

Creating efficiencies

Trends driving innovation in packaging, print related processes, and pre-media production

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PACKAGING PRINT RELATED PROCESSES:
STAGES OF PACKAGING CREATION THAT TAKE PLACE BETWEEN THE COMPLETION OF DESIGN AND ACTUAL PRINTING, TYPICALLY COMPRISED OF (BUT NOT LIMITED TO) ARTWORK, REPROGRAPHY, AND COLOR PROOFING. ALSO KNOWN AS ARTWORK AND REPRO, PRE-MEDIA, AND/OR PRE-PRESS.

There were many lessons to be learned during the great recession of 2008-2010. For most smart business leaders, these lessons, such as having savings in the bank, reducing debt, and having a leaner, more efficiently run company, will likely remain an integral part of their business plans for years to come. These companies are now seeking greater efficiencies across all processes, core and non-core, in an effort to reduce waste, costs, and time-to-market.

For smaller local and regional companies, one area of business which has long resisted efforts to tame, slim, and optimize, is packaging print

related processes. It is simply too difficult for a smaller company to bring resources to bear on what is essentially a non-core function. The management of the entire technical process is largely left in the hands of a small marketing team that relies on a network of suppliers to recommend the best procedures, processes, and prices. Needless to say, this is equivalent to letting the cat among the pigeons.

As Andre de Koning, Board member of Cocoon Group states, “The largest budget in the packaging process is pre-press and printing, and yet, this is treated in the least systematic manner”

TAKING LEARNING FROM MULTINATIONALS

Larger multinational companies have known for years now that savings were possible in print related processes and have tried a number of solutions with varying levels of success- from outsourced print management consultancies and internal departments devoted to pre-press to automated solutions.

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Now, as efficiency becomes an imperative for businesses of all sizes, the lessons from many of these experiments are morphing into the trends driving print related processes and pre-media in the coming decade. Here at CG Artworx, we have pinpointed 5 of the most important trends and explain why we feel they represent the biggest opportunities for businesses of all sizes to improve efficiency.

1 CENTRALIZATION

Centralization of pre-media creation, data, and knowledge.

Most large international companies learned long ago that managing a brand from a single point saved time, effort, and most of all, money. A centralized database of assets means that the latest files are easy to find by all relevant parties, rather than having to make phone calls or skim through email histories. While some companies have found ways to centralize all of their data and knowledge through internal departments, others have found the investment too great and instead rely on independent third parties who can supply the resources and the systems to effectively manage these assets.

2 OUTSOURCING

There are a number of agencies specialising either in the management of the entire process of brand point management or at least the print related processes. These agencies have the knowledge and expertise available to clients for a much smaller investment than would be necessary for a company to find and hire people internally. In the best case, these agencies or consultants are independent of print suppliers and can troubleshoot and find opportunities for innovation that would be otherwise difficult to get from existing networks.

3 TECHNICAL VS. CREATIVE CULTURES

One lesson that has been learned almost universally is that pre-media specialists should handle all artwork and pre-press operations rather than design studios. The reason for this is quite simple –while there are efficiencies to be uncovered in these processes, creative agencies are simply not skilled or motivated to uncover them.

In the short term, it may seem like an easy or cheap solution to have the design agency also do the artwork preparation. However, to truly optimize pre-media, it is best to hand over all files over to an agency specialized in, and motivated by, effective workflow management and the effective use of print technologies. Only then will you begin to see your errors, costs, and time to market begin to come down across all stages.

4 BRIDGING

Knowledge transfer is coming under increased scrutiny as an area where wastage, delays, and unnecessary costs seem to be particularly frequent and severe. The stage 'between stages', knowledge transfer refers to the movement of important data and information between different suppliers working under different systems and with different protocols and formats.

Some larger companies have experimented with knowledge transfer specialists, agencies, or technical specialists within their own organization, whose sole task is to make sure that information is made available in the right format as and when required. By having someone focused entirely on making sure that information and data flows quickly, efficiently, and with no mistakes, these companies have been able to realize gains with regards to cost savings, fewer delays, and quicker time-to-market for all projects.

5 WEB-BASED, CROSS-PLATFORM BRAND MANAGEMENT

The worldwide web is finally beginning to live up to the hype promised at the end of the last millennium. Speed, security, and interface issues have been overcome, and now, some online interactions (renting films for instance) are replacing traditional behaviours and relationships.

At this point in time, there are a number of project management solutions available from off-the-shelf, open source solutions to bespoke systems created with particular clients and processes in mind. The focus has now shifted from simple online access to full scope, 24/7 brand management at the touch of a mouse.

Integrating the various stages of brand management (research, strategy, design, pre-press, print, etc.) onto a single platform and giving clients full control of project tracking and management is now the latest challenge that suppliers and

software manufacturers are scrambling to meet with varying levels of success. The important takeaway from this trend is that the clients' desire for greater online access and functionality is quickly replacing the fears, scepticism, and security concerns of the past years.

Package print related processes have been a black hole for many smaller, local, and regional businesses. These highly specialized functions are seen as complex, indecipherable, and perpetually hungry for more and more cash. The fact is that these processes hold many great opportunities for optimization and cost savings.

Now, as efficiency becomes a priority for most businesses, smaller companies are looking to the examples and experiments of large multinationals to see where efficiencies can be realized. The examples cited in this document are only a few of the most telling trends that we believe are driving businesses in general.

CG Artworx considers these business trends to be guiding principles. We firmly believe that the benefits of centralizing packaging print related processes supplemented with technical specialization, superior knowledge transfer, and online workflow management are the keys to ensuring that the stages between design and printing stop being 'black holes' and eating clients' time, money, and resources.

Instead, our products and services seek to optimize these processes, removing wastage and redundancies and increasing transparency and cost savings.

For more information on how CG Artworx can bring about these benefits to your business, visit our knowledge center at **WWW.CG-ARTWORX.COM**

Or, contact us directly for a consultation:

artworx@cg-eu.com

CG Artworx

U Pruhonu 13/800 | 170 00 Praha 7 | Czech Republic

Phone: +420.222.998.590 | Cell: +420.724.723.193

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