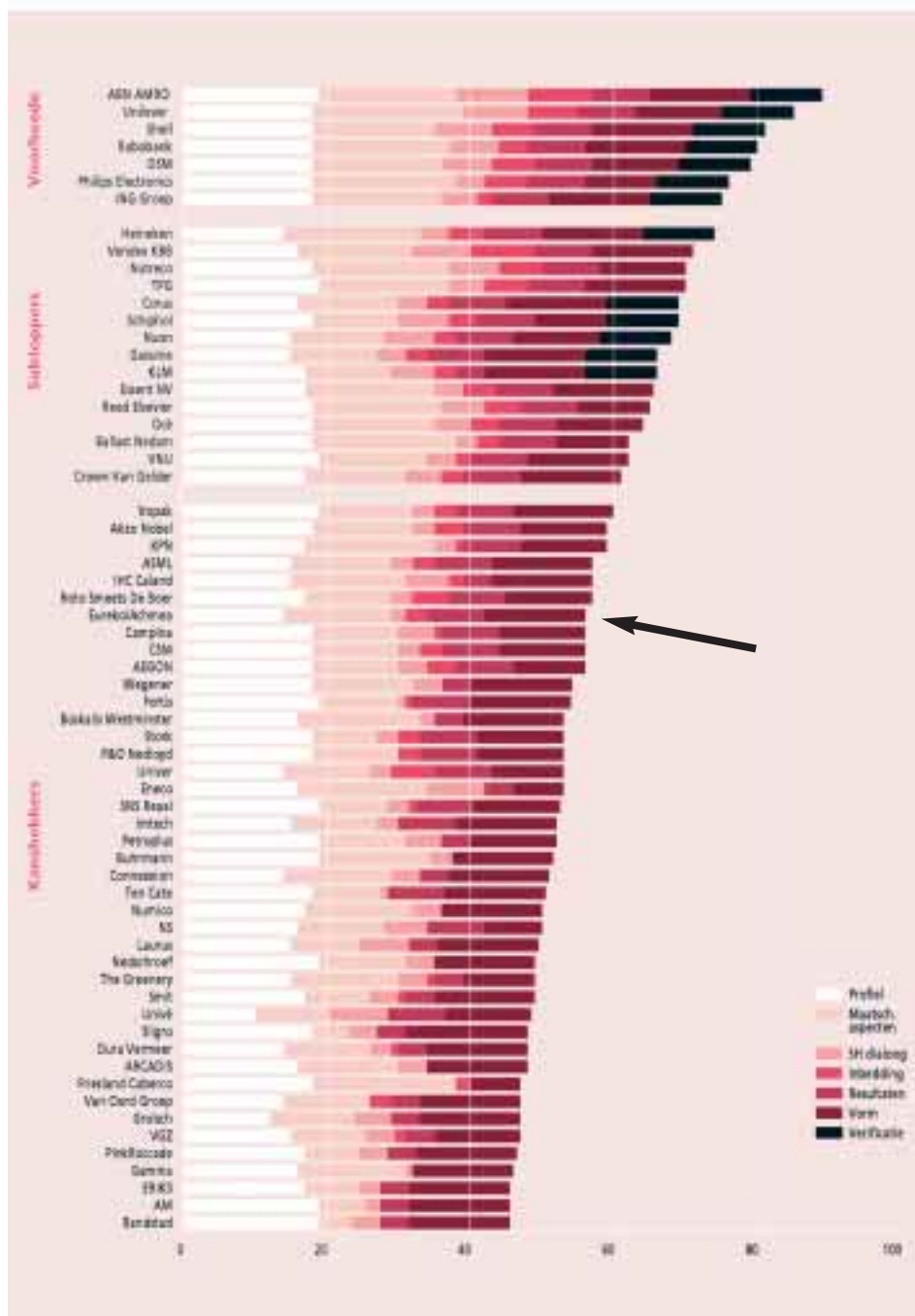
Influence on the environment, employees, human rights, internal and external guidelines.

Stakeholder dialogue and chain responsibility (max. 16 points).

External stakeholders, dilemmas, position in relevant production chains.

SRB policy embedding (max. 9 points).

Embedding of SRB in organisational structure and management systems.



European Publication Gravure Award 2004

Roto Smeets among the prizes

Results (max 8 points).

