

CASE STUDY:

Full Steam Ahead with Fig Industries

A growing design and publishing studio
manages a wealth of operations with Sugar.

FIG INDUSTRIES

Fig Industries
figindustries.com



Fig Industries knows a thing or two about creative design and marketing. But could a branding, package design and magazine publications company use CRM software not only for the traditional sales and marketing functions, but also to run publishing processes? The answer, it turns out, is an enthusiastic yes.

“Each magazine we publish has many assignments and deadlines: who’s writing which article, who’s photographing it, what advertisers will be included, and the status of all advertising and editorial copy,” says Amy Hynes, Fig Industries’ product manager. “That’s just for starters. Add in additional deadlines, from draft copy to final approval on every single piece, and you have a massive amount of process for each issue – and must be perfect. There’s no going back and fixing it once it’s printed.”

Fig Industries publishes Fig®, six hyperlocal guides to shopping, dining, arts and entertainment in Pennsylvania and South Carolina. The quarterly publishing schedule adds up to twenty-four issues each year, a large task for any organization – but Fig Industries also has a thriving business for clients who need branding, creative packaging, marketing strategy, photography and letterpress. Even the least creative of us gets the picture that it’s a lot of information to manage, and it’s all time-sensitive.

Manage it they do: Fig Industries has customized Sugar to boldly support both their advertising sales and magazine publishing processes as well as the flourishing design business. Not only does it mean streamlined efficiency for their workflow, it also creates opportunity. Without Sugar, Fig Industries could not grow.

Growing Pains

“Our business model is a blend of design and administrative staff, writers, and photographers. With six Fig® magazines in place, and our intensive schedule, we were rapidly approaching a breaking point where we couldn’t expand our business with our existing software tools,” Amy relates.

Like many product managers, she found herself asking the question of how to do more work without increasing staff, and how could they digitize their workflow without a cumbersome, sophisticated system?

“I was brought on board with the specific charge of growing business. We want to double in the next three to five years,” said Amy. “But how could Fig Industries publish Fig® for more areas with our already maxed-out workflow? We needed a system to help us keep track of everything so we could say ‘yes’ to more work.”

Amy knew that in order to grow, Fig Industries needed something flexible, powerful... and fast.

“It was just two years ago that I was hired to be Fig Industries’ product manager. My job would entail making sure all publications go to press on time. From the beginning of selling ads for each issue to okaying a mailing date, I touch every



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aspect of our business. I was excited to know that I was going to be able to help build a custom system that fit the needs of Fig Industries' future."

Part of what makes the story of Fig Industries' Sugar most interesting is their rapid timeline across a scant two years.

Jumpstarting via the Cloud

"We wanted to start with a cloud-based system. Being on the cloud let us get up and running so much faster, and it seemed easier: no worries about installing software on our server, doing backups, or other technical concerns. It felt...safer. For small businesses especially, who often don't have staff who know lots about data and IT, there is a 'fear factor' about data safety. With the cloud, Sugar would be completely taking care of us."

They did consider other cloud-based solutions, including Salesforce.com. "My former company had a massive process system and was ready to integrate it with Salesforce, but I had never really been sold on Salesforce," says Amy. "For Fig Industries, Salesforce just didn't have the flexibility we wanted. Fig Industries reviewed Sugar with W-Systems, and we tested it with a few sales team members, and the decision was made. Right off the bat, we could all see that Sugar was user friendly. Sugar was the right decision for us to make."

Best and Most Flexible

"Besides the fact that Sugar is simple out of the box, it was reassuring to know that even if we decided to have it on our own server later, we could, but getting started, we didn't have to know much about development or servers or hosting," Amy affirmed.

Still, a helping hand made things easier getting started.

As Fig Industries learned more about the enormous possibilities SugarCRM offers, they realized they wanted to harness Sugar's ability to tightly tie together what at first seemed to be separate business processes. Now, Fig Industries' staff uses Sugar not only to manage publication deadlines, they also can forecast advertising revenue from each issue. Sugar's matrix-style reports can show all such information quickly for all six Fig® magazine's quarterly issues... but that's still just the beginning of what's happened across the last two years.

