

# White paper

## Saving money and improving customer satisfaction with electronic lead fulfillment

**Written by:**

Christine Mariconda

President

Mariconda Marketing Solutions

631.462.6139 **Tel**

631.462.6138 **Fax**

[cm@mariconda-marketing.com](mailto:cm@mariconda-marketing.com) **Email**

# Saving money and improving customer satisfaction with electronic lead fulfillment

Christine Mariconda, President, Mariconda Marketing Solutions

## Abstract

For decades companies have employed print literature-warehousing fulfillment practices to provide literature and product samples to prospective customers when customers respond to advertising, direct mail and other marketing activities. Print fulfillment can be costly when considering the associated expenses such as printing, warehousing, labor, and postage. Thanks to advances in technology, nowadays there are more options for lead fulfillment that can save companies significant money and improve customer response. Unfortunately many companies are not thoroughly aware of all the options. And, companies that have handled their lead fulfillment in the same way for years, even decades, are sometimes reluctant to explore new options; as the saying goes, "If it ain't broken, don't fix it." Companies that have, however, started to transition from traditional print literature warehousing / lead fulfillment systems to print-on-demand models and electronic fulfillment are achieving considerable cost savings and improving customer response. This white paper provides an overview of the electronic lead fulfillment option and how using e-fulfillment can save companies money, improve customer response, and how it is good for the environment.

## Introduction

When referring to print literature fulfillment I am basically describing the process that takes place when a company receives an inquiry from a customer (about a product, service or other matter), and how the company responds to the customer. Most companies typically have some type of fulfillment process in place to handle these inquiries. For example, a customer visits your booth at a trade show. The customer has an interest in one of your products. The company representative working the booth takes the customer's information and promises to send product information. After the show, the lead makes its way to corporate headquarters where it is moved into the lead processing stream. The lead is typically entered into a database and then a literature package is usually sent. The package might include a cover letter, product brochure, price list and/or other relevant printed literature. The lead might also be passed to a local sales representative who is responsible for the account. Depending on whether the process is handled in house or outsourced, the time frame for fulfillment can vary significantly.

The cost for warehousing, printing and mailing literature can be significant. And, whether a company handles the process in house or outsources to a 3rd party provider, there are labor costs involved. All in all, the cost to process leads can be significant.

## Improve your fulfillment process

Electronic fulfillment offers companies a new option for lead processing. Electronic fulfillment has been available for some time; however, the technology has not been fully exploited. With electronic lead fulfillment, companies respond to customer inquiries via e-mail instead of sending traditional print literature fulfillment packages as described in the previous example. The e-mail can be personalized and include electronic product or service information in lieu of printed literature. The electronic information can be provided in PDF format or via a link to HTML product content on a company website.

There are tools available that can help to automate the electronic lead fulfillment process. For example, Peconic Software, a software development company that specializes in lead management, offers a web-based application that includes e-fulfillment features. This tool, and others on the market, help to streamline the e-fulfillment process. With Peconic Software's application customer leads are easily imported into an electronic database. Based on predetermined criteria such as product interest, service interest or other, an automated, personalized customer e-mail is generated and e-mailed to the customer as soon as the lead is imported into the database. The e-mail includes links to applicable website pages, literature PDFs and/or other online content. This automated model not only saves the obvious costs associated

with printed literature and mailing, but is also much faster - not to mention more environmentally friendly. For companies “going green”, electronic fulfillment is a must.

Electronic lead fulfillment also offers companies the opportunity to provide their customers more complete information. For example, a company introduces a new product. The company has a product brochure and a product demonstration video that’s available on the company website and YouTube®. With electronic lead fulfillment, the company can send a link to online literature, website content, and also multimedia presentations. This is a huge advantage when it comes to information fulfillment. With electronic lead fulfillment, you have a win, win, win situation.

#### Companies Win:

- Decrease costs associated with print literature
- Reduce postage expenses
- Reduce warehouse requirements (for in-house storage) and/or external warehousing costs (when literature is stored off site)
- Reduce labor required for lead processing
- Provide faster information delivery
- Can more easily provide customers information beyond static literature such as video / multimedia content

#### Customers Win:

- Receive information in a more timely manner
- Potentially receive more complete information

#### We all Win:

- Electronic fulfillment is better for the environment

### Hold on, print fulfillment is not completely dead

Electronic fulfillment will not work in every situation. With so much e-mail spam circulating, customers are often reluctant to provide their e-mail addresses to advertisers. If you do not have a customer’s e-mail address or the customer opts-out of your company e-mails, you obviously can’t fulfill their inquiries with electronic fulfillment. Print is still a viable option. When customers request product samples, traditional fulfillment is your only option. Additionally, there are still customers who want to receive a print catalog or brochure. These customers want a piece of literature they can hold, file or put on their shelf for quick reference. Print lead fulfillment still has a place in these situations.

