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REPRO REPORT

Features

Columns

Becoming Digital Services Savvy

Michael Shaw
President
2005-2006

As we as an industry become more computer savvy, we are facing an ever growing number of file formats and levels of complexity.

Our ability to convey an understanding of these file formats presents an opportunity to process these files, and yes, charge for this service. But we must be willing to expand beyond our traditional customer base.

Two facts come to mind: First, members of the AEC community are not the only ones using computers, and second, more and more computer files are finding their way to paper. We must continue to uncover, as well as be the match for, these opportunities.

In our quest is our industry's portfolio demonstrating our expertise in providing quality service for a fair price. We have managed high-profile, multimillion-dollar, time-sensitive projects, in some cases over years. We process hundreds if not thousands of documents and files and their corresponding revisions to see these projects to successful completion. We have been at the forefront in the development of printing and digital printing technologies as well as many of the finishing processes that further enhance the quality and deliverability of these products. And now we manage and maintain these jobs electronically regardless of their origins. Many of us have become well versed in the areas of computer databases, backup, file transmission and archiving.

If we haven't done it already, we need to establish our role in providing digital services and the appropriate charges for them. These digital services not only support all of our printing endeavors, but also are billable support services in their own right. As more and more of corporate America is outsourcing "support" to other countries, we all have heard the problems of getting fast, courteous, understandable support. These, I believe, are untapped opportunities to expand our bottom lines.

While many of us continue to break out these digital services with our present customer base and meet with varying degrees of success, we must set the tone early on with any new customer, certainly if they are in a non AEC market.

So, where does one get digital services savvy? There are numerous ways, starting with your IRgA membership and the benefit of reading *REPRO REPORT*, participating on the Forum e-mail list with your peers, and of course, at the IRgA Convention and Trade Show during many of the numerous educational sessions and networking opportunities.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank all of those who attended this year's convention. For those who could not, how much longer can you afford to stay away?

Remember that we are approaching the regional association convention season. These conventions are a great way to network with your peers locally and get some valuable education sessions. I had the privilege of attending a number of these last year and brought back benefits that we implemented upon my return.

I continue to increase the networking that I do both in and out of business. It is amazing to me how many untapped opportunities are available. Even when I visit with our existing customers, I am amazed at how many common interests we share. While I am careful not to advocate becoming everybody's best friend, people do buy products and services from people they like. When you put a face and personality on your business, instead of just a name and e-mail address or phone number, people will feel more comfortable reaching out to you, especially in a time of need. And the last time I checked, we are all in the needs-fulfillment business! ●

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WHEN IMAGING MATTERS

Oracal and CeeLite Form Strategic Marketing Partnership

Media company Oracal USA and CeeLite, maker of light-emitting capacitor (LEC) technology, recently announced the formation of a strategic marketing partnership. CeeLite's LEC technology can be used as illumination for signage, trade show and exhibit design, sports and entertainment events, architecture and design, point of purchase displays and photography.

Oracal USA will work with CeeLite to develop substrates that can be used with CeeLite technology as a backlit medium for outdoor advertising as well as commercial and architectural graphics applications.

Study: Demand for Finishing Increases

A new report from the Post Print Manufacturers Association (PPMA) details the growth in demand for mounting and laminating services.

The report, based in part on previous industry studies, discusses the impact of flatbed inkjets and roll-fed eco-solvent printers and finds that finishing services are more dynamic than ever.

"Successul graphics producers have come to a new appreciation of the value of finishing in general," says PPMA Executive Director Al Boese. "For example, finishing professionals understand that laminating provides far more value to an image than protection. Customers today expect a turnkey graphic product and not just a print."

The full report is available for free download at www.printfinish.org/paper.html.

OfficeMax, Staples Add Wide-Format Color

Staples Inc., the world's largest office products company, has added large-format color printing to its list of services. The company has signed a deal with Hewlett-Packard Co. to install 24" HP Designjet 130nr printers at more than 1,250 U.S. stores. In addition, Staples has added 42" Designjet 5500 UV printers to 16 hub locations, larger facilities that support the smaller stores.

The deal gives Staples a new revenue stream, and HP gets a larger share of the wide-format graphics market.

OfficeMax is also getting into the wide-format market. Canon USA, Inc., has announced that more than 500 OfficeMax Print and Document Service (PDS) Centers will install 24" imagePROGRAF W6400 pigment ink printers, which can produce poster-sized photos, visual aids and graphs, and customized posters and signage.

"We are proud to grow our relationship with OfficeMax superstores. OfficeMax's use of our imagePROGRAF printers is proving to be the perfect example of creating value and opportunity for customers and individual stores with large-format printing," says Tod Pike, senior vice president, Imaging Systems Group, Canon U.S.A., Inc.

Survey: Digital Printing Equipment Sales Up

A recent survey by the Specialty Graphic Imaging Association (SGIA) reports the number of sales of screen and digital printing equipment for the past year rose at almost an equal level.

Of the industry professionals surveyed, 38% say they bought screen printing equipment and 42% percent bought digital equipment in the last year. Approximately 13% of respondents say they invested in both technologies.

A majority of customers who bought roll-to-roll inkjets in the past year chose solvent (67%) over aqueous (31%) or UV-curable systems (24%). In the next 12 months, the number of buyers planning to invest in aqueous slipped to 11%, while those interested in solvent inks jumped to 82%. Customers planning to buy UV-curable systems rose to 40%.

