



A consolidated workflow

Commercial printer delivers quality work—and quality service—using an online job submission system based on Adobe® PDF templates and Job Definition Format

For commercial printers, meeting deadlines is a crucial factor in customer satisfaction, and the deadline that matters most is when the printed piece arrives in the hands of the customer's customer.

A model for harnessing technology to accelerate workflow is Consolidated Graphics Group (CGG) of Cleveland, Ohio. A midsize sheetfed commercial printer with 130 employees, CGG is considered one of the most technically advanced graphic arts production companies in the North Central region of the country.

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David Minnick,
chief technology officer,
Consolidated Graphics Group, Inc.

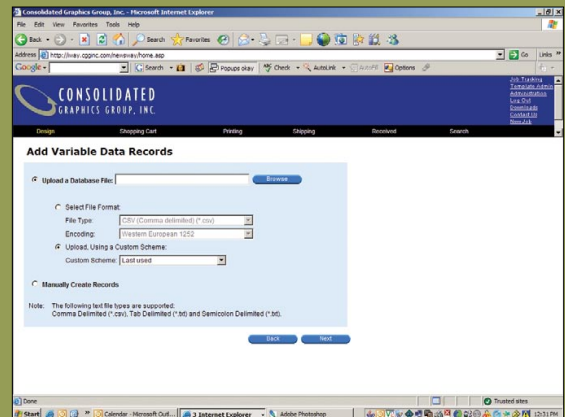
CGG’s full suite of services includes design, prepress and print, fulfillment, mailing, and delivery for jobs ranging from business cards to complex variable data printing (VDP) customized for millions of individuals. Customers include The Cleveland Clinic, Sterling Jewelers, Cleveland Indians, and other high-visibility enterprises. CGG works around the clock, scheduling jobs Monday through Friday to leave the weekends available to ensure deadlines are met.

“We work with customers concerned with quality, both of the printed piece and the service they receive,” says David Minnick, chief technology officer. To deliver the quality that its customers demand—and enable the company to take on more business—CGG takes advantage of Adobe publishing technologies.

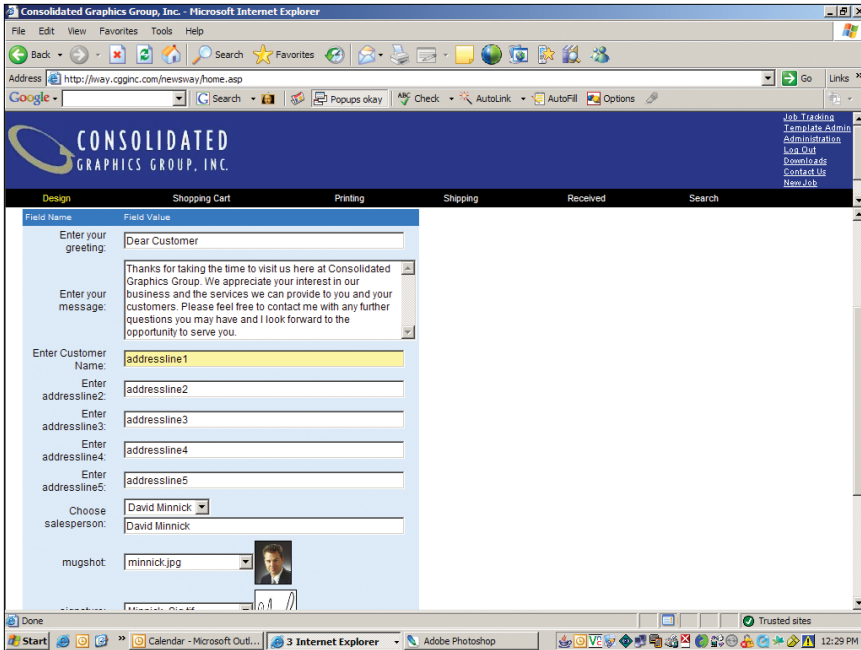
Online job submission and no preflighting

CGG’s workflow begins when customers use one of two online submission systems: either iWay Prime from Press-sense or a system that CGG developed in-house. Both systems use Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) templates to compose documents that are static like datasheets, versioned like business cards, or variable like brochures customized for each of thousands of database records. Customers who submit jobs can view the final Adobe PDF proof result before finalizing their order, sparing CGG the need to preflight these jobs, which can go straight to production. “Saving 15 minutes per job by eliminating preflighting frees up hours each day, enabling us to accept more jobs,” says Minnick.

To pull in variable data, such as customer names and custom images, CGG uses either Press-sense’s iWay Prime or Printable Technologies’ FusionPro software, online systems that also are based on Adobe PDF templates.



When customers submit variable data printing (VDP) jobs to CGG, they upload a database file containing their customer names, custom images, or other personalized content. The online VDP systems that CGG uses are based on Adobe PDF templates.



CGG's customers submit static, versioned, and variable jobs online, using a simple interface like the one shown above for a versioned job. They can view and approve the final Adobe PDF proof online, saving CGG an average of 15 minutes ordinarily spent preflighting.



Tips for VDP: Early involvement is best

For VDP jobs, CGG encourages its customers to involve the printer early in the design process. “Often a customer will hand us a completed design and a data file and ask us to produce a VDP piece,” says Minnick. Executing that request is sometimes difficult because of the way the customer has designed the page. For instance, if the customer has changed the content in the middle of a paragraph, the text needs to rewrap and might push another paragraph onto the next page. “If customers involve the printer at the design stage, we can provide this type of guidance before the design is created—for example, cautioning them to leave enough room on the page after the paragraph,” says Minnick.

