



Adobe® PDF

Tri-Ad Litho

Printer doubles revenue in three years with Adobe PDF**ABOUT THE CUSTOMER**

- Thirty-year-old printer that has evolved from a conventional offset printer into a predominantly digital on-demand service bureau
- Location: Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- Employees: 10
- Annual revenue: US\$1.8 million

BENEFITS SUMMARY

- Adobe PDF enables 75% faster turnaround, allowing Tri-Ad to meet tighter deadlines and grow its on-demand business.
- Adobe PDF is the underlying technology that makes Tri-Ad Litho's on-demand business profitable.

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Tri-Ad Litho has been in business for 30 years. Over those 30 years, Tri-Ad has evolved from a conventional offset printer into a predominantly digital on-demand printer and service bureau. Tri-Ad still takes in conventional work; in fact, there are still three Heidelberg offset presses on the floor: a GTO, a 29-inch SORM, and a Quickmaster. Several years ago, Tri-Ad saw the digital revolution coming and made plans to take full advantage of it.

To step into the digital, on-demand world, Tri-Ad invested in three Xerox digital presses: two DocuTech 135s (one with a cover inserter/booklet maker) and a DocuColor 2045. Tri-Ad's president, John Novosel, also had the foresight to invest in something else: prepress tools that would make the company's digital presses profitable. These tools are supplied by Adobe, and Tri-Ad's digital workflow today is centered around Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). Tri-Ad has been so successful in reinventing itself that today the mix of work is 75% digital and 25% conventional.

In the process, Tri-Ad Litho has found a unique niche in the Pittsburgh market. Dan Makuta, the sales manager at Tri-Ad,

explains, "We are not a storefront, so we don't take in any work off the street. But we have found two major markets that provide us with a steady stream of work. The first is what I would call an external in-plant market. That is, we act as an in-plant printer for a number of major corporations. We regularly supply 12 major companies with manuals, technical books, and other documents.

"The second major market," continues Makuta, "is acting as a service bureau for the digital work that many of the local printers are ill-equipped to handle. We made the investment and learned the technology, so the smaller mom-and-pop shops and medium-size commercial printers don't have to worry about it. It's a win-win for everyone."

At the heart of Tri-Ad's success are Adobe PDF and the entire library of Adobe prepress products. "We've doubled our revenue in three years because of the Adobe PDF workflow," says Makuta. "We were grossing about US\$950,000 about three years ago, and we are now at US\$1.8 million. That's a pretty

good return on investment! When a major client said, 'It's PDF or the highway,' we listened, did something about it, and grew!"

It is not difficult to understand why Tri-Ad's clients would be so insistent on Adobe PDF, an integral part of Adobe PostScript® 3™ technology. Adobe PDF is an open file format that faithfully preserves the look and feel of documents across applications and platforms. An Adobe PDF file provides a single "digital master" for use in electronic, print, and cross-media workflows, helping ensure the highest possible fidelity across all media and devices. Adobe PostScript 3 delivers targeted benefits to users for whom printing the right document in the right way is critical. For Tri-Ad's customers, this means improved performance and better network integration. For Tri-Ad, this means increased reliability and predictability from their digital printing systems.

Makuta points out the importance of Adobe PDF to Tri-Ad's bottom line. "When we use the Adobe workflow, we are profitable. The margins in the digital world are extremely slim, so the only way to make money is to move that file extremely quickly. If you have to play with the file, you don't make any money. But Adobe PDF allows us to pass those files through the system without a hitch.

"We work with our customers to give us the cleanest possible Adobe PDF files," says Makuta. "We can price the work favorably

when we get clean PDF files, but the meter's running when we don't. We walk the customers through the process of creating Adobe PDF files with the latest version of Adobe Acrobat® software, and distribute our Acrobat Distiller® settings to facilitate this process. I would estimate that our productivity advantage with Adobe PDF is about 75% faster throughput."

Tri-Ad Litho produces 30 to 50 jobs per day on its Xerox digital presses, with run lengths ranging from 50 to 5,000 copies. Makuta explains, "We produce around 250 titles per month, plus other types of books and newsletters. We do a lot of vanity publishing, acting as an in-plant digital printer for some of the major publishers in town. These titles range anywhere from 24 pages on up to 300 pages, and they're coming to us in Adobe PDF.

"For one major electronic supplier," says Makuta, "we deal in a strict Adobe PDF workflow for their short-run manuals, which vary in size from 4 to 196 pages. They upload the PDF files to our Web server, and then we automatically direct the files onto one of our DocuTechs or the DocuColor. These jobs go in as Adobe PDF and come out the other side as finished manuals!"

Makuta says the demand for color is exploding, which is why the DocuColor at Tri-Ad is extremely busy. Makuta explains, "The quality that we're getting out of the DocuColor is indeed exceptional, and our customers are more than satisfied with it. When we show DocuColor samples to some of the larger full-color houses in town, they swear it is offset!"

As for Tri-Ad's plans for the future, Makuta offers, "Within the next three to six months we plan to add another digital color press, primarily because of the increasing market for full color. Right now we can hardly keep up with the demand, and I only see it increasing from here."

Adoption of Adobe Acrobat 5.0 software is also high on Makuta's list. "We always try to get our customers to stay current with the latest and greatest version of Acrobat, as Adobe is constantly improving it. The goal is to make the workflow as effortless and error-free as possible, and Adobe PDF has made it a no-brainer for most of our customers and even our sales force. Acrobat 5.0 will undoubtedly help us to move to the next level with our customers, to exchange Adobe PDF files electronically with annotations."

TOOLKIT

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Adobe Photoshop®
Adobe PDF
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