While only SGIA members can receive the complete report, a one-page summary of the results is available at www.sgia.org.

News Bits

Management Promotions at Cushing

Cushing & Color Chicago recently announced several promotions. **Jorge Galvan** has been promoted to manager of digital services. He has been with Cushing nearly 16 years and has worked his way up through the company. **David Parkes** has been promoted to director of IT services, where he will be in charge of the IT personnel. He has been with the company more than eight years. **Gary Cortez** will be Cushing's new systems integration coordinator. He joined the company two years ago.

Sepialine Appoints Regional Manager

Sepialine has appointed **Michael Becker** as general manager for the United States Eastern Region. Becker joins Sepialine from Equitrac, where he worked extensively in the cost recovery market. Becker will serve the Atlantic seaboard with an emphasis on the New York, Boston and Washington, D.C. metropolitan regions. With a focus on Sepialine's core industries-architecture, engineering, advertising, reprographics and legal-he will work closely with Sepialine Authorized Resellers and strategic customers to implement and educate customers about Sepialine solutions.

DuPage Copy and Blueprint Acquired

Digital Printing Center has acquired DuPage Copy and Blueprint and The Mailery of Glen Ellyn. The new company, Digital DuPage, will remain at its current location, 20 S. Park Blvd. in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

The acquisition will bring the same full-service reprographic services-including CAD printing, digital copying, HP Indigo color printing, facilities management, LightJet large-format color, trade show graphics, banners and vehicle wraps-to DuPage County as Digital Printing Center provides to its downtown Chicago clients.

Transilwrap Celebrates 75 Years

Chicago-based Transilwrap Company, Inc., recently celebrated its 75th year in business. Celebration activities include special recognition of Chariman **Herbert M. Drower**, who has spent 45 years with the company.

Transilwrap was founded in 1931 as a provider of cellophane films. The company now has three divisions-Lamination, Packaging Films and Printable Plastics-and operates six facilities in the United States and three in Canada.

"I want to thank our employees, past and present, for their hard work and dedication in bringing Transilwrap to the forefront of our industry," said **Mark Stevens**, president. "I also want to thank our customers and suppliers who have helped us build the kind of relationships that have kept Transilwrap on the competitive edge."

Queen City Adds Kentucky Office

Evendale, Ohio's Queen City Reprographics has a new location in Covington, Kentucky. Queen City Reprographics of Northern Kentucky opened in early June.

Detroit-Area Shops Merge

Three Southeast Michigan repro shops owned by American Reprographics Company – Dunn Blue Reprographic Technologies, Entire Reproductions & Imaging Solutions, and Westside & Detroit Reprographics – have been merged. The combined company will be named Dunn Blue Reprographics.

Dunn Blue now has six locations around Detroit and Ann Arbor.

New Office for eBlueprint

eBlueprint has opened a second office in downtown Denver. The shop will specialize in servicing the downtown market within three miles of the city center.

The new office, located at 1408 Wazee Street, will be directed by the company's veteran operation manager, **Rachel Meyer**.

ARC Buys T-Square

American Reprographics Company has acquired Miami's T-Square Reprographics. T-Square Reprographics, founded in 1924, has five locations and is the oldest and largest reprographics firm in Miami.

"We're thrilled to have the T-Square team on board," said American Reprographics Company's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, S. "Mohan" Chandramohan. "This acquisition is strategic to ARC's presence in South Florida and supports the company's continuing efforts to build its presence in major metropolitan markets across the United States."

Personnel News at A&E

Richard Lira has been named sales manager for A&E – The Graphics Complex in Houston. Richard joined A&E in February 2004 and has 24 years of experience in the printing industry. **Regina Bunns** has been appointed branch store manager for A&E Downtown and Medical Center locations. She has been with A&E for seven years. **Lori Sebastian** joins A&E as an account manager for auto dealerships, home builders, non-profit organizations, and financial institutions. She has six years of sales experience in the printing industry. **Clint Langford** has been named customer service manager for A&E's headquarters location. He has been with A&E for six years starting in customer service and moving on to technical training and programming. **Steve Brod** has been promoted to vault manager where he will manage digital file storage. He has been with A&E for eight years. **Hector Lopez** has been named assistant vault manager. He joined the company three years ago.

IRgA Announces New Board Members

At the Annual Business Meeting which was held during the IRgA's 80th Annual Convention and Trade Show, the IRgA announced its 2006-2007 Board of Directors slate.

President
Mike Carter
Lynn Imaging
Lexington, KY

Vice President
Bryan Thomas
Thomas Reprographics
Richardson, TX

Secretary/Treasurer
Dan Stephens
Georgia Blueprint/QRS
Alpharetta, GA

Vendor Director
Earl Buchmann
Kyocera Mita America
Fairfield, NJ

Director
Robert Roperti
Jiffy Reprographics Inc.
Clearwater, FL

Director
Kip Young
Kal-Blue Reprographics
Kalamazoo, MI

Remaining on the board as directors are Michael Shaw, Central Blueprint Corp., Great Neck, NY; Mike Cully, AIR Graphics, North Quincy, MA; Chuck Hayes, OCB Reprographics, Irvine, CA; Woodie Rush, Plan Express Inc., Memphis, TN; Gary Wilbur, R.S. Knapp/Napco, Lyndhurst, NJ; and remaining as vendor director is John Cronin, PLP Digital Systems Inc., Arlington, VA. The new board begins its term August 1, 2006.

