

DesignMerge® vs Printshop Mail™ – Product Comparison

Printshop Mail (PSM) is a standalone VDP software product that is generally used for very simple mailing pieces and other basic VDP work. The product is fundamentally different than DesignMerge because PSM does not work directly with Adobe InDesign. Rather, the process is similar to other standalone VDP applications where the user creates a “background” image (typically a PDF file) containing the static elements of the layout, and then uses the PSM tool to overlay variable data “on top of” the PDF file. This means that the variable data must be aligned perfectly with the static background, which is often difficult to accomplish. When the merge process begins, PSM software imports the variable data, merges it, and produces a print stream that combines the variable output with the static background image. The final composite output is then sent to the printer.

The first major difference between DesignMerge Pro and PSM is that document design features are very limited. Many of the composition features available in Adobe InDesign are simply not supported in PSM. Examples include kerning & letterspacing, tabular composition, runarounds, anchored boxes, transparency, multi-page documents, drop-caps, type on a curve, and many other features. DesignMerge has no such restriction – you just select any element in the document, and ***Make it Variable***™. If you already know how to use Adobe InDesign, then you already know how to use DesignMerge software!

Another significant difference between PSM and DesignMerge Pro is that PSM uses its own composition engine to produce the variable data. This means that although the static portion of the document (which you saved as a PDF) looks correct, the variable portion does not match up with the static PDF. This is because, as you might imagine, the PSM composition engine will compose and print text very differently from what you see coming out of Adobe InDesign. Basically, every aspect of the composition is controlled by PSM, not by Adobe InDesign, so it just looks “different”. And if any changes must be made to the static PDF portion of the document, the user often must make those changes in the original source document, and then re-import the changes as a new PDF into PSM all over again, which can be very time-consuming.

Beyond those differences, consideration must be given to the overall feature set of the two products. PSM has no Macintosh support, no interactive Rules building and testing capability, and provides nothing like the DesignMerge CopyFit (automatic copy-fitting) or GroupPicture (variable groups and layouts) features. Basic conditional logic is offered, but pales in comparison to the DesignMerge Rules module, which is completely menu-driven, requires no programming, provides interactive testing features, and works directly inside of Adobe InDesign. Both products offer linear bar code support, however, unlike DesignMerge Pro, PSM uses a graphic rendering engine to produce QR Code and other 2D bar codes, which can be prohibitively slow.

We like to say that DesignMerge produces “predictable” output. What this means is that every personalized sheet looks just like you printed it using *File/Print* from Adobe InDesign. The variable data matches up with the static data, all of the composition lines up perfectly, and the output looks great. This is the advantage of using a plug-in approach for VDP. For more information about this, please visit www.designmerge.com/aboutplugins.

The following product comparison chart lists the major features included with your purchase of DesignMerge Pro. If you have any questions on the available features, please contact your DesignMerge representative, or visit www.designmerge.com for more information.



DESIGNMERGE®

Professional Variable Data Software for Adobe® InDesign®

DesignMerge® Pro vs Printshop Mail™ – Product Comparison Chart

Capability	DesignMerge®	PSM™
Works directly with Adobe InDesign	✓	
Cross-platform with full Macintosh & Windows support	✓	(Windows Only)
Supports Variable Text, Images and Articles (multi-paragraph, styled text)	✓	(No Article Support)
Includes support for PostScript and PPML output formats	✓	✓
Variable type-on-a-curve, runaround, and transparency support	✓	
Supports Pantone and custom colors for text, style sheets, and frames	✓	
Menu-driven conditional logic support (if/then/else) with custom action support	✓	(Limited; No Custom Actions)
Automatic copy-fitting of overset or underset frames (MPS CopyFit)	✓	(Very Limited)
Built-in consecutive numbering features	✓	
Supports job “chunking” and print optimizations for greater efficiency	✓	
Fully variable Layers, Layouts & Master Pages	✓	
Multiple-up imposition with support for “Cut & Stack” output in document	✓	
Supports continuous text flows across multiple pages	✓	
Variable Data alignment and styling precisely matches the Static Data	✓	(Variable Does Not Match)
Interactive testing features for conditional Rules and Actions	✓	
Longest Line, Shortest Line and Overset Text checking	✓	
Data Preflight features to check for missing variable pictures and Articles	✓	
External Adobe InDesign documents as variable assets (MPS GroupPicture)	✓	
Multiple user-defined global search paths for variable assets	✓	
Full scripting API available for automation and custom actions	✓	
Adobe InDesign Server support for Web-To-Print and automated workflows	✓	
VDP packaging feature to collect all variable assets for a VDP job	✓	
Integration with Enfocus Switch and other workflow software products	✓	
Create individual PDF files for every data record with full filename control	✓	
Font-based 2D bar code support for QR Code, Data Matrix, and PDF417	✓	(Graphic-Based = Slow)
USA Development, Sales, and Technical Support (no outsourcing)	100%	(Canada & Outsourced)