Continuity of goals, results, targets for future SRB policy.

Reporting (max. 17 points).

Availability, contact information, dating, coverage.

Verification (max. 10 points).

External verification of SRB reporting.

The percentage of the maximum score determines a company's final position on the transparency ladder. There are six rungs on the ladder: advance guard, near-toppers, triers, seekers, rearguard and sweepers. This last category includes companies that publish no reports.

Voorhoede	75 t/m 89 punten	7 bedrijven
advance guard	75-89 points	7 companies
near-toppers	61-74 points	15 companies
triers	46-60 points	42 companies
seekers	32-45 points	57 companies
rearguard	17-31 points	31 companies
sweepers	0 points (no annual report)	23 companies

RSDB scored well, with 57 points and can thus be found well up on the ladder of triers.

Source: Transparency benchmark, Ministry of Economic Affairs (www.minez.nl)

The biennial presentation of the European Gravure Award 2004, organised by the European Rotogravure Association (ERA), took place recently. Roto Smeets gained prizes in four categories.

The European Rotogravure Association's (ERA) membership is drawn from European gravure printers and related industries, while Eurographic Press is an association of leading European graphics business magazines from 14 countries.

SHOWCASE

This awards meeting is an international showcase for gravure work and thus a significant promotion opportunity for the industry. For comparison, the awards are given for a variety of paper types, indicated by abbreviations such as MF, SC, LWC and MWC, depending on the paper composition. Entries to these categories are open to both ERA members and non-members.

An international jury assessed the entries, judging them on the basis of colour intensity, clean printing, folding quality and finishing among other things. Roto Smeets gained prizes in all four categories.

In the MF category – Improved Newsprint, Machine Finished – Roto Smeets Deventer gained an award for customer Intergamma, whose house-to-house folder Gammakrant is printed on Improved Newsprint.

In the SC category – Uncoated / SC paper – Roto Smeets Etten won with the weekly Story.

In the LWC category – Light Wood Content – we did not win a prize, but Roto Smeets Deventer gained a special mention for the production of the Booschappen (Shopping) magazine for the C1000 supermarket chain.

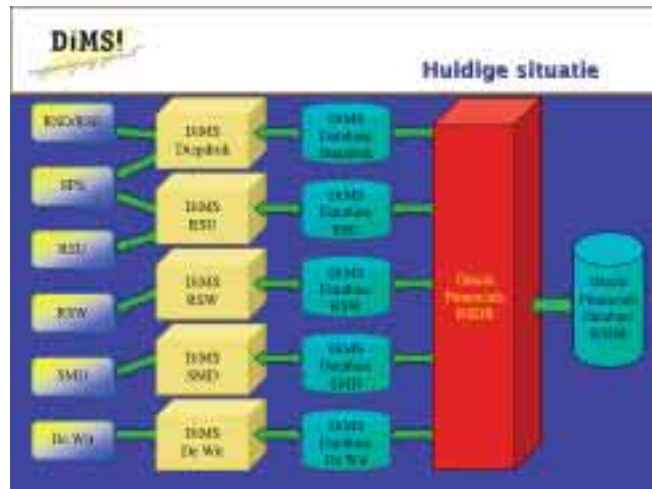
In the category MWC – Coated paper 70 grams and upwards – Roto Smeets Etten also walked off with the prize with the Douwe Egberts coffee company's gift catalogue 2004.



Second from right: John Caris, Board Member responsible for Roto Smeets, with the awards he received on behalf of Roto Smeets.

Roto Smeets transfers to DiMS! Enterprise

The DiMS! information system contains data on planning, calculation, order management, stock management, invoicing and more. All Roto Smeets printing plants, the central sales force and De Wit Graphics Projects are now working with DiMS! Last year saw hard work done on creating a DiMS! Enterprise version, so that all systems can be linked together, creating a single, centralised, accessible information system. All participating companies will then be working with the same database, meaning that the information is recorded unambiguously and that it is readily accessible.



The implementation of DiMS! Enterprise is very important. It is not only expected to contribute after some time to improved profits within the companies involved; it also puts us in a position to improve the group's synergy. All the information from the rotary printers and afterpress is already available in digital form. When this information is linked up via DiMS! Enterprise we shall be able to co-operate and communicate with each other even better and respond even faster to customer requests.