The 2006 IRgA Operating Ratio Study

The IRgA's 2006 Operating Ratio Study is packed with useful, up-to-date information detailing key financial ratios in the reprographic industry.

This second edition features color charts and graphs highlighting some of the most important ratios in the industry, such as ratios for cost of goods, payroll and overhead expenses that can be used to compare your firm's performance against others in the industry. Best of all, these ratios can be used to set practical goals for attaining higher profits in 2006 and beyond.

The study also includes

- An executive summary by industry consultant and author Larry Hunt
- 27 profit and loss statements
- 14 balance sheet breakouts
- Comparisons of annual sales volume, single versus multiple locations and market size
- A "profitability worksheet" that can be used with the data in the study to improve your company's profitability and set goals for the next 12 to 24 months.
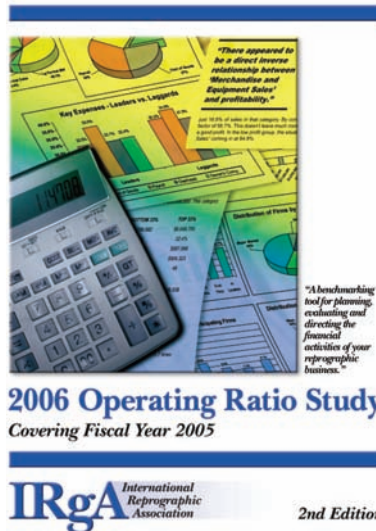
The 2006 IRgA Operating Ratio Study is now available for $99 for IRgA members ($249 for nonmembers). For more information, call the IRgA at 800/833-4742 or visit www.irga.com.

New Year New Membership– Have You Renewed?

August 1 signals the beginning of the IRgA 2006-2007 membership year. We're getting ready for another exciting year with membership benefits and programs including the continuation of the industry branding campaign, more best practices, improved education and more!

Be on the lookout for your membership continuation notice and continue your participation in the IRgA community.

If you have not received a notice, please contact us at 800/833-4742.

Branding the Reprographics Industry

An overview of the IRgA's AEC Perception Study

The following is an overview of a presentation given by IRgA President Michael Shaw and Executive Director Steve Bova during the Opening General Session of the IRgA's 80th Annual Convention and Trade Show recently held in Orlando, Florida. A report is being developed to include the full survey results and will be available within the next several weeks to all industry members.

When IRgA board member John Cronin "Googled" the word blueprint last spring, the search engine delivered 61.3 million hits. When he Googled the word blueprinter, the hits fell to 28,200. Finally, a search of the word reprographer brought the number of hits down to 10,600.

Blueprint is a household word. Everyone understands what blueprints are and what they are used for. Somehow, the word became as recognizable as Kleenex, Band-Aid and Google.

Reprographics is not a household word. Broken down, the word is simple: reproduction of graphics. However, it is much easier to describe your craft as one who makes blueprints.

Why, then, has the reprographics industry abandoned one of the best branded words of all-time for a word that nobody seems to understand, let alone accept? Does the industry have an identity crisis?

Why Brand the Reprographics Industry?

When the IRgA Board of Directors and a group of industry thought leaders gathered in Hollywood, Florida, for an intensive strategic planning session, the need to re-brand the reprographics industry became a top priority for this association. Since developing the plan, the IRgA has worked toward re-establishing the industry's identity within the AEC market. Collectively, we need to change the perception of the reprographics industry and of the value it delivers to the AEC community. The IRgA, as the only independent organization of reprographers, has accepted the responsibility to lead this effort.

What's in a Brand?

Branding is defined as a mixture of tangible and intangible attributes, experiences, images and associations that people have in their minds about a particular organization or trademark that helps distinguish products or services of one supplier or organization from another. A brand is a promise – of what it does, what it believes in and what it stands for. The power of a brand lies in its ability to influence behavior – how people make their decisions, spend their money and use their time.

Effectively communicated, a strong reprographics industry brand will:

- Generate better awareness among the AEC community for reprographers
- Generate greater awareness of the IRgA
- Build credibility for reprographics shops as well as our association
- Drive self-esteem and confidence within our industry
- Attract greater participation and perhaps more competition
- Improve our industry across the board.

What is the reprographics industry's brand promise?

What is our competitive advantage?

What problems do we solve?

How do we earn trust and loyalty from the AEC customers?

How do we create value?

What is uniquely different about using a reprographer over another kind of company?

What sets us apart?

The IRgA has attempted answer some of these important questions by conducting our industry's most comprehensive study on the current perceptions and future expectations of those in the AEC community: architectural firms, engineering firms and construction companies.

Approach/Method – Qualitative and Quantitative Research

The first phase of the initiative involved conducting qualitative and quantitative research to help guide the development of our industry's brand positioning.

Gaining Initial Feedback Through Qualitative Research. To identify and understand the broad opportunities and challenges facing our industry, several IRgA members and AEC customers participated in separate telephone interviews. The interview results provide qualitative information on primary products/services, needs, trends, challenges, competition, factors determining the use of an outside reprographer, perceptions of the reprographics industry and the unique benefit/value of using a reprographer. Members also provided input on the value and level of involvement in the IRgA, its strengths and weaknesses, and their involvement in other organizations. The results of the qualitative research were used to develop the quantitative end customer survey.

