



AlphaGraphics

Print provider offers leading-edge workflow with a personal touch

PROFILE

- Print provider offering both color and black-and-white print services: design, preflighting, large-format plotting, traditional offset printing, digital printing, finishing, and bindery
- Supports digitally savvy local business-to-business community
- Focuses on customer education and personalized service, which yield a highly loyal customer base
- Employees: 11
- Location: Nashua, New Hampshire
- www.alphagraphics.com/us277

BENEFITS SUMMARY

- Adobe PDF increases the efficiency and predictability of the workflow, both within AlphaGraphics and between the company and its customers.
- Time and money spent on preflighting and file correction have decreased sharply with the use of Adobe PDF.
- Customers enjoy the rapid turnaround of reviewing Adobe PDF proofs via e-mail. AlphaGraphics saves significantly on courier service and overnight shipping.
- An Adobe PDF based workflow allows AlphaGraphics to serve Macintosh and PC customers with equal flexibility.
- The interoperability of Adobe PageMaker®, Illustrator®, Acrobat®, and PostScript facilitates file editing and exchange.
- Adobe technologies have helped AlphaGraphics build a strong foundation for its current and future digital workflow.

Farley Gates has fond memories of visiting Nashua's landmark Woolworth's building as a ten-year-old boy. Today he returns to this newly renovated building as general manager of the city's AlphaGraphics print shop. A Nashua native, Gates—along with the AlphaGraphics team—takes great pride in offering a superior customer experience to the surrounding business-to-business community. AlphaGraphics considers Adobe technologies a key element of its success.

AlphaGraphics enjoys a retail storefront on Nashua's bustling Main Street, amid sidewalk cafes and boutique clothing stores. But the bulk of its work is not from walk-in customers. Rather, AlphaGraphics markets its services to local Fortune 500 companies such as Compaq, Teradyne, McGraw-Hill, and Emery Worldwide. Adobe technologies and file formats—in particular, Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF)—are well known in these corporate customer environments, greatly improving project collaboration.

A customer focus

Although AlphaGraphics sits alongside the Nashua River, it does not attempt to “cover the waterfront” of services. The company made a strategic decision to target specific customers with a defined set of services. “With a retail storefront, it's tempting to try to be all things to all people,” explains Gates. “Our philosophy is ‘Do fewer things, and do them better than anyone else.’ This differentiates our shop from the competition and yields a high degree of customer satisfaction.”

The typical AlphaGraphics customer is a digitally savvy corporate marketing, marcom, or purchasing representative, so the company's leading-edge digital production environment perfectly suits clients' needs. A Xerox DocuColor 2045 prints short-run customized color postcards, direct mail, and presentations, while the Xerox DocuTech is ideal for black-and-white training and software manuals. Both of these systems import Adobe PDF files directly, speeding workflow immensely.

A Hewlett-Packard plotter creates trade show and presentation graphics, and an AB Dick four-color offset press supports the continual need for corporate letterhead, envelopes, forms, and business cards. A full-service finishing and bindery department completes AlphaGraphics' offerings. All the systems are supported by an Adobe PostScript workflow.

“Customers like the fact that we can handle each stage of a project, from design to bindery,” says Gates. “Meanwhile, we like it because we can control our workflow more effectively and offer the highest level of quality.”

Digital dividends

New Hampshire boasts a highly skilled labor pool, so AlphaGraphics can offer the benefits of a 99% digital workflow environment. “We receive 25% of our files via the Internet,” says Gates, “and the majority of our customers review



and approve Adobe PDF proofs via e-mail.” The benefits are far reaching: AlphaGraphics saves money on courier service and overnight mail, and customers enjoy more rapid project turnaround. “It’s not unusual for our customers to submit projects with a 24-hour deadline. With Adobe technology and a Web-enabled digital workflow, we can offer that level of service,” says Gates. But this level of automation was not built overnight.

Investing in education

Before Adobe PDF was introduced, AlphaGraphics would receive up to two CDs and five ZIP disks for a simple data sheet project. Agreeing to tackle these projects to build key customer relationships, AlphaGraphics initiated a program to educate clients on preparing files for optimum workflow. “We showed our clients how to use Adobe technologies to build their files,” explains Gates. “The result was a smoother production process and a highly appreciative—and loyal—customer.”

“Many of our clients are already familiar with Adobe products, so when new applications or versions are introduced, they come up to speed quickly,” reports Suzanne Quagliozi, design specialist at AlphaGraphics. She receives files in Adobe PDF, as well as Adobe PageMaker, Photoshop, and Illustrator files. “The interoperability between all Adobe products also makes file edit and exchange much easier.”

In addition to designing, preflighting, and correcting files, Quagliozi and colleague Jonathan Wolf devote significant effort to training clients in proper file preparation techniques. “Receiving more client files in Adobe PDF has greatly improved file integrity, maintainability, and

speed of processing,” says Quagliozi, “so the time spent educating our customers is a good investment.” In addition to these workflow benefits, the compact size of Adobe PDF files makes it easier for AlphaGraphics to receive high-quality files via its FTP site.

Wolf, a former press operator, often travels to customer sites to provide hands-on tutorials on making print-ready Adobe PDF files. “Now we can import Adobe PDF files directly into our DocuColor 2045 and DocuTech digital printers, which really simplifies and speeds production. I’m on the road a lot less these days, thanks to PDF,” he reports.

Adobe-enabled advances

With increasingly sophisticated customers, AlphaGraphics is positioned to add more Web-based automation to its workflow. Consistent with its focus on leading-edge support with a personal touch, AlphaGraphics is now offering key clients a customized Web site for project collaboration. Customer data and preferences are input and stored, which facilitates subsequent projects and transactions. Gates sees this most recent service as an extension of AlphaGraphics’ digital workflow offerings, enabling him to serve a broader set of clients—from anywhere, at any time.

“Advances in our production workflow have been enabled by Adobe technologies, from page layout, trapping, and file correction; to file transmission and digital proofing; to importing Adobe PDF files directly into our printing systems,” concludes Gates. “AlphaGraphics is able to streamline production, differentiate its services, and build these specialized offerings with a solid foundation in Adobe and Adobe products.

TOOLBOX

Adobe Acrobat
Adobe Illustrator
Adobe PageMaker
Adobe Photoshop®
Adobe PostScript
AB Dick four-color offset press
HP DesignJet 2500
Xerox DocuColor 2045
Xerox DocuTech 135



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