A Case Study for PIES: Do It Once, Do It Right

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In a market where images sell, it only makes sense to streamline and automate the exchange of photos and images. Most of the benefits are obvious: save time and money, improve productivity and provide a better image. Some benefits become apparent after the fact. Save server space, avoid duplication, easily update and archive materials.

Two years ago, BGI began researching and developing software to assist clients in what was rapidly becoming a never-ending task of managing thousands of images and distributing them to their trading partners. In 2005 the Technology Standards and Solutions Committee of the association published an Images Best Practice Guideline and incorporated image support into the Product Information Exchange Standards (PIES). Many existing product images did not meet PIES specifications and clients were spending inordinate amounts of time and dollars creating and distributing images.

In 2005, when BGI launched its Image Solutions™ system, the process clicked. In one case, a client supplied BGI with 10,000 images and 4,000 parts to photograph and process for their archive. After reformatting the images to PIES specifications, the images were categorized and uploaded to the online Image Solutions™ archive. The parts were stored, photographed and then returned to the client at the completion of the project.

Like every new venture, BGI and their clients have learned a few things:

- It may be more cost effective to take new photos than to retouch and reformat existing images. A first step is to spot check all image files to determine what's usable within the PIES specifications.

- Sometimes, part photographs can be retrieved from second-tier suppliers. In one case, BGI obtained over 7,500 images from a secondary supplier, saving the client a significant amount of money in photography costs.

- Using an Excel spreadsheet for part identification expedites the process even more. BGI advises their clients to divide parts into categories and product types on the spreadsheets. If clients have a large number of products, they should focus on photographing and archiving the most popular items first.

- Consider the financial impact of archiving. When images are in a centralized database, it eliminates duplicate efforts among departments when creating, finding, distributing and updating images.

BGI's newest upgrade allows for different views of the same part to be entered easily, and also features an electronic checklist for clients. They fill in the relevant information, check off the image groups that go to an individual end user and return the form. BGI then pulls only the relevant photos and image submittal form.

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Retailers and other end users continue to drive the image management process, pushing manufacturers and distributors to find more efficient and cost effective ways to manage and distribute images. As customers learn that a smart and simple process is available, BGI anticipates more and more companies choosing a PIES-compatible, centralized image management system.

For more information, contact BGI at 419-661-6363, e-mail dbeluska@bgi-inc.com or visit BGI's website at www.bgi-inc.com. For more on PIES, visit www.aftermarket.org. ∎

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