Digging Much Deeper Through Quantitative Research. From the qualitative research, and with input from the IRgA's Branding Task Force, a 26-question survey was developed to identify AEC blueprinting/reproduction needs, current and projected usage, influencers in using a specific reprographer, benefits gained by using a reprographer, perceptions of the reprographics industry, issues/challenges and professional affiliations and their value.

The Web-based survey was sent to a list of AEC customers, purchased from McGraw-Hill in December 2005, which included subscribers to ENR, Architectural Record and McGraw-Hill Construction.com. A total of 158 completed surveys were received.

The independent survey was conducted by SmithBucklin Corporation's Market Research &

Statistics Group, as a third- party consultant. All survey data submitted by individual respondents is strictly confidential. Only data in its aggregate has been released to the IRgA.

The Demographics

Respondents to the survey are primarily architects (40%), then subcontractors/general contractors (21%), engineers (10%), and estimators (10%). The majority of respondents identify themselves as being in either the architectural (49%) or construction business (46%) or both. Just 26% of the respondents work for an engineering company (Figure 1).

The majority of respondents (71%) are employed by small firms (fewer than 100 employees). The scope of their work is primarily regional. The respondents' business area is representative of the IRgA's U.S. regions (Northeast, Central, Southeast, and West).

Respondents typically need quick copying, blueprints/drawings/plans and specifications. Our industry's primary competitor is the in-house shop. Respondents typically call reprographers their printer or blueprinter, and do not see us as their partner.

In-House or Out?

A small percentage (14%) of the respondents handle their large- and wide-format reproduction needs solely in-house. Half of the respondents handle them both in-house and outside, and 36% send all of their large- and wide-format work to an outside organization (Figure 2).

Among those respondents that handle some or all of their large- and wide-format work in-house, almost half lease or rent the equipment and have their staff run the equipment; 28% of the respondents have specially trained staff running the equipment; and 14% have an outside company handle their onsite blueprinting/reprographic needs (Figure 3).
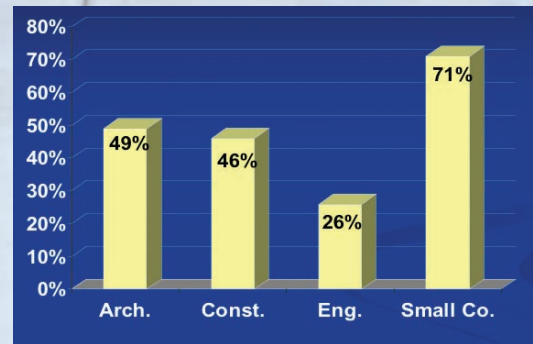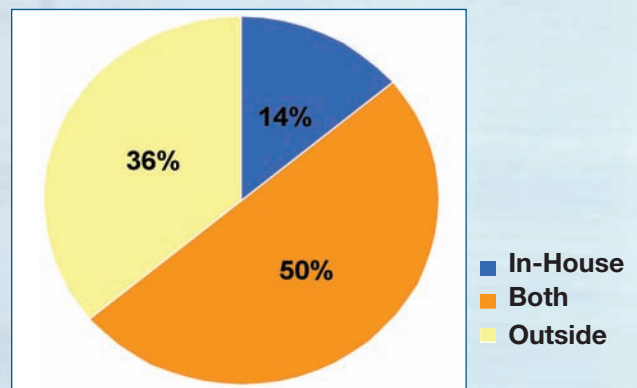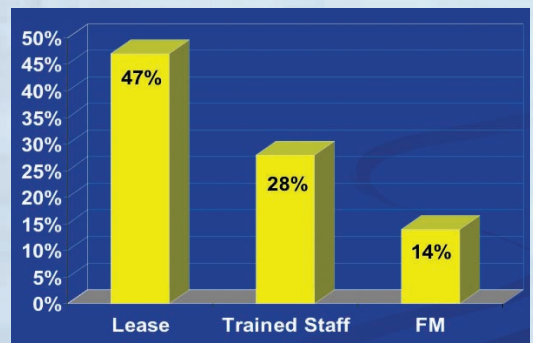

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Large Quantities, Efficiency and Turnaround Time

Among those respondents who handle their large- and wide-format work both in-house and outside, jobs are sent outside primarily due to the large quantity needed. Respondents also send jobs outside because it is more efficient and productive, or because they need a quick turnaround.

Loyalty and Respect are Earned

Respondents, on average, work with two reprographics companies and have worked with their primary reprographer for about seven years. Loyalty to one reprographer is highest among architects and lowest among construction companies. These responses represent longstanding relationships with customers and also a community that recognizes the value of our services.

Determining What Reprographer to Use

When determining whether to use a specific reprographics company, respondents are primarily influenced by accuracy, speed, quality, service attitude and convenience (Figure 4). While still important, it is interesting to note that price, skill of personnel and products/capabilities did not rank among the top four. Only construction companies ranked price as the most important factor. When evaluating how well reprographers are serving AEC needs in theses areas, reprographers are falling short, and in many instances by a large margin, of AEC expectations.

The Next Five Years…

In the next five years, the most important factor, when determining whether to use a specific reprographer, will be cost, followed by speed/turnaround time, quality and accuracy. Other important factors will be location, convenience and hours of operation. These factors were ranked similarly among the three segments of respondents.

