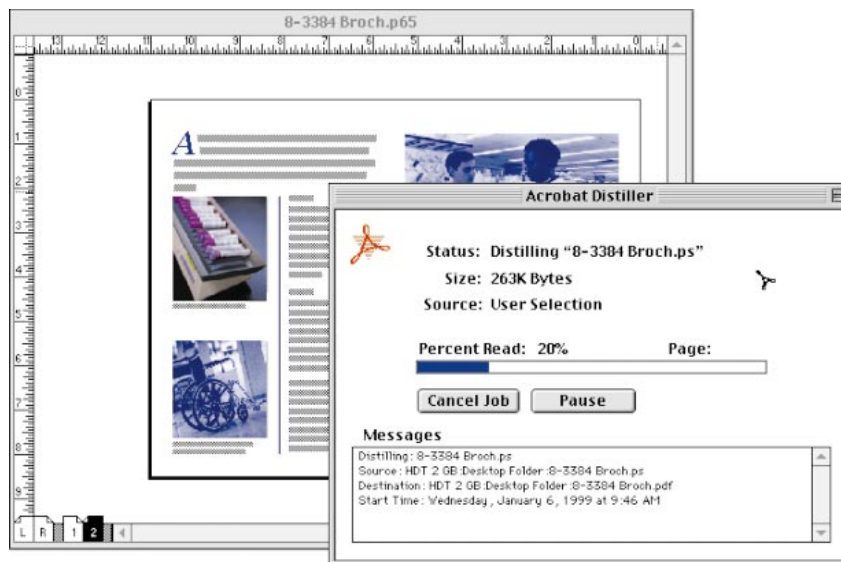


AlphaGraphics, Inc.

Printing Firm Streamlines Workflow in Its Stores and Reduces the Cost of Its Operations Manual 75 Percent With Adobe Acrobat Software

Adobe® Acrobat®



AlphaGraphics relies on Adobe Acrobat and PDF to streamline its print production workflow. Using Acrobat Distiller® software, customers convert print jobs to compact PDF files that contain all necessary fonts and graphics in a single file, eliminating errors associated with missing files during the printing process.

Key Benefits

- PDF files print correctly 90 percent of the time, compared to 35 percent for native file formats.
- By using PDF to facilitate design review, AlphaGraphics shaves days off the process, improves its customer service, and eliminates shipping costs.
- Adobe Acrobat decreases the cost of printing manuals fourfold—from \$37.50 to \$9—by enabling creation of compact PDF files for CD-ROM publication.
- Publishing manuals in PDF improves usability by enabling searches.
- Acrobat facilitates Web publishing by creating small files that maintain exact fidelity with the printed version and can be viewed on any platform.

AlphaGraphics takes seriously its commitment to leverage technology to deliver superior service and quality. That commitment has translated to success: AlphaGraphics has franchised more than 270 stores in the United States and 85 internationally in over 20 countries. Now AlphaGraphics has begun achieving unprecedented efficiency in its print production workflow—and cutting costs at headquarters—using Adobe Acrobat software.

Improved Workflow in Design Services

Like many printers, AlphaGraphics receives designs from its customers in a variety of native file formats—from Adobe PageMaker® and QuarkXPress files to various graphics program files. “Accepting native application files from customers is often problematic because of missing files, missing fonts, or corrupt or incorrectly created graphics,” says Gary Howell, profit center manager for design services. “In fact, only 30 to 40 percent of the jobs submitted in native file formats

print correctly on the first try.” Logjams affect every department: “When a job that is supposed to be on press is missing fonts, the logjam also stops our bindery and offset printing operations, affecting our productivity, profitability, and reputation as a quality service provider.”

These problems are common to all printing firms, and those firms that find a way to ensure jobs are completed on time and without additional costs can achieve a significant competitive edge. That’s why AlphaGraphics now encourages its customers to submit jobs as Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) files instead of native application files. “Ninety percent of PDF files print correctly the first time,” says Howell. “If they don’t, the problem is typically a client oversight, such as an incorrectly specified color.”