One of CGG’s customers, which services automobile dealership service departments, won the Digital Printing Initiative’s prestigious PODi award for the sheer number of variables in an 11x17-inch document. Every element on the page was a variable, including name, type of car, service engineer, vehicle specs, date of last maintenance, services needed, and coupons for services needed.

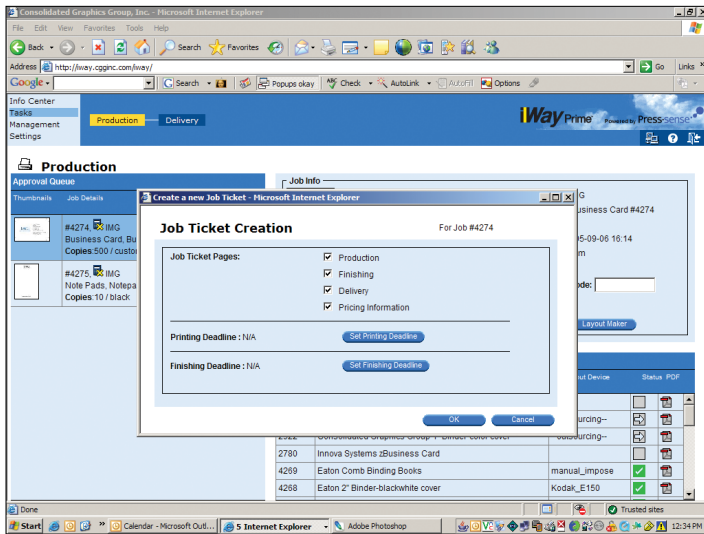
Connecting the design and print communities

Virtually all files that CGG receives are designed in Adobe Creative Suite 2, and CGG designers use it exclusively. “We’ve seen a tremendous migration to Adobe Creative Suite,” Minnick notes.

Built-in tools in Adobe InDesign® CS2 software provide all the capabilities CGG needs for prepress, including built-in preflighting layers for creating versioned documents or varnishes, and transparency for natural drop shadows and effects. Having built-in tools in InDesign eliminates the need to purchase third-party tools and train staff to use them—and also reduces the time spent on each job by 10% to 20%. “Customers often say something like, ‘Here’s my job, but it should be six colors instead of ten and the spot varnish is in the wrong place,’” Minnick says. “With Adobe Creative Suite 2, it’s much faster to make those changes while retaining the customer’s original content. Adobe listened to the print community and evolved Adobe Creative Suite 2 so that it treats design as a means to an end rather than an end in itself.”

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Integrated with Adobe InDesign CS2, Job Definition Format (JDF) describes every step in CGG's workflow for a particular project. Every person who interacts with the file has access to the job ticket, which helps avoid misunderstandings that could otherwise delay timely job completion.

Job Definition Format—escorting the file through the process

Among the foremost goals for today's print service providers, according to Minnick, is unifying previously separate workflows or "trying to manage a job as a single project instead of separate pieces." A barrier until now has been the struggle to communicate information between the various workflow phases: concept through design, production, delivery, and even customer feedback.

CGG has been able to integrate workflow throughout all phases of production by using Job Definition Format (JDF), which is built into Adobe Creative Suite 2. JDF describes the intent of the printed piece as well as each process step required to achieve that intent. "The JDF file is like a job ticket, indicating, for example, that the file should be a 16-page, 8x11-inch, two-color job," says Minnick.

CGG captures the customer's job information during online submission and then uses this information to generate the JDF job ticket that streamlines the print process. The JDF file subsequently accompanies the job through every stage of the workflow, avoiding the need to rekey the project information at each stage and also helping to eliminate misunderstandings

as a job progresses to the next stage. "With JDF, Adobe has done a wonderful job making sure that Adobe Creative Suite 2 exchanges information both upstream and downstream," Minnick says.

Adobe Solutions Network

A member of the Adobe Solutions Network (<http://partners.adobe.com/public/asn/psp/detail.html>), CGG uses the program's resources to remain at the vanguard of print service providers. Membership benefits include monthly newsletters; technical resources such as bulletins, white papers, and toolkits; and free customer referrals through the Adobe Partner Finder. For CGG, the most valuable membership benefits to date have been access to software prereleases and white papers concerning Adobe Acrobat® software, print-ready files, and transparency issues. Everyone in the prepress department reads the *Read Me Now* newsletter.

"Printers touch so much of the project in addition to the actual printing that customers want to know that we understand the entire process," says Minnick. "JDF and the integration among the tools in Adobe Creative Suite 2 help us work more efficiently throughout the design, preflighting, prepress, and printing processes to meet our clients' deadlines."

Company

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Challenges

- Unify workflow from submission to delivery
- Meet client deadlines

Solution

- Avoid the need for preflighting by using online submission systems based on Adobe Acrobat and Adobe PDF templates
- Transmit job information throughout all stages of workflow, in a JDF file
- Use Adobe Creative Suite 2 for design, preflighting, and prepress

Benefits

- Avoid preflighting on files submitted online with Adobe PDF templates, saving 15 minutes per job and hours per day
- Reduce time needed for preflighting, when necessary, by 10% to 20%

Toolkit

- Adobe Creative Suite 2. Components used include:
 - Adobe Illustrator® CS2
 - Adobe InDesign CS2
 - Adobe Photoshop® CS2
 - Adobe Acrobat 7.0
- Macintosh computers with Mac OS X and PCs with Microsoft® Windows® 2000 and Windows XP
- 10-color, 28x40-inch Heidelberg press
- 6-color, 28x40-inch Heidelberg press
- HP Indigo 3050 press for color VDP jobs
- Xerox and Kodak presses for black-and-white VDP jobs

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