Overall, respondents describe their reprographer as responsive, ethical, professional, and efficient. They do not see reprographers as being a partner, proactive or specialized (Figure 5).

Currently, the majority (60%) of all respondent groups always/usually use an outside reprographer for blueprints/drawings/plans. This use is projected to decrease in the next five years among all three groups but primarily among engineering and construction firms.

Other areas projecting a 5% to 10% decrease in overall AEC usage are color copying, servicing/maintenance of equipment and specifications (Table 1). For most areas, engineering firms are the primary contributor to the projected overall drop in usage. Engineering firms are also projecting decreased use in a greater number of reprographic service areas when compared to architectural firms and construction companies.

Areas projecting a 5% to 10% increase in overall AEC usage include online planrooms, electronic document management (storage, retrieval, archiving), document distribution/document integrity, managing and tracking of subcontractor information (orders, bids, contracts awarded), and protection/security of documents and/or intellectual property (Table 2). Architectural firms are the primary reason for the projected overall increase, with a significantly larger increase in projected usage compared to

When Determining What Reprographer to Use

Currently	In next 5 years…
■ Accuracy	■ Cost
■ Quality	■ Speed/turnaround
■ Speed/turnaround time	■ Quality time
■ Service Attitude	■ Accuracy
■ Cost	■ Location convenience, hours of operation

Figure 4

Describe Your Blueprinter/Reprographer

Top 6…	Bottom 6…
■ Responsive	■ Partners
■ Ethical	■ Proactive
■ Professional	■ Specialized
■ Efficient	■ Leader
■ Timely	■ Innovative
■ Knowledgeable	■ Cutting-Edge

Figure 5

What to Concentrate On

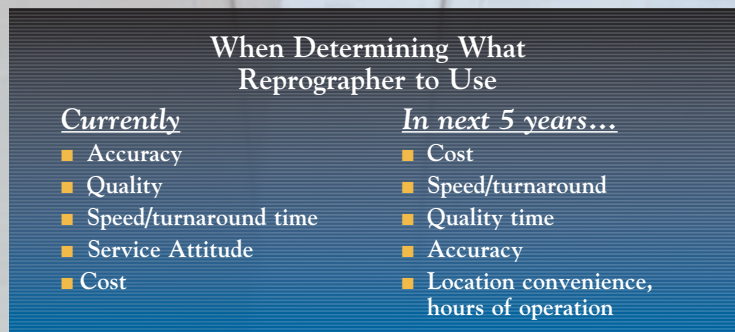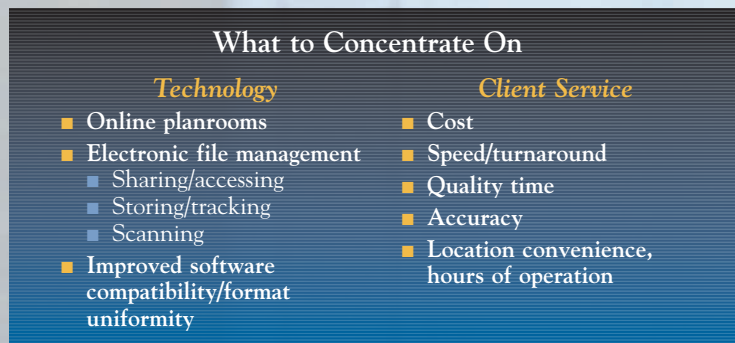| Technology	Client Service
■ Online planrooms	■ Cost
■ Electronic file management	■ Speed/turnaround
■ Sharing/accessing	■ Quality time
■ Storing/tracking	■ Accuracy
■ Scanning	■ Location convenience, hours of operation
■ Improved software compatibility/format uniformity	

Figure 6

engineering firms and construction companies. Architectural firms are also projecting increased usage in a greater number of reprographic service areas compared to engineering firms and construction companies. The only area in which engineering firms project increased usage is in online plan rooms.

Plan Rooms

About one-third (32%) of the respondents use an online plan room to manage their documents. Among this group, 57% handle the plan room internally. Architectural firms are less likely to use an online plan room and more likely to handle the application internally if they do use one. Construction companies are more likely to outsource the application.

The reprographers' unique capability is primarily their ability to handle large-format prints. Architectural firms also value their reprographer's understanding/response to the specific needs of their industry. Construction companies value their reprographer's speed and e-mail/online capabilities.

In the next five years, the biggest issues for architectural firms and construction companies will be electronic document management/ storage/archiving and electronic document distribution. Engineering firms believe the biggest issue will be electronic file management. Construction companies and engineering firms are more concerned about controlling costs.

Respondents plan to gain better staff time management/efficiency through the use of a reprographics company. They also hope to gain efficiency via the reprographers' timely document management and distribution capabilities. Construction companies also look to their reprographer to make their tasks easier.

Reprographics companies should concentrate on improving technology with regard to online planrooms, electronic file management (i.e., sharing/ accessing, storing, tracking, scanning), as well as improved software compatibility/ format uniformity (Figure 6).

Reprographers can meet the needs of their AEC customers by serving as a distribution hub and ensuring the protection/ security of documents.

Next Steps

Reprographers are great at organization and distribution of print and digital documents and images. They perform document and information management and distribution services with speed, accuracy and professionalism. For more than 80 years, reprographers have provided cutting-edge expertise, technology, and cost-effective solutions in a rapidly changing environment, so that AEC companies, owners and developers can meet critical deadlines, save time, money and resources.