PDF improves AlphaGraphics stores’ print production workflow in several ways. First, PDF ensures that every page of the document will appear exactly as the author intended,

with all fonts, graphics, and other layout characteristics intact. "PDF virtually eliminates font errors, which account for 65 to 75 percent of all errors in our printing process," says Howell. Second, "Print jobs run faster because PDF files are about one-tenth the size of native application files, which translates to 90 percent less information traveling over the network and 90 percent less time spent in raster image processing and printing." And third, because Acrobat software is an Adobe PostScript® interpreter, it can be used as a preflighting tool, informing the customer of any problems, such as missing fonts or files, before the file is submitted.

Adobe Acrobat offers AlphaGraphics several other advantages for streamlining the production process. Store employees can use Acrobat to make minor edits, such as fixing typos in a customer's file, just before printing. Designers also can preview and print selected pages. And, because PDF files are device-independent and don't have embedded print drivers, AlphaGraphics can print to a variety of output devices.

"Soft Proofing" Saves Time, Improves Customer Service

Some AlphaGraphics stores are gaining hard benefits from "soft proofing," also made possible with Adobe Acrobat software. Ordinarily, customers either have to visit the store in person to proof their artwork or settle for a low-resolution, black-and-white fax. In the new workflow, the designer creates the layout for the customer as usual, but then uses Acrobat software to create a PDF file, which is published to an FTP or Web server. Customers use Acrobat Reader software, available free from Adobe's Web site, to view the file exactly as it would print.

Soft proofing not only improves customer service, but it also shaves days from the review cycle time and reduces costs. "PDF files cost nothing to produce beyond a few minutes of labor," says Howell.

CD-ROM-based Manual Slashes Costs by 75 Percent

AlphaGraphics also is realizing cost savings from Adobe Acrobat software at its headquarters. Franchisees learn everything they need to know about operating an AlphaGraphics franchise from a 700-page, four-volume operations manual, created with Adobe PageMaker software. Headquarters revises the document each year and redistributes the complete set to each store. In the past, the company printed copies for each store, at \$27.50 apiece, and then shipped them, for \$10. This year, AlphaGraphics is distributing the manuals in PDF on CD-ROMs. Total cost: \$9 instead of \$37.50, for a fourfold cost savings amounting to more than \$9,000 annually.

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—Gary Howell
Profit Center Manager

When the PageMaker files are approved, the writer simply chooses the Export Adobe PDF menu item to create PDF files, which are then published on CD-ROM. "With the integration of Acrobat and PageMaker, we can produce an electronic version of our documentation that maintains complete

fidelity with the printed version—in a single step with virtually no additional costs," says Howell. In fact, AlphaGraphics also publishes documents such as employee bulletins and customer guides as PDF files on its internal and external Web sites.

The advantages of PDF files for distributing documentation extend beyond cost. Waste is eliminated because stores can print out only those sections they need. Also, store employees can easily navigate through the documents—to locate job descriptions, for example—because all table of contents and index entries are hotlinked. AlphaGraphics fully indexes the files using Acrobat Catalog software, enabling easy searches both within and across multiple PDF files.

Superior Customer Service

AlphaGraphics anticipates continual improvements in its digital prepress workflow as more customers begin using Adobe Acrobat. The company encourages the use of Adobe Acrobat in its *Digital Output Guide*. The guide, which will soon be available in print and on the Web, explains to customers how to submit print jobs. "PDF ensures that files print correctly the first time," says Howell. "This streamlines our design workflow and strengthens customer service."

AlphaGraphics, Inc. Systems At-A-Glance

Software

Adobe Acrobat
Adobe Acrobat Catalog
Adobe PageMaker

Hardware

Apple Power Macintosh computers
PCs running Windows® 95
DocuTech, Fiery,
InfoPrint 60 output devices

Adobe Systems Incorporated
345 Park Avenue
San Jose, CA 95110-2704 USA

Adobe Systems Pty. Ltd.
Level 4, 67 Albert Avenue
Chatswood, NSW 2067
Australia

Adobe Systems Europe Limited
Adobe House, Mid New Cullins
Edinburgh EH11 4DU
Scotland, United Kingdom

Adobe Systems Co., Ltd.
Yebisu Garden Place Tower
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