

Continental Litho

Setting new standards for service and quality

Print service provider boosts productivity and service levels with Adobe® Creative Suite software and participation in Adobe Solutions Network

Better quality generally means higher prices, unless you're competing in today's print services market. With advances in technology, print service providers and their clients have seen the quality and variety of output improve markedly over the years. At the same time, however, more competition and better technology have driven down the cost for services. "It's hard to compete just on quality and price today," says Kent Wright, prepress manager at Continental Litho in Vista, California. "Print quality at reputable providers is quite good, and print costs are comparable."

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Company

Continental Litho

Vista, California
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Challenges

- Differentiate services in competitive print market
- Reduce costs and errors associated with client jobs

Solutions

- Improve services and streamline print production workflow using Adobe Creative Suite software
- Provide expert training through Adobe Solutions Network

Benefits

- Accelerated preflight and printing cycles by 50%
- Expanded variety and quality of client services
- Reduced client review cycles by days

Toolkit

- Adobe Creative Suite. Components used include:
 - Adobe InDesign CS
 - Adobe Illustrator® CS
 - Adobe Acrobat
 - Adobe Photoshop CS
- Adobe PostScript 3
- Apple Power Mac G5 computers running Mac OS X
- Creo Brisque Impose
- Creo Trendsetters
- Epson 9600 printers

Facing these realities, Continental Litho is finding new ways to improve and differentiate its services. One important strategy involves expanding its use of leading technologies such as Adobe Creative Suite software and offering clients easy access to advanced training. Fortunately, the strategy is paying off for the Southern California firm, which produces a range of full-color marketing collateral and other printed materials for area companies such as DC Shoes, Callaway Golf, and Ashworth, Inc.

Continental Litho has built a print production workflow that helps maximize clients’ design options while minimizing production time and unexpected errors on press. This is particularly critical for the firm’s exacting clients that often want complex, visually rich marketing materials printed immediately.

Use of Adobe Creative Suite on the rise

“We’re relying on Adobe Creative Suite more every day,” explains Wright. “For example, using layers in Adobe InDesign® CS streamlines producing high-quality print output.” With Adobe InDesign CS layer support, design professionals can create layers for pictures, drop shadows, text, and other elements, making it easy for Continental Litho staff to reliably preview each layer and determine where printing problems may arise.

Already, the firm receives more than 45% of its print jobs as InDesign CS files, and the number continues to rise. In 2005 the firm received 50% more jobs in InDesign CS compared with the prior year. Continental Litho staff can quickly view layers in InDesign CS files and see if text, images, or pictures overlap. This simple process staves off costly problems later in the printing process because errors can be identified beforehand and fixed immediately.

Preflight up to 50% faster

For Continental Litho and its clients, the advantages of working with Adobe InDesign CS are impressive. For example, a customer recently submitted a 300-page, full-color catalog in QuarkXPress™ for printing. Unfortunately, to achieve the desired special effects on printed pages, the client created many complicated workarounds that were extremely difficult to decipher during preflight.

“Through preflighting, we quickly identified multiple problems with the catalog,” says Wright. “If the client had used Adobe Creative Suite to create the images and move them more seamlessly across design and layout programs, the resulting file would have been much easier to RIP, and we could have handled the job twice as fast.” To avoid problems printing next year’s catalog, Continental Litho staff demonstrated Adobe InDesign CS and Photoshop® CS layering and design features to the client, who now plans to use the software on future projects.

Flexible, powerful Adobe PDF

After preflighting, staff converts some InDesign files and print jobs submitted in other native application files to Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). The platform- and application-independent files are sent to clients for review. “The more we can engage our clients, the less likely we will end up with errors,” says Wright. “With Adobe Acrobat® and Adobe PDF, we can incorporate fast, reliable review cycles into our work.”

Clients can review the compact Adobe PDF files using free Adobe Reader® software. With new features in Acrobat 7.0 Professional, Continental Litho staff can also create Adobe PDF files that clients can mark up with commenting tools enabled for those using Adobe Reader software. The automated review processes are faster than manually delivering paper proofs for review and can reduce client approval cycles by days.

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Kent Wright, prepress manager, Continental Litho

Once proofs are reviewed by clients, Continental Litho begins processing files through their workflow, leveraging the clean Adobe PostScript® in Adobe PDF to speed up file rasterization and trapping. “The benefits of Adobe PDF are tremendous,” explains Wright. “Having an Adobe PDF file RIP and separate properly in our Creo Brisque can boost our productivity four-fold.” Because the Creo Brisque RIP uses industry-standard Adobe PostScript 3™ printing technology, Continental Litho has an extra level of assurance that jobs will print properly on the firm’s Creo Trendsetters and Epson 9600 printers.

Outstanding Adobe support

Using Adobe InDesign CS and other Adobe Creative Suite applications is easy for Continental Litho thanks to excellent support from Adobe Systems. As an Adobe Authorized Print Service Provider and member of the Adobe Solutions Network (ASN), Continental Litho has a close working relationship with Adobe and receives training, software updates, and software patches. The firm also taps into Adobe’s expert staff to help train clients.

Continental Litho’s education seminars, offered through its Continental College and co-hosted by Adobe staff, provide clients with hands-on training using Adobe Creative Suite software. Topics include using layering and transparency techniques in InDesign, streamlined integration among Adobe Creative Suite applications, and generating print-optimized Adobe PDF files. “The Adobe Solutions Network is an invaluable resource for us,” says Wright. “We can improve the quality and reliability of print jobs that clients submit and also provide clients with unmatched training, something that further differentiates our services.”

Gaining a competitive edge

By using the integrated Adobe Creative Suite applications and offering clients expert training, Continental Litho gains an important edge in San Diego County’s competitive print market. “Improving the quality of files that clients submit helps keep service levels high and revenues up,” says Wright. “With Adobe Creative Suite and our participation in the Adobe Solutions Network, we have a winning combination of tools and training for working smarter and achieving better results.”