A Moment in the Day

"Let's say I'm managing editor for one of our Fig® magazine issues. I can use Sugar in a traditional CRM sense: it has records of potential advertisers as well as current ones. We can use the lead generation modules to target ad sales...but on top of that, we have small custom 'modules' that help me track ongoing design notes for a particular ad: 'the client wants all the text in red' or 'the photo needs to be the ad background instead of inset', for example. When the ad reaches the end of the pipeline and is considered 'sold', Sugar can automatically schedule alerts for each person who will then need to work on it to create copy, photographs, where in the issue the ad is running, if it covers a seam (the fold of the magazine). It all happens just by filling in certain fields.

"For instance, Jane just sold an ad and we now need to write an informational story about the advertiser to go with it. As the editor, I chose the name of the writer I want from a dropdown, and boom, Sugar automatically sends an email to that writer containing the salesperson's name, the size of the ad, the press date, notes from the sale, and other info.

"As the magazine editor, I don't know how Sugar makes that email happen, and frankly, I don't care. What I do know is that it saves me from having to type the same kind of email over and over and over for each issue. That's a huge workflow time saver. It's also a guarantee. That email gets sent, thanks to Sugar, even if I happen to be interrupted right then with a phone call."

Mobile Photo Journalism and QuickBooks Integration

Working to publish a local magazine, sales and editorial staff are always on the move and out of the office. Every process that exists in Sugar is also available on the SugarCRM mobile app. Users take photographs onsite and dictate meeting notes directly into the SugarCRM mobile app. SugarCRM Mobile truly is the workhorse of this installation.

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"We would not have been as confident if not for W-Systems, our SugarCRM consultant. This truly great group of people helped us to see both the short-term and long-term strength Sugar could offer our company. It wasn't just a way to boost sales and keep track of customer information. It could manage our publishing workflow processes. It could become a source of information our customers could access through our website. Sugar was powerful, which would help us to be more powerful, too, while enabling us to grow."



“We’re very pleased with how collaboration, creativity, and SugarCRM have allowed us to focus even more on our customers and doing things perfectly for them. Even businesses without a big IT staff like ours benefit extensively from a well-designed CRM system.”

This year Fig Industries opted to integrate Sugar with their on-premise QuickBooks installation. W-Systems installed a data integrator tool with QuickBooks connectors to automatically update Sugar with the latest accounting summaries and customer invoice data.

Sweeten My Email, Please?

Fig Industries, like most CRM users, knew that integrating their CRM with email would boost efficiency everywhere. “W-Systems helped us through that process. I tried several options, but Riva, who claims to be the leader in CRM-email integration, is amazing when it comes to linking your email to Sugar,” Amy shared. W-Systems put us in contact with Riva, and we’ve been very happy with them.”

“Our next task with W-Systems is to get help on what is called “dependent fields”... when you choose a value for one field, it pops up another box tied to that value. It’s just an example of the importance of a longtime partner such as W-Systems, with their excellent helpdesk. They are so highly responsive. They’re so fast. I never have to wait. They completely support us as we constantly fine-tune our system to make it better and better,” she says.

Looking Ahead

Fig Industries has been delighted with the development of mobile apps for Sugar in the last two years. “Every improvement is an improvement on an already great app,” Amy reports. “Sugar 7 completely blew away my expectations.”

Fig Industries’ team is looking forward to getting more and more from Sugar. “We want custom reports, which we can design using the information stored in our on-premise system,” says Amy. “We want data analytics. We’re looking forward to powerful visual dashboards aimed at giving all stakeholders real-time updates.”

As Fig Industries flexes its SugarCRM muscles, even more opportunities open up. “We now look at Sugar as the hub in the middle of our company wheel. SugarCRM protects our data while it simultaneously moves critical information to our publication website, and manages workflow for designers and writers and photographers, and feeds our billing systems and is fed by them. Fewer mistakes happen because everything is written down and tracked. It’s absolutely the best CRM software platform there is, and we have such a great team at W-Systems to support it.”

Fig Industries’ goal by year end is to have advertising clients be able to log into the Fig Industries website and access their own dashboards. “We can give them advance billing info, tell them when their ad will go to print, what designs are ready for their review, and what their billing information is. We’re excited about that. Such customer-centered focus would give our studio a huge value-add compared to other similar studios. Our goal is to be as transparent as possible in our workflow. It lets our customers engage in a way that they truly feel part of the process.”

Fig Industries can look forward to strong positive growth, and they’re looking forward to using Sugar even more effectively. “Our Sugar will evolve to support many more processes. We’re now using Sugar’s Knowledge Base to build a library of critical company information, to streamline things like new employee training,” Amy relates.



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