When all companies are linked up via DiMS! Enterprise they will have an on-line view of all phases in the production process. The entire order processing will also be visible. It begins with a survey of where printing capacity is

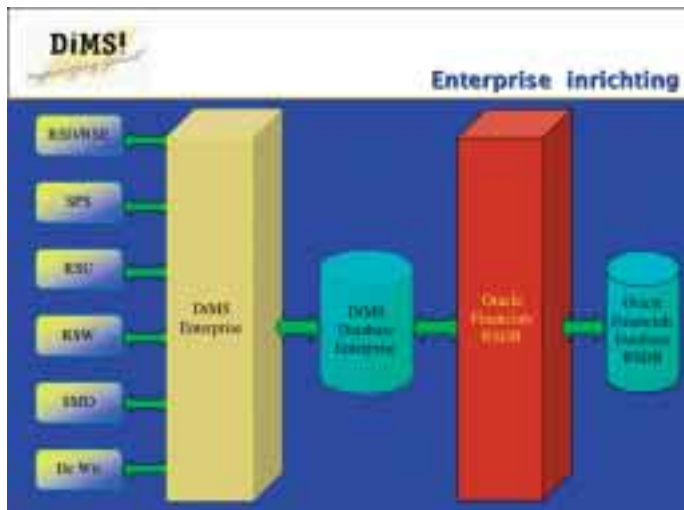
available, what paper has to be ordered and when. The purchasing department can also see at the click of a button what the paper requirements are for the rest of the year and what the stock levels are. A link will also be created with Papinet, a paper suppliers' network. Rolls of paper can then be tracked from the moment they leave the factory through to the point at which they are used in the product.

SOME ADVANTAGES OF THE SYSTEM

- Information is more readily accessible and rapidly available.
- DiMS! Enterprise ensures a single system for ordering, operating instructions and calculations. Orders can easily be transferred

to another plant and the staff can also share the burden in extremely busy periods.

- Exchanging management information and customer details is far faster as the information can be called up from a single, company-wide database. This makes the organisation far more transparent.
- Major price quotations can be composed of activities from the different plants. For example, we can calculate for rotary printing in Weert, sheet-fed covers in Doetinchem, and two-section printing in Utrecht.
- Automatic invoicing between the profit centres is possible. Contracting out to another profit centre can be done internally within a single database, to which the standard subcontracting price can be linked.
- Linking the planning schedules gives a picture of the occupancy per company and Sales can see at a glance which plants are over- or underoccupied.
- A special test team will soon be able to test new releases centrally.
- Maintenance will soon be limited to a single central system and will no longer be needed for each subsystem and/or company.
- A link will soon be made to our track-and-trace system so that we shall be able to inform our customers on-line about the their product's current production and/or transport phase.



Total Action in 2004 and 2005

RSDB's Total Action Team co-ordinates the commercial activities of the different RSDB companies, thus ensuring the greatest market penetration for RSDB's extensive services package.

Optimum consultation ensures that commercial opportunities are spotted and exploited. In 2004, cross selling achieved 7.5 million more turnover from existing relations. This turnover is the sum of combined Communications and Creativity, Direct Marketing, Pre-Publishing and Print activities. But there's more in the proverbial pipeline, which gives us confidence for 2005.

These activities will be supported in 2005 by the implementation of Customer Relations Management (CRM) (see elsewhere in this Communiqué).

The challenge lies not so much in the CRM system, which can structure more information on

customer value and customer satisfaction, but mainly in its management to make it more efficient and effective, especially in the areas of marketing and business development, sales and production support, and order management. The management information and reporting facilities that will become available include leads, customers, opportunities, contacts, communication, documents and campaigns. More power to them, in other words.

PRIORITIES

Great attention will be paid in 2005 to customer value and innovation.

CUSTOMER VALUE

Customer value is the value represented by an organisation to its customers, the significance of our organisation to our customers, and the reasons why customers stay with us. It's all about an even closer focus on the customer,

looking at their strategic issues. If, for example, loyalty is a strategic issue in the service industry, then knowledge about this is combined in the business lines to see what we can do in the area, in terms of products and services.

