



ALAN HOWELL | MBJ

DeWayne Adamson, CEO, and Antony Francis, president and COO, of Plan Express

Contractors use Plan Express virtual plan rooms to order, distribute project blueprints

BY TARA MILLIGAN

Plan Express has changed the way contractors nationwide look at blueprints.

Through a Plan Express online "plan room," contractors, developers and architects can access and manage blueprints for a project and order copies of those plans to be sent practically anywhere in the U.S. overnight.

When DeWayne Adamson, a former owner of a Wisconsin construction company, started thinking about launching a blueprint printing and distribution company, he knew FedEx

Corp. would be key to the concept. And that meant Memphis would be Plan Express' home base.

By putting the company in Memphis, Adamson's customers could place orders for blueprints as late as 8 p.m. and still have the plans arrive at their destination the next day. It was a revolution for a process that used to take days.

It works like this: A client sends blueprints to Plan Express, where the plans are converted to graphic TIFF files. Those files are then stored on a private Web portal. The clients can view and order the plans at any time. The client can also grant access to the online plan room to subcontractors, or anyone else they choose.

Clients pay only for the shipping and printing. And Plan Express, which ships about 1,500 packages a night via FedEx, is able to offer discount shipping to its clients. Access to the online plan room and the document management services are free.

But Adamson is still fine-tuning the

system. When FedEx bought Kinko's several years ago, Adamson saw an opportunity to open Plan Express offices in some key cities.

Adamson said some clients like the idea of having a Plan Express office nearby. So offices are now open in Nashville, New York, Tampa, Dallas and San Francisco.

"It was important for us to be face-to-face with more customers," Adamson says.

Adamson also needed help managing a company that was rapidly growing. In 2005, revenues reached nearly \$10 million. And Adamson expects revenues to grow another 60% in 2006. Adamson needed to beef up his management team.

He got the help he needed when Antony Francis, a veteran of the distribution and logistics industry, joined Plan Express in February as its new president and COO.

Prior to joining Plan Express, Francis was COO of a catalog and e-commerce fulfillment provider, where the model for clients was "pick, pack, ship." Francis says the transition to shipping blueprints wasn't

all that different.

"I'm used to working in a very high-volume transaction environment," Francis says. "This is print, pack and ship out of a virtual warehouse."

Kent Moon, president of Lakeview Construction in Pleasant Prairie, Wisc., says using Plan Express has helped his company control printing and shipping costs of plans.

Moon's company builds hundreds of retail stores across the U.S. and in Puerto Rico. So having an easy way to manage and ship those documents has become an essential part of his business.

"I believe they were ahead of their time in doing this," Moon says. "We're spending less by outsourcing our printing."