The IRgA will strive to grow the reprographics market to the AEC community by:

- Promoting reprographer skills/expertise

- Making it easier/more compelling to do business with reprographers
- Offering education to enhance knowledge and professionalism
- Developing products/services that strengthen reprographer skills and business profitability
- Creating networking and communication vehicles that facilitate sharing and adoption of best practices.

In addition to a publication that includes the full research results, the IRgA is finalizing a brand marketing plan. This plan will be communicated to the entire reprographics industry for feedback, and ultimately implementation. This enormous effort will require grassroots participation from all industry reprographic associations and affiliated organizations, as well as from industry suppliers and members of the trade press. ●

Projected Decrease in Usage in Next Five Years
(By Type of Business)

	ALL	Architectural	Engineering	Construction
Color Copying	-10%	-15%	-17%	-2%
Blueprints/Drawings/Plans	-9%	-4%	-19%	-13%
Servicing/Maintenance of Equipment	-6%	-3%	-11%	-3%
Specifications	-5%	-5%	-17%	-4%

Table 1

Projected Increase in Usage in Next Five Years
(By Type of Business)

	ALL	Architectural	Engineering	Construction
Online Planrooms	8%	10%	4%	6%
Electronic Document Management (storage, retrieval, archiving)	7%	8%	0%	6%
Document Distribution/ Document Integrity	6%	8%	0%	2%
Protection/Security of Documents and/or Intellectual Property	5%	8%	0%	3%
Managing and Tracking of Subcontractor Information (orders, bids, contracts awarded)	5%	11%	0%	2%

Table 2

Big Ways to Save
Big Money
in Your Inkjet Department

By Ed Avis

That large-format inkjet printer humming away in your shop is probably an important money-maker for you. But it also can be a money drain – wasted ink and paper can cut deeply into your bottom line.

Here are some tips to save money on both your ink and paper.

Use Bulk Ink

The first thing a new inkjet user notices is how darn fast the ink runs out. Those little cartridges run dry faster than the gas tank of a Hummer! Inkjet manufacturers love that – they make far more money selling ink than printers. You don't need to keep the inkjet makers in clover, though: Using third-party, bulk ink is usually far more economical.

How much can you save using third-party ink? "On average, dye inks from Hewlett-Packard cost about 25 to 30 cents per milliliter; for refillable inks it's about 12 cents per milliliter," says Peter Sutton, senior product line manager for Charrette, a reprographics equipment and supplies vendor headquartered in Woburn, Massachusetts.

Third-party inks have long been available for Encad inkjet printers. Encad began selling its own bulk ink products early on, so it was simple for third-party suppliers to start hawking their versions of the ink.

Hewlett-Packard, on the other hand, had a lock on its supplies essentially until last year, Sutton says. They did it by having a computer chip in the cartridges that "turned off" when the ink ran out. The cartridge couldn't be refilled because the chip would still say it was empty. That chip has finally been duplicated.

"I think technology caught up with them," Sutton says. Third-party manufacturers "cracked the chip. They know how to get around it now."

Charrette is distributing HP compatible inks from Monteith. These new "plug-and-play" cartridges replace the OEM cartridges for the HP 5000/5500 inkjets. The cartridges are "hot swappable," meaning you can change them while you're printing if a cartridge runs low.

The Monteith cartridges also come in a refillable variety. That saves even more money, of course, but involves a bit more work. "They're not difficult to use," Sutton says, "but you have to follow the directions."

Another company that recently introduced HP inks is LexJet, which began shipping refilled original HP cartridges in February. "For many reasons, we have elected not to compete with OEM inks for more than ten years," stated Camillia Mankovich, LexJet's marketing director, in a written statement. "We can now confidently offer a viable alternative ink solution to our customers who are using HP 5000/5500 printing technology."

Another third-party supplier is Inkbags (www.inkbags.com). As their name implies, this company sells bulk ink in bags, which feed continuously into the cartridges. The bags contain five times the ink of a standard cartridge.

The catch with using third-party inks is that the colors are not going to be exactly the same as Hewlett-Packard colors.

"If you have a critical color application, you have to reprofile when using third-party inks, or stick with the OEM," Sutton says.

Be Smart With Your Paper

Another obvious area to save money is your media consumption. In fact, media is eating up more of your budget than ink. "When you look at the total print cost, the ink cost is usually much smaller than the ink cost," says Kevin Shimamoto, world wide market manager for wide-format inkjets at Kodak, which makes Encad inkjets (and Kodak inkjets).

First, make sure you use the narrowest width of paper possible for each job you're printing. For example, don't use a 60"-wide roll for a job that's 30" wide-you'll be trashing 30" of paper!

"I have a bazillion different widths of paper," says Greg Betty, general manager of Studio Blue in Pleasanton, California. "Our inkjet printers go up to 72", so we have material that's 72", 60", 50", 48", 42", 36" and 24" wide. That allows us to use the right width depending on the job."

Another way to save on media is to gang up print jobs. For example, if you have two 24" wide posters to print, have your software arrange them side-by-side on 60" media rather than run them one after the other.

"Use the nesting capabilities and rotate features of the printer," explains Sandy Gramley, HP DesignJet category business manager.

Gramley also recommends using your driver's "preview" feature to make sure the output will be what you expect. It's way smarter to take a minute before printing to see what's going to happen than to notice afterwards that something was screwed up.