INNOVATION

According to the 2004 innovation monitor 'Twijnstra The Bridge', innovative products and services are high on the agenda of many Dutch companies. New demands from customers who want to gain an edge on the competition. We too see it as a challenge to mobilise innovation. With our in-House knowledge we are in a first class position to support our customers here.

BusinessWeek 75 years

The American magazine BusinessWeek recently celebrated its 75th anniversary. Over time, BusinessWeek has grown into a weekly that appears in five different international editions with a print run of around 2 million copies. The magazine reports primarily global business news with the aim of helping its readers to make better professional and financial decisions. BusinessWeek has both demographic editions (Elite, Frontier, Industrial Management) and regional ones (such as BusinessWeek China and BusinessWeek Poland).

Roto Smeets has been printing BusinessWeek for some 15 years. RS Weert also takes care of the preparations for international distribution.

Apart from a major size increase, the special jubilee issue also wore a five-colour cover. The week after the special issue appeared we were visited by two members of publisher McGraw-Hill Companies' management and Business Week itself, when we were able to present each of them with a set of the original plates used to print the cover.

Standing from left to right: Michael Vincent, Director Publication Operations Global Procurement & Manufacturing Services McGraw-Hill Companies, Alec Bergsma, Roto Smeets, Linda Carvalho, Vice President, Advertising Business and Production BusinessWeek. Kneeling left Jan Rietjes and right Ton Poos, both of Roto Smeets Weert.



CRM: Keeping a closer eye on the customer

“Customer Relations Management means continuously and systematically entering into and developing relationships with individual customers so as to identify and create mutual advantages.”¹

The market is changing faster than ever before. New distribution channels, the arrival of new competitors, changing customer needs and declining customer confidence require that organisations take a critical look at their commercial side (marketing, sales, SPS, order management). The customer decides what happens. Products are often no longer just pure products, but more often a combination or collection of services surrounding a core product.

MOST IMPORTANT ASSET

The focus has to be even more on the customer, for without them there is no business and thus no continuity for the company. Customer relations provide the company with a continuous income flow over a long period. The company's most important asset is not the products nor the personnel, but the relationship with the customer! In view of its importance for the company, it is essential to manage the relationship with these customers, which is where Customer Relations Management comes into play. All customer-related processes are grouped around the customer contact, in such a way that all employees who have contact with the customers and business relations always have available the most up-to-date information that is relevant to their function.

SOFTWARE

The roughly 350 members of the RSDB commercial staff have a long reach. Their sales capacity can be better utilised. A knowledge of customers and prospects should increasingly be shared. Existing customers can be offered a broad package of services offered by other RSDB companies. That is why CRM software will be implemented in all RSDB companies in the coming year. The goal is that everybody who has contact with our customers, in whatever form, will use the CRM software. That way we shall be in a position to attract the right customers, develop the relationship and retain them, leading to a significant competitive force.



The following potential improvements can be achieved with CRM:

- Improved knowledge of individual customers and prospects;
- Increased turnover due to improved retention rate;
- Improved customer satisfaction and loyalty, and thus improved margins;
- Fewer lost customers;
- Centralisation of customer and relationship

files;

- Harmonisation of all activities and customer agreements;
- Lead quality;
- Customer profitability;
- Profit on marcom activities.

¹ From "Customer Relationship Management. An Introduction" by Ruud Verduin.

Aftonbladet, a New Weekly

Roto Smeets Sweden recently gained the printing order for a new Aftonbladet weekly magazine for Sweden's largest newspaper. This is not a free supplement but is sold separately from the paper. The Sondag magazine appears 52 times per year in a print run of 350,000 copies. The printing contract runs for a minimum of two years. The new weekly is Sweden's second largest and the publisher, together with a sponsor, is to market the title more

actively in 2005. It is expected that we shall be able to print regular inserts and outserts as well.

The background to this success is Roto Smeets' good performance in the past year regarding two titles for the same publisher, Bil and Kropp, which has led to a close, reliable relationship between printer and publisher. We have also actively supported the publisher this year with ideas and options when an attack was mounted by the competition. Efforts like that never go unrewarded.

