

# Attention Shoppers: Graphic Services Implements CTP



As seen in *In-Plant Printer*

Formed in 1987, the 15-employee Graphic Services department, an in-plant of Target Corporation, handles the majority of the corporation's printing. The in-plant prints a variety of internal pieces, including on-demand forms, standard supply forms, envelopes and letterhead. In addition to internal documents, the in-plant also prints collateral, such as small signs and direct mail pieces.

Graphic Services produces primarily one, two and spot color work in run lengths ranging from 500 to 25,000 copies. Since Target's employees are free to out-source print work, Graphic Services must operate efficiently to maintain low prices. That means taking advantage of state-of-the-art technology, such as computer-to-plate.



*Andy Thrasher, manager of Graphic Services at Target Corporation, has successfully integrated Printware's PlateStream platesetter into the plant's existing workflow.*

they'd pay a premium for that kind of service. If I could increase our productivity, I could decrease reliance on outside vendors. The PlateStream enables us to meet more deadlines, which saves the organization a significant amount of money."

## Cost justification

As do most in-plants, Graphic Services used cost-justification as the primary means of validating the purchase of the CTP system. Thrasher based his justification on the savings the corporation would realize in materials and labor.

"Upper management trusted my judgment in choosing the right CTP system," he says. "They just wanted to see the numbers and know if I could show a conservative return on investment in four years."

## Why change to CTP?

Says Andy Thrasher, manager of Graphic Services, "An in-plant operation is obviously under great pressure to be competitive with outside sources. I saw an increasing demand for short-run work, which hasn't been our strong point. In addition, I wanted to improve our turn-around time, so our internal customers would have no reason to use outside vendors on jobs that we could run.

"We only operate one shift, whereas our customers could always find printers with two or three shifts to get a job done in a hurry. Of course,

## Before CTP

Graphic Services creates 80 percent of its artwork digitally. Customers provide artwork on disk about 15 percent of the time, and camera-ready art makes up the remaining five percent. Before installing a CTP system, the in-plant's prepress department output digital files directly to an image-setter or sent mechanicals to an outside vendor for film. Then, Graphic Services stripped and imposed the film to make metal plates. The in-plant processed the plates and mounted them on its Ryobi 2800, Ryobi 3302 or Multigraphics 1960 presses. (See Figure 1.)

## After CTP

Graphic Services installed a Printware PlateStream Platesetter. Now, the in-plant just sends files directly to the platesetter via a RIP, which stores platesetter page set-ups. The platesetter images, processes, cuts and dries the plates—all in one step. Plates emerge press-ready. (See Figure 2.) If a plate is damaged on press, the press operators can output a new plate without involving the pre-press department.

## The results

Graphic Services has shortened turn-around time, reduced costs and saved space.

**Faster turnaround:** "Our platemaking time has been cut in half using CTP," says Thrasher. "In addition, registration is on the money, so press makeready is faster. In general, our equipment is better-utilized, so I can get more jobs through the press."

**Reduced costs:** "By installing a CTP system, we have almost completely eliminated film and metal plates, which we were using for every job, regardless of run length," he says. "The system uses polyester CTP plates which are good for up to 25,000 impressions and appropriate for the vast majority of our work. Polyester CTP plates are less than half the cost of metal plates. We have also seen a decrease in our labor expenses. Whereas we used to spend hours stripping film, now the plates come out press-ready. All of the manual steps have been eliminated."

**Reduced space:** "We still have archives of metal plates, but, as the artwork changes or the metal plates wear out, we replace those archives with electronic files, which are stored on a server," says Thrasher. "It not only saves space, but it is also a much more organized system, and it simplifies the process of finding and updating the artwork. In the future, all of the files will be stored on a server, and the plate filing area will be significantly reduced."

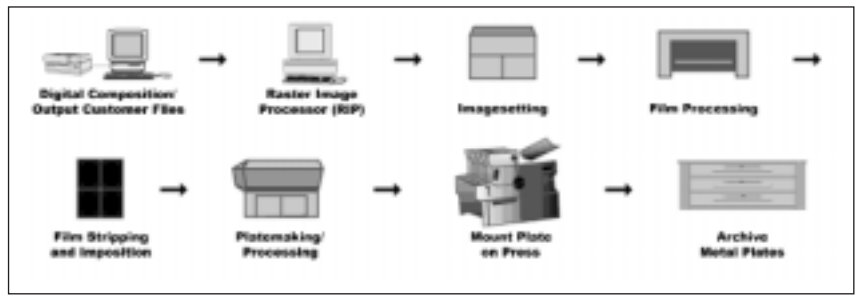


Figure 1: Graphic Services' Previous Workflow



Figure 2: Graphic Services' CTP Workflow

## Advice on implementing CTP

Thrasher recommends having a digital workflow in place before implementing CTP.

"Once you've established how you are going to handle electronic files and you've created in-house expertise, outputting to a platesetter is like outputting to any other device," he says. "Be prepared to reorganize your staff. With less time spent making plates, there is more time to focus on other parts of the process. Employees previously involved with manual processes can be retrained for other jobs, such as outputting plates on the CTP system."

"I am pleased with our transition to CTP. I believe we made the right decision for Graphic Services, its customers and the division as a whole," says Thrasher. "More importantly, shoppers at Target, Marshall Field and Mervin's stores saw no disruption and never even knew it happened."