

# BRIDGES OF MORRIS COUNTY...

MORRIS COUNTY  
**BUSINESS** *Life*



## Technology to Tame the Menagerie

By John L. Picard

*“It was the best of times. It was the worst of times.” — A Tale of Two Cities, Charles Dickens*

As you read this, business is facing a virtual menagerie of challenges — a global environment facing the *dogs of war*, an economy that’s like a *horse out to pasture* and customer programs that are as easy as *herding cats*.

One of the better investments to tame this menagerie and make these “the best of times” is to consider some of the marketing and communications technologies becoming commonly available.

**Technologies to Make the Connection.** Fully 93% of businesses today are using instant messenger (according to *Information Week*). There are a variety of formats, but all serve as a tool to instantly write to others on-line and in real time. You can use it to collaborate within your office, with partners or to instantly reach any of your customers. I often use IM to speak with clients. I will sometimes coordinate and share my thinking with a client while we are both on a conference call with a third party. It adds a dimension that accelerates what’s accomplished in the call. Many businesses today are also exploring the use of video on the web and those little CAMs (cameras) on top of the PC. Though not the quality of the DVD you rented from Blockbuster, they are opportunities to come “face-to-face,” to show samples and to add immediacy to working sessions. Web conferencing (such as Webex) can offer you higher quality virtual meetings, conferences and even interactive seminars (think of the hotel or food bills you can save).

**Technologies to Make it Personal.** In two recent high technology trade shows (the AIIM Exposition and the On-Demand Conference), I have seen major advances in the ability to produce personalized printed communications. Traditional printing has seen an industry retrenchment, but personalized and on-demand printing has grown. These new tools offer any business the chance to leverage their customer knowledge and to turn that knowledge into materials that are customized, “printed” and bound for any customer, market or industry. You can now have short-run and cost-effective brochures that mix graphics as well as words for each customer opportunity. One financial customer of ours divided his database by customer concerns. Those who sought safety saw images of family and home. For those who sought investment performance, the brochure displayed images of success — cars, cruises and lifestyle. Basic materials can be produced in quantities as small as 500 or 1,000. You can even create a hardcover book you “publish” for your best customers. All it takes are basic computer programs to create the files that you send electronically to shops with this production technology.

**Technology That Almost Places You There.** How many times have you thought, “If I could just give that customer or prospect a tour or show them how my service can work for them”? With today’s digital technologies, you can extend your presence through streaming video on the web, CD presentations, and now DVD tours that can be handed out or mailed. Most of these tools take no more time to create than producing a website. They can become your mini-salespeople or a chance for you to personally tell your customers how important they are.

**Together, It’s Technology with Purpose.** The introduction to the *Six Million Dollar Man*, a television show that is probably replaying on a cable station near you, began with the words, “We can rebuild him. We have the technology.” When the need is survival and prosperity in difficult times, I might paraphrase the show opening: “Business growth: we can rebuild it . . . we have the technology.”

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