

ECommerce (web site) automates CTP process



As seen in *Graphic Arts Monthly*

Job submissions over the web which directly feed into an unattended CTP workflow that produces plates automatically is a reality to Lason online.

- Using the Web, clients specify structured corporate documents such as business cards, stationery, envelopes and memo pads from their desks.
- A PDF file is automatically created that will be used for printing; a GIF graphic is derived from the actual PDF, which is fed back to the client in real time for approval.
- After approvals, the job is automatically imposed and a job docket created; the order is scheduled based on the priority assigned by the client.
- Requests for client approvals are sent to the appropriate people based on predetermined criteria.
- Finally, the same PDF file the client approved is sent to a platemaker to produce plates, ready to put on press; meanwhile, job ticket information is posted on the Web so clients can check status.

Further Benefits

Bruce Hillman, Lason's prepress manager, notes that, because the client controls and approves the exact file used to create the plate, traditional proofing is not required. Individuals order their own materials with the system handling approvals, he adds, relieving clients of the burden, and CTP imaging permits job turnarounds of 24 hours.

The list of companies using Lason Online's new system, which is built around a Printware PlateStream® platemaker, includes Apple computer, Monsanto, PeopleSoft, and Shlumberger.

Lason Online is a unit of Lason, Inc., Troy, Mich., a leading provider of integrated outsourcing services for the information management marketplace. Lason, has revenues in excess of \$200 million, services more than 4,000 customers and prints

upwards of 100 million documents each month.

Lason has multiple networked technology centers throughout North America; the San Francisco location prints a wide range of commercial materials for corporate clients, in addition to producing the on-line work.



Prepress manager Bruce Hillman says his firm's prepress and press staff applaud the performance of the Printware PlateStream.

Behind the Scenes

Lason Online operates its prepress and platemaking departments two shifts per day and its pressroom and bindery around the clock. Its presses include six duplicators and a Didde web press. The facility keeps an inventory of preprinted shells on hand for most clients, so only one or two colors need to be printed on short turnaround. Most business cards are printed 12-up, but more can be imposed on each plate for high-volume orders, or fewer on a plate for time-critical work.

Lason Online uses its Printware system both for new on-line business and traditional work such as financial printing.



Integrating Computer-To-Plate

“We created a high-volume system when we added Printware’s CTP unit,” says Hillman. “Previously, we used an imagesetter to expose polyester plates, but it proved not to be the right tool for the job. It was slow and its poor image-to-edge accuracy increased press makeready.”

After an extensive study, Hillman chose Printware’s PlateStream. He says, “It takes less than a minute to make a plate, which is two to three times faster than before. Also, the PlateStream plates go on the press in register, which eliminates more than half of the makeready time.”

PlateStream is also very versatile in handling various types of silver-halide media. To fill out the system, Lason specified a Harlequin RIP because of its ability to directly run PDF files, a format that allows hassle-free operation from the plate to the on-line proof. For more complex PDF imposition, Lason added Quite Imposing, a PDF plug-in.

While preparations took several months, the actual switch to CTP took less than a week. To speed installation, Printware set up key platesetter

and RIP parameters at the factory according to Lason’s requirements, then sent a technician to install the platesetter and finalize its set-up. “Our prepress people like the PlateStream’s platemaking speed, and our press operators like the improved image registration,” reports Hillman.

Future Expansion

Lason Online is adding new products such as thermography and structured documents like point-of-sale displays, data sheets, and brochures. Eventually, a true distribute-and-print model might be implemented, with platesetters at multiple plants.

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