When you're setting up a print job, take a minute to make sure you have enough ink and media to finish it. You don't want to run out of either half way.

"You have to be cognizant of how much ink you have left," Betty says. "It's the same for the roll of media. Use the media tracking tool on the printer. If you've got five feet of media left, don't print a six-foot banner."

Shopping wisely for paper also pays off. There are hundreds of paper suppliers-from coaters to converters to distributors-vying for your business. Shop around for good prices, but also keep in mind that developing a solid, long-term relationship with one or two vendors has advantages.

Also keep in mind that not all jobs will require the same level quality. A poster intended for a one-day, indoor book sale at the local library doesn't need to be printed on durable vinyl. If you can save a few dollars on the media and pass on half the savings to your customer, everyone wins.

"You should look where the image will be placed, what image quality is needed, how long it needs to last, etc.," Shimamoto says. "Will this print be viewed in an art gallery or viewed from 50' away? When you know that you can really look at the different substrates and find the low-cost solution."

Shimamoto says Kodak has been working to teach customers about different media options that might save money. "Some of the media we introduced last year are great substitutes. Economy papers and polypropylene can be used for a wide variety of applications, and they're much cheaper than the standard photo papers," he says.

Betty says the folks at Studio Blue evaluate each job from media to ink to finishing options to determine the smartest way to put it together.

"You have to take into consideration what the customer wants for the end product," Betty says. "That pretty much dictates the material we print on. We have to come up with a finished product combination that allows us to meet the clients' specifications."

Using these strategies to save ink and media should keep those invoices from your supplier a bit lower. Pass on some of those savings to your customers, and you may find your inkjet department getting busier! ●

Ed Avis is a freelance writer in Oak Park, Illinois.

Mapping Your Company's Future

By Brett Scully

This article is a continuation of the one I wrote in the May/June issue about business plans. Where we left off was…You need a business plan, just like you need a map for a trip. You don't really need it, but expect to get lost if you don't. So let's dig into how to draft the plan. A basic outline should be the first step. I think a broad set of points in the outline would contain an executive summary, an industry description, a company history, an explanation of customer base, the growth plan, staffing, organization charts and finally the financial statements and forecasts.

Let's start with what an executive summary is supposed to say. First off, who is the business plan geared towards? Maybe it's just for the bank at first, or for the owner's own use. So the executive summary should reflect that. For example, if a firm is $1.5 million in revenue, the executive summary may include a five-year plan to grow to $2.5 million in revenue. The rest of the business plan is basically the detailed points of how the executive summary is to be accomplished.

Next is the industry description. This is important for non-insiders to understand what we really do. If I tell someone I'm a blueprinter, most of the time they think I actually draft drawings for people. If I were to tell them I'm a reprographer, who knows what they may think I do? However, a detailed section like this will specifically spell out that we are like a Kinko's, only we copy big sheets. You can also get a wealth of information on the IRgA Web site that will assist you in filling in the blanks about industry size, demographics, etc.

As we dig further into the business plan, we get to the fun part: company history. This is a pretty easy part for anyone, and it is nice to actually see the history in print. This part also is helpful in letting others know about the success that the firm has enjoyed,

as well as challenges that the firm overcame in difficult times. I like the history to start with the founder, and segue into those who became key personnel over the years.

The next important area to cover in the plan is describing the customer base of the company. This part is not necessarily the same for all firms. For instance, our Denver operation is concentrated heavily in the home builder market, whereas our Cleveland operations deal mostly with architects and construction managers. Here you can also use things like pie charts to graphically show the percentage of clients and their specific disciplines.

One of the hardest yet most rewarding parts of the plan is the company growth strategy. The first step in the growth plan is determining how far ahead to look. Next year's plans can be hard enough with the changing climate of our industry, so looking out further seems to be almost impossible. But think about how lost you would be if you had to think about these things after the fact, when it might be too late. The first way to look at the future is to study the past, maybe in revenue trends over the past five years. If your growth rate has averaged 7% per year, what size might your firm be in 2011 if you used this same growth rate? Other parts of the growth could include ideas of how the revenue growth may happen. Can you open a new shop on the other side of town? Can you concentrate on selling supplies or equipment? Think outside the box, and put it on paper.

Two related areas of the business plan are firm staffing and firm organization. This is very helpful for people like bankers or consultants. Google has some great sample links of how to structure an organization chart, showing the chain of command, as well as being able to departmentalize areas of the company that may not be currently defined. This type of

worksheet can also be useful as a tool for the employees of the company, so they understand more about who is who at the company and who is responsible for what aspects of the business. The firm organization is also helpful for outsiders, because there may be differing ideas on how to look at things like tax strategies, succession plans, etc. These type of things can vary greatly depending on if the company is a C-corporation, sole proprietorship or a limited liability structure.

> *Can you open a new shop on the other side of town? Can you concentrate on selling supplies or equipment? Think outside the box, and put it on paper.*

A comprehensive set of financials is the last and probably most important part of the plan. A typical plan will look back at least three years, preferably five. Forecasts of the future are also as important as past results, because they show how the money will be made to grow the firm in upcoming years. This part of the plan should also be enlightening for the owner to see, side by side, the results of what the firm has accomplished over the past years.