When print fulfillment is the best or only option, companies should consider a transition from a traditional literature-warehouse fulfillment model to an on-demand print fulfillment model. On-demand printing is an excellent option for print literature fulfillment, but beyond the scope of this white paper.

### Tips for a successful transition to e-fulfillment

Following are a few key points to keep in mind when you transition to an electronic lead fulfillment model.

First, respect your customer preferences. Whenever possible, ask customers how they would like to receive information from your company. Sometimes you do not have the opportunity, but there are many scenarios where you can collect customer preferences. For example,

- Website inquiry forms should include a mandatory field where a customer can indicate their preference for receiving information and/or an opt-in option for e-mail.
- Trade show leads are typically captured by an on-site representative from your company. Train your staff to ask potential customers who stop by about their preferences and be sure that your rep indicates the customer’s preference on the lead form.
- When customers call into your Customer Support Department to request product or service literature, make sure that your customer service reps are trained to ask customers about their preferences.

Next, carefully consider the form of electronic communication that you are providing. As noted previously, there are several ways to provide information via electronic lead fulfillment.

- Send an e-mail with a PDF attachment. If you are providing PDFs, make sure that the PDFs are small files that are quick to download.
- A better scenario, provide a link to PDFs that can be downloaded from your website. This ensures that you don’t bog down customer e-mail servers.
- Provide links to your HTML website pages. In this scenario, be aware that your customers may not read through all of the information that is available. They may jump from one page to the next and you lose some control in how the customer learns about your product.

With e-fulfillment you must also have a process in place to handle undeliverable mail. E-mails may be permanently undeliverable or temporarily undeliverable. In either case, you need a process to handle fulfillment of undeliverable e-mail.

Finally, if you transition to an electronic fulfillment process, consider using a software application that will facilitate the process. This will help you achieve maximum benefits of an electronic fulfillment system.

## Summary

Electronic lead fulfillment offers companies many benefits when compared to traditional print-warehouse fulfillment systems. Print lead fulfillment is still necessary in some situations, however, companies should leverage e-fulfillment as much as possible. Decreased printing, mailing, warehousing and labor costs are obvious advantages. Perhaps even more

importantly, is the positive impact that e-fulfillment can have on a company's brand. Providing customers more timely, highly relevant and complete information in response to their inquiries can help to improve customer satisfaction and helps to nurture customer relationships. Satisfied customers and prospects typically translate into loyal customers and increased sales. In addition company and customer advantage, electronic lead fulfillment also benefits the environment through reduced paper and mail waste.

# About the author



Christine Mariconda is the President and founder of Mariconda Marketing Solutions, a full-service marketing consulting and communications company based in New York. Christine is a marketing communications professional with 20 years experience working for startup

and global companies. She has expertise in a wide range of disciplines: marketing strategy and planning, branding and corporate identity, traditional marketing communications (print advertising, direct mail, trade shows, print catalogs, public relations, etc.), online media (website design, search engine marketing, e-mail marketing, social media, etc.), as well as lead management, including the development and implementation of closed-loop sales force automation systems.

Prior to establishing Mariconda Marketing Solutions, for over 15 years Christine held senior management positions at market-leading companies serving the life science research, pharmaceutical, biotech, analytical chemistry, clinical and related markets. As Executive Director of Communications

and e-Business for Brinkmann® Instruments and Eppendorf®, Inc., Christine ran a full-service in-house advertising / marketing communications department that was responsible for all marketing communications activities in North America. Christine was also responsible for local corporate identity management, internal corporate communications, lead process management, customer database development, and the implementation of a Sales Force Automation application. As a member of Eppendorf's Global Creative Committee, Christine provided strategic and creative input for a wide range of global projects. Throughout her 20+ years in corporate life, Christine helped to evolve some of the most well known brands in the laboratory products and analytical instrumentation industries.

Christine's background also includes a strong academic foundation. She has a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Business Administration in Marketing.

Learn more about Christine's background at:  
[www.linkedin.com/in/christinemariconda](http://www.linkedin.com/in/christinemariconda)

### Mariconda Marketing Solutions

Tel: 631.462.6139

Fax: 631.462.6138

Email: [cm@mariconda-marketing.com](mailto:cm@mariconda-marketing.com)

Web: [www.mariconda-marketing.com](http://www.mariconda-marketing.com)

**MARICONDA**  
Marketing Solutions