New Orders for Senefelder Misset

Title: Cosmo Trucks Magazine ▪ publisher: Nunq Consultants BV, Doetinchem ▪ print run: 10,000 copies ▪ frequency: 3 x per year ▪ size: 12 pages ▪ process: sheet-fed offset



Title: Paulus ▪ publisher: Zending Gemeente Woerden ▪ print run: 34,000 copies ▪ frequency: 6 x per year ▪ size: 32 pages ▪ process: rotary offset



Title: Wusel ▪ publisher: Rieder Verlag AB, Dortmund ▪ print run: 30,000 copies ▪ frequency: 6 x per year ▪ size: 32 pages ▪ process: rotary offset



Title: Shift ▪ publisher: Clipboard

Publications, Rijswijk ▪ print run: 12,500 copies ▪ frequency: 6 x per year ▪ size: 36 pages ▪ process: rotary offset



Title: YachtFocus.com ▪ publisher: WorldYacht BV, Amstelveen ▪ print run: 30,000 copies ▪ frequency: 10 x per year ▪ size: 116 pages ▪ process: rotary offset



Title: Landmacht ▪ publisher: Koninklijke Landmacht, The Hague ▪ print run: 60,000 copies ▪ frequency: 10 x per year ▪ process: rotary offset

International order for PlantijnCasparie DM: Kappa Interbox

PlantijnCasparie DM, in association with a strategy bureau, has implemented an international lead generation programme for Kappa Interbox, manufacturer of solid cardboard packaging for vegetables and fruit.

PCDM has supplied a web-based system to guide communication with previously qualified prospects. The communications media used include a number of different websites, direct mail and e-mail. The system takes care of optimum management of the lead generation process, supports the Kappa Interbox account managers, and allows real-time monitoring of campaign and sales results.



The lead generation programme aims at qualification of prospects, improving their knowledge of and relationship with Kappa Interbox and its products. This is achieved by conducting regular campaigns over an extended period. The qualified hot prospects receive a

telephone call from the account managers for an appointment.

The target group comprises those vegetable and fruit traders and exporters that are among the top in their country in terms of volume and quality. The programme focuses on Europe, Asia, North Africa and North and South America.

The preliminary results from the pilot project, conducted in the first six months of 2004, were very encouraging. The programme is to be rolled out world wide in 2005, when its utility for new Kappa product / market combinations will be investigated.

Communications demand on the rise again

All companies in the Media Partners Group are noticing that the demand for new communications concepts is growing once again. Potential clients are still keeping their hands firmly on their wallets, but the number of leads is increasing and new initiatives are being undertaken. This is often accompanied by a critical look at current communication efforts and the money spent on them.

The expansion of Media Partners Group activities, which started in 2004, is beginning to bear fruit. This will even show through in the 2004 book year results.

The new brand SLiM (in text, image and design) is clearly fulfilling a need. It is expected that the list of clients will expand considerably in 2005. Among other projects, SLiM is currently working hard for Pressofoon publishers in Heemskerk,

where they are consulting and assisting with the optimisation of the magazines in the "Alles Over ..." (All About ...) series. An update on SLiM's current activities can be found on the website slimtekstbeeldvorm.nl

dem communications, too, is looking forward to expanding their portfolio, based on the growing number of new business leads. In the meantime, the young, enthusiastic dem communications team have their hands full with the current order portfolio and have therefore taken on extra staff. The decision on a number of major new projects has taken longer than expected, but that is just a sign of the times. The average 'incubation time' for a new project has grown in recent years from around three months to more than six.

Parent company Media Partners recently added two household names to its client list: Deloitte and Red Cross Nederland. Media Partners is to develop a new internal personnel magazine and

a new client magazine for Deloitte. The Red Cross has asked Media Partners to produce a magazine for the large group of volunteers.

CHRISTMAS REPORT

Late last year, Media Partners received a good Christmas report from its clients. The customer satisfaction survey conducted by research bureau Ruigrok MC gave Media Partners an excellent score on such important, customer-related themes as professionalism / quality, trust, price / quality, and flexibility. A number of points needing attention also came up, of course, and the organisation is currently working on them.

For 2005 Media Partners expects to profit from its strong portfolio and the slightly improving market.

Wine Almanac 2005

"You could look at all the tasting I did for my new Wine Almanac as a complete inventory of virtually all inexpensive wines on the Dutch market. From 10 May through to July I tasted nearly 2000 wines, all cheaper than 5 Euros a bottle. The outcome? More than 650 really good, tasty wines that are described in the Wine Almanac 2005. Whites, rosés and reds from round the world. The only thing I didn't risk was the cheaper German wines, as most of them are semi-sweet."