All in all, a business plan must be prepared for the management of the company, even though it is secondarily useful for others dealing with the firm, like bankers, accountants and corporate attorneys. The business plan is the roadmap. If you want to travel without the map, EXPECT to get lost. ●

Brett Scully is CEO of eBlueprint Holdings of Cleveland, Ohio. You can reach Scully at bscully@eblueprint.com

80th Annual
Convention & Trade Show Recap

The IRgA 80th Annual Convention and Trade Show a Success

The IRgA 80th Annual Convention and Trade Show, May 10-12, 2006, hosted nearly 1,000 reprographers and exhibitors from around the world. The following pages show our attendees enjoying expanded educational sessions, panel discussions, a sold-out trade show packed with vendors and numerous networking events in the Florida sun.

Unable to attend? Tapes and CDs of all of the educational sessions from the 80th Annual Convention are now available. In addition to audiotapes of the presentations, we're now offering a CD-ROM featuring MP3 formats of all audio plus copies of all handouts. Go to www.irga.com and click on Convention and Trade Show to place your order.

And don't forget to save the dates for next year's convention, May 9-11, 2007 in Dallas, Texas.

Photos by Freeze Frame, unless otherwise noted.

Bukovsky Winners Advance the Industry

Chuck Gremillion, immediate past president of IRgA, presented this year's George K. Bukovsky Awards at the 80th Annual IRgA Convention and Trade Show in Orlando, Florida.

The Bukovsky Award recognizes outstanding contributions to the reprographics industry. It honors the memory of Bukovsky, who worked in the reprographics industry for more than 30 years and served as a champion for the IRgA.

"We are thrilled to present the Bukovsky Award to three individuals who represent the ideals and qualities for which the award was established," said Gremillion. "Each of this year's recipients is receiving the award for

completely different contributions to the industry, but their legacy is similar in that they helped advance the industry and our association."

Mal Baboyian, president of the Digital Document Systems division of Océ North America, led the Wide Format Printing Systems group of Océ responsible for the Technical Document Systems, Display Graphics and Imaging Supplies divisions. He built the largest direct sales/service organization in the industry and established a substantial dealer program for equipment and supply sales.

Baboyian is on the Board of Directors of Océ North America and is Chairman of the Board of Directors of

Océ Mexico. He served on the IRgA Board from 2003 to 2006.

Sathy "Mohan" Chandramohan entered the reprographics industry by joining Ford Graphics in February of 1988 and quickly expanded that company with the purchase of Graphic Reproductions in San Francisco in 1989. Mohan's American Reprographics company has acquired more than 80 companies, all governed by the business philosophy of buying and then growing those firms. In February of 2004, ARC went public on the New York Stock Exchange.

Mohan joined the Western Reprographics Association and served as its president in 1994-95. The

Chuck Gremillion presents the George K. Bukovsky Award to Carol Nelson, Mal Baboyian and Sathy Chandramohan.

success of this presidency brought Mohan to the attention of the IRgA, who invited him to join its Board of Directors in 1996. He served as IRgA president in 2002.

"Soon after joining the IRgA Board, Mohan made a substantial contribution to the industry by writing his white paper titled 'Strategies for Successful Transition in the Reprographics Industry,'" said Gremillion. "This paper introduced the concept of Global Unit Pricing and explained in detail how

reprographic shops could profitably transition from blueprinting into the new digital printing environment."

Carol Nelson's first encountered the reprographics industry in 1970 when she worked for Xerox Corporation in Davenport, Iowa. She held several positions, including senior sales representative, selling their engineering products in Houston.

When Xerox introduced its 2080 in 1981, she and her husband, John, got the idea to open their own reprographics shop, Quality Reprographics.

"They started that company with four employees and no customers," said Gremillion.

In 1997, the Nelsons sold their company to Thomas Reprographics. Today there are still employees of Quality working for Thomas Reprographics, including the Nelson children.

Carol served on the board of the Mid-South Reprographic Association and became its president in 1991. She was asked to join the IRgA Board and served as the association's president in 1995-1996. In 1996, Carol received Houston's Top 50 Women-Owned Business from the Houston Business Journal; Houston Women's Business Council Woman Business Executive of the Year for Services; and Outstanding Women in Commercial Reprographics, presented at the IRgA Convention in Vancouver by Xerox Engineering Systems.

Nominees for the Bukovsky Award must be living and meet at least two of the following criteria: have a minimum of five years of service to the reprographics industry and be a current member of IRgA; have a career that enhances the image of the reprographics industry; and have made technical innovations in the reprographics industry.

Jay Magenheim, Bill Thomas, Steen Borg and John Nelson hit the links during the annual golf outing.

Many Thanks to Our Sponsors

The IRgA Annual Convention and Trade Show wouldn't be possible each year without the generosity of our sponsors. KIP America and Océ North America, Inc., sponsored the opening session and closing keynote lunch; American Reprographics Company/PlanWell sponsored a hotel drop, banners, badge holders/lanyards and directional signs; Kyocera Mita America sponsored the Friday networking reception and a hotel drop; and Sepialine sponsored the water bottles.

Registration bag inserts were sponsored by Ervin Leasing Co., Kyocera Mita America, Michlin Products Corp., Pinnacle Infotech, Inc., and Sepialine.

Contex Scanning Technology was the premier golf sponsor. Specialty hole sponsors included KIP, National/AZON, Paradigm Imaging and PLP Digital Systems.

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Convention Recap

The 2006 IRgA Convention and Trade Show Exhibitors

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Alvin & Co
American Reprographics Company (ARC