

Hunkeler Innovationdays (14th-17th February, Lucerne) Booth S04

PDF/VT & TRANSPROMO: A COLOUR WORKFLOW FOR A COLOUR APPLICATION

The missing piece in the high-quality, high-volume, high-speed VDP printing puzzle is a workflow that combines the best of both worlds: highly efficient processing a vast amounts of data, the ability to track and control individual records and above all, sophisticated colour and graphic capabilities that have become the standard in high quality colour reproduction. Tim Taylor, Marketing Manager of Screen Europe, analyses the issue and provides the answer.

Twenty years ago when the first Postscript RIPs were being introduced to the graphic arts market there were many in the industry that questioned if Postscript could ever match the quality levels that were then being achieved through dedicated typesetting and colour page make-up systems.

Despite fierce resistance from users of proprietary technology, Postscript (in combination with the Apple Mac, Photoshop and QuarkXPress) eventually triumphed and became accepted as the standard way to produce both text and colour documents. Part of this success was that it lowered the cost of entry into the then lucrative colour repro market but equally importantly, it expanded colour printing to a far wider audience because of its ease of use and the fact that it was a standard that was widely adopted by both industry professionals and people with only a loose connection to the printing industry.

In the early 1990s it was about expanding the opportunities for colour printing, today we see a similar opportunity to expand the use of print but this time it will be with increasing use of variable data printing (VDP).

Until recently, VDP has fallen into two clearly defined categories: high-volume black and white or low-volume colour. With the introduction of high-speed continuous feed inkjet presses we now have the print technology to allow the best of both worlds – high speed and colour – but most of the current generation of output devices rely on a workflow (AFP) that was designed for taking black text from mainframe computers.

The missing piece in the high-quality, high-volume, high-speed VDP printing puzzle is a workflow that combines the best of both worlds: highly efficient processing a vast amounts of data, the ability to track and control individual records and above all, sophisticated colour and graphic capabilities that have become the standard in high quality colour reproduction.

Screen's answer to this opportunity is the introduction of its EQUIOS workflow technology. Internally, EQUIOS is based on the Adobe PDF Print Engine version 2 (APPE2) and in addition to the overall performance, flexibility and quality enhancements that this brings, APPE 2 also provides the key to the system's variable data capability, through its support for variable data from VDP software.

In addition to the many benefits that come from its APPE2 core, EQUIOS has an open JDF-based interface to enable the addition of extensive automation capabilities via the EQUIOSNET Partnership Programme.*

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EQUIOS delivers all the well-known benefits of PDF print production, for VDP jobs which have not previously been able to use the tools, conventions, expertise and technologies already in use in the graphic arts, such as native support for live transparency and layers. By fitting seamlessly into existing PDF-based prepress operations, Variable PDF enables a single common PDF print production workflow for all job types.

With increasing amounts of colour being introduced to VDP, comes the need to process more and more data. With Screen's implementation of the APPE2-based RIPPING, you can have a scalable RIP that can be extended according to your processing needs. The RIPs will also have intelligent load balancing from multiple parallel processors. This means that printers will be able to maximise the performance of any connected output device, including running the Truepress Jet520ZZ at its rated speed of 220 m/min in full colour.

EQUIOS will also automatically extract and optimise shared reusable text or graphical elements included in a PDF or Variable PDF job so that they are immediately available for combination with the variable part of the job as it is rendered. This will significantly improve RIP performance as well as simplifying the workflow in comparison to current production methods.

Benefits of adopting 'Standards'

Working with an APPE2-based workflow and PDF/VT will bring many advantages to all producers of jobs with variable colour. As with other PDF jobs, ICC colour management can be used in a PDF-based VDP workflow, pre-flighting of files can be carried out and Acrobat or the free Adobe Reader can be used for review and approval. Standard desktop printers can also be used for proofing designs before committing to a full print run. The support for the print production and exchange standards PDF/X4 and 5 will allow simplify the adoption of contract standards between customer and supplier. The device independence of this format will also maximize print quality through native PDF RIPs.

The metadata capability also allows device-specific processing to be applied as part of the rendering process, only applying the necessary imposition rules for the given output engine at the time of output, enabling greater flexibility in routing of jobs without having to recompose the PDF/VT output.

Job tracking and production assurance are also facilitated by the metadata support built into PDF/VT. This means that it is possible to be sure that all the pages or records in a given job have been printed successfully.

A future in colour

The adoption of industry wide standards have been the foundation for the wholesale adoption of colour for all types of printing. Before variable content also becomes the norm rather than the exception, there also needs to be a move away from proprietary and archaic data formats to a standard and more easily accessible production approach. Screen believes that PDF/VT opens the way for exactly this to happen and we look forward to helping our customers make this transition over the coming years.

*Equiosnet Partnership Programme (http://www.screen.co.jp/ga_dtp/en/partner/index.html)

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Currently there are 30 companies collaborating, to provide connectivity with EQUIOSNET from W2P/VDP and document creation software developers through to offset and digital press manufacturers, finishing equipment manufacturers and MIS suppliers.

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Note to editors: If you would like more information or to discuss Tim Taylor's comments in more details then please contact Ruth Clark ruth@splashpr.co.uk T:+44 (0)1580 241177

About Screen

As a precision manufacturer with a long history of building innovative imaging technologies, Screen develops and manufactures expert digital printing technologies for high-end professional print on demand applications. The company provides a 360 degree service delivering total solutions spanning workflow automation, digital printing devices, finishing partnerships, ink and substrate expertise and support. www.screeneurope.com

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