This is how Hubrecht Duijker's website describes the Wine Almanac 2005, published in October by Hat Spectrum publishers.

A survey of all wines under € 5, available from local stores or supermarkets, has wide appeal. Often, though, when you drop into the store you've forgotten the name of the wine you selected at home, based on the description,



professional judgement and price. "What was that Chardonnay again?" The wide range of similar wines causes you to doubt. At times like these it's handy if you can consult the Wine Almanac. This can now be done, thanks to an i-mode site. The information is available on site for anyone who has an i-mode (third generation) mobile phone.

PlantijnCasparie Data has recently satisfactorily completed the commission to build an i-mode site to give electronic access to the folio edition. The i-mode wine almanac has been on-line now for nearly three months.

As with many automation projects, there's not a lot to see. The technology is hidden in invisible programs running on an internet server while the modern consumer views the results as run of the mill.

Hans de Jong: “Rather the best than the biggest”

This was the headline to an interview with Hans de Jong that appeared in the October 2004 issue of the publishers' trade magazine Media Facts. We didn't want to keep that information from you. A condensed version of the interview is printed below.

Roto Smeets De Boer came into existence as a result of mergers in 1993 to become a printing giant, sixth on the European list. Media Facts' Hans Scheffer talks with Hans de Jong, Chairman of the Board, who has brought RSDB on course through the heavy economic seas.

The printing business is inherently sensitive to the economic cycles, both the consumer cycle and maybe even more in the business-t-business market. How do you keep RSDB on track?

Hans de Jong: “In common with so many businesses, 2000 was an absolute top year, but nearly everybody, including RSDB, went right downhill in 2001 and 2002. The expected economic recovery did not materialise, which undermined our long-term planning. 2003 was especially difficult. There was a lot of discussion with shareholders, both internal and external. Drastic measures were unavoidable. We put through two major reorganisations at PlantijnCasparie, one of the results of which was the closure of a number of plants. The Roto Smeets sales department has now been entirely centralised. That encountered some resistance in the printing plants, but it's starting to pay off now. It's an advantage both to the customers and ourselves. In the first half of this year the profits have risen appreciably and we expect further profits growth in 2004. Many new titles and lower costs of printing technology have had a favourable effect, while further internal cost savings are a great help.”

What actually has a greater impact on your results, reduced size due to the advertising market or lower print runs?

“It's mainly the size, that has a run-on effect; the print run less so. But of course lower print runs also have their repercussions on the advertising market, which affects size once again.”

The publishers of the major titles can in fact only go to RSDB or the Brouwer Group in Holland. Moreover, both of them offer gravure and offset. So it's more or less a duopoly. What does that mean in terms of competition pressure and, naturally, mainly for price competitiveness?

“Your question is based on a limited definition of the market. We are active on the Western European market and I'm certain that the Dutch monopoly watchdog also looks at it that way. Our market actually comprises the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, the UK and Scandinavia. We have a market share of about 5%, putting us in sixth place.

Incidentally, we'd rather be the best than the biggest. When you look at our market you should think of an active radius of 800 kilometers for gravure work and about 300–400 km for offset, although there are exceptions. There's a lot of capacity. There's been a merger in Germany between Bertelsmann, Gruner u. Jahr and Springer. That is a very large combine.”

How does a printer get chosen after a publisher's enquiry?

“Let me start by saying that the publishers are becoming increasingly professional. And we are increasingly having to do with media purchasing

bureaux. So a price quotation is also increasingly a joint product. In any case, everything arrives together in the sales department. They look at the product specification to see which process – and thus which printing plant – is most suitable. The format is important in this regard, but so is the way the sections are put together, the size and, of course, the print run. So over the course of its existence, a growing title can change from one printer to another. The same holds for a title in decline, of course. A change in the specifications of an existing title can also do it. What we are after is the optimum solution for both parties, so we keep a sharp eye on all developments related to a title.”

If you also take account of reproduction quality, is there a difference between gravure and offset?

“There’s no difference whatever, in terms of the way the end-user experiences the printed product. No difference at all. But the people in both the offset and the gravure plants would disagree. They swear by their own product, and maybe the rare expert at the customer might have a preference.”

