Day-Timers Inc., a leader in time planning tools, has designed a new product to help customers with their schedules. The *Personal Pages* product was first offered to the public in July 1998, and has become the single best new product ever launched by Day-Timers, with tens of thousands sold. The innovative *Personal Pages* product is truly a competitive advantage – no one else in the industry is yet able to produce these highly customized planners.
The company
At the Day-Timers web site, a customer - usually a business consumer - enters up to 100 personal dates occurring over the next twelve months. After receiving the information electronically, Day-Timers uses a streamlined digital manufacturing process to deliver each customized Day-Timers Personal Pages planner. Océ 8080DI Twin digital printing systems provide the on-demand, variable-data output required for each customized piece.

Roots in the Printing Business
Day-Timers was not always involved in time management. The Pennsylvania-based company has been around for 52 years and started as a family-owned print shop. Even into the late '80s, Day-Timers was still doing some printing work. Day-Timers planning products got started when attorney Morris Perkin brought the company a system he had developed to keep track of billable hours. This “Lawyer's Day” product eventually led to the Day-Timers line.

Today Day-Timers’ primary business is producing tools for planning and organizing, and the company is an office products division of Fortune Brands under the umbrella of ACCO North America. The main market remains the corporate consumer, and the majority of Day-Timers’ customers are business professionals. Direct mail has been the company’s main channel of distribution, taking products directly to customers. Now the company is expanding through mass marketing and offering products through retail office supply stores. With its progressive Personal Pages planner, Day-Timers is taking advantage of Internet communication to work even more closely with customers and prospects.

Proactive Partners Didn’t Give Up
The Personal Pages project did not happen overnight. In fact, management at Day-Timers had been thinking about the Personal Pages project for years, said Michael Little, vice president of manufacturing at Day-Timers, where about 400 employees are responsible for pre-press, printing, finishing and engineering. “We went to the On Demand show in New York years ago looking for ways to do this.” However, the company’s vision was ahead of its time, and it had to wait for technology to catch up. In the meantime, Day-Timers implemented a completely digitalized front end for electronic pre-press and “kept looking for and talking about ways to make the Personal Pages product happen.”

Finding the right printer partner eliminated a major hurdle. Day-Timers was first attracted to Océ printers because of the advanced print engine technology, but they came to appreciate the company’s proactive approach. Although Day-Timers looked at other print systems initially, “Océ was the one who kept coming up with ideas to

Day-Timers Inc.

- Expanded digital printing capacity
- Ultra high-speed and superior image quality
- Superior customer service

Lorraine Stetzel, Production Manager reviews print quality with Mike Little, Vice President of Manufacturing
do it,” said Little. “They worked closely with us. What we liked most was that they were there with people and answers faster than the competition. I don’t think this project would have happened with other vendors. Océ put resources in front of us and did what was needed to make it work.”

“In December 1997, we did a test run that did not do well, but Océ quickly worked out the problems,” Little said, and the project was back on track. Things started moving even more quickly after Day-Timers parent company dangled a marketing “carrot”. If Day-Timers could hit a target date of July 7, 1998 for the launch of Personal Pages, the parent company would run an advertisement for it in the Wall Street Journal. Wall Street Journal advertising is not cheap, but it was the perfect vehicle for reaching Day-Timers’ target business audience. This tempting offer gave the team lots of incentive, but only six months to finish the project. Fortunately, because of the work that had already been done, the rest of the development easily proceeded to the finished concept.

Streamlined Manufacturing Reduces Steps
Not only did Day-Timers develop a creative and useful product, but at the same time they developed a highly streamlined manufacturing process to produce it cost effectively. Day-Timers even brought in student researchers from a local university to help simulate and study work flow to and from the finishing cells. “This helped us look at things such as process flow and how many steps we have now compared to how many we could have later,” explained Little. Through “lean” manufacturing, process steps have been significantly reduced.

Innovative digital technology allows electronic collation and variable printing, and pre-press plates have been eliminated. The application even permits switching from one person’s planner to another’s without stopping the printer. The Personal Pages products come off the Océ printers 80% complete, with only minor finishing required. Work that would have taken 48 to 56 hours previously, can now be completed in about eight hours.
Along with streamlined manufacturing processes, Day-Timers also instituted a team-based work environment organized around the Océ printers. The printers have become special members of the Day-Timers team, to the point of having their own names. Bubba was the first Océ system installed back in April, 1998, soon followed by Thelma Lou in July and Junior in August. The fourth member of the Day-Timers family, Ellie May, is on her way. The Day-Timers crew who work with each system have taken them as their personal mascots. “The teams are set up with Junior or Thelma Lou T-shirts, and people are in charge of their day-to-day work and help to run the process,” said Little. Day-Timers keeps all Océ systems going six days a week, 24 hours a day doing both generic and customized printing. With the printers, “we can run over 60,000 feet a shift.”

Unique Product Is Competitive Advantage
The customized Personal Pages product gives Day-Timers a strong competitive advantage. “The competition can’t readily do this,” noted Little, and “from an internal aspect, major benefits are the lean manufacturing processes that came out of the development. The streamlined manufacturing strategy has also impacted internal factors such as floor space, inventory, and work in process. Now you don’t see any inventory when you go on the manufacturing floor. Now it’s almost too simple!” he exclaimed. Being able to customize planners was something that could not be done before digital printing technology. Given Day-Timers’ determination and creativity, customers can look forward to even better ways to plan their busy schedules.