Paper is a very significant cost. You take care of that, but the customer can also do it. What is your policy?

“The simple answer is that we have no policy, the customer can decide. Three quarters of our customers leave paper purchasing to us. That way they profit from our purchasing power, our knowledge, and let’s not forget our expertise in environmental requirements. We don’t earn anything on it.”

It’s known that a year of European Cup football, Olympic Games and a US Presidential election means a heavy demand for paper, so world market prices rise. Is that your experience?

“Not really, no. It’s striking how little the paper price has moved this year.”

Currency and lead times for advertisements are a sensitive point. It’s an area where magazines have their limitations.

“We can do a lot for our customers. If the last

section is delivered at 15:30 in a given afternoon, we can print and finish overnight so that the magazine is on sale next day. Advertisements are a different story. Together with the publishers we will have to cut the submission time even further.”

You talked yourself about the many new titles. I can imagine that RSDB may sometimes co-finance introductions, certainly if there’s some overcapacity in the group. I’ve always understood from printers that machine occupancy is in fact more important even than price.

“We do sometimes finance zero (trial) issues to demonstrate our commitment. But for the rest we don’t make price concessions.”

Never?

“Never.”

Media Partners, with their custom publishing, is in a growth market and naturally that’s important for press occupancy. What new initiatives are they developing there?

“The competition is on the increase, so we have to differentiate ourselves further. More types of media, new media, including non-print ones. But also initiatives to optimise the work routine, digitisation and automation.” “The competition is on the increase, so we have to differentiate ourselves further. More types of media, new media, including non-print ones. But also initiatives to optimise the work routine, digitisation and automation.”

Chain optimisation is very important for publisher and printer alike. You have developed the workflow system WorkWizz. What use is that to the publishers?

“WorkWizz links all parties in one single, clear workflow. None of the participants have to invest in hardware or software. All the facilities are available on line. All you need is an internet connection. WorkWizz Publication Manager (PUMA) gives the customer access to an on-line flatplan, the plank. This is where all the content is planned per page. WorkWizz checks whether all participants do their work according to the agreed deadline. WorkWizz AD Sell is an on-line

advertising sales system. Together with WorkWizz PUMA you can see right away where the advertisement space is, and the ads go straight onto the right page.”

If you look at your position in the business column, what movements do you want to see, both towards the publishers and the distributors?

“It’s all governed by what the market wants. Technically, we can do a lot, which means we can be flexible and our activities differ per sector and often per customer. I’m talking here about the pre-press routine as well as databases and content management systems. This spring we – PlantijnCasparie in this case – signed a database management contract with Wolters Kluwer. This is not just for page makeup but also for digital information structuring. On the distribution side, if required, we can manage address files and even make the changes. If wanted, we can also do pre-postal work.”

You are tremendously dependent on print, of course. Replacement investments always lead to even faster presses. What about your belief in the future of print, especially printed magazines?

“Let’s be clear about it, magazines are important to us, but at Roto Smeets they take care of only 50% of turnover. The rest comes from catalogues and retail, as we call it: folders for the DIY chain Gamma, for example. The objective is to retain our position in high-volume printing. But we are alert to the unmistakable development towards titles for smaller target groups: special interest ones, in other words. We recently reconfirmed our faith in the future of print by investing in new presses, both gravure and offset.”

Source:

Media Facts, the trade magazine for publishers in the Netherlands and Flanders, is published by Media Business Press, Rotterdam. Media Facts organises the annual National Publishers’ Congress with speakers from at home and abroad. The next congress will be held on 9 June 2005 in Amsterdam.

COLOPHON

Editorial

RSDB Holding
Zeverijnstraat 6
1216 GK Hilversum
The Netherlands
Tel.: +31 35 625 8611, Fax : +31 35 623 1939
e-mail: info@rsdb.com, www.rsdb.com

Co-ordinator

Emily Knegtel

Layout

PlantijnCasparie Utrecht

Printer

PlantijnCasparie Digital Print

Translator

Ian Priestnall, ¶aragraph Services, Wormerveer, The Netherlands

If you would like to be placed on the RSDB Communiqué mailing list, please mail info@rsdb.com or ring Emily Knegtel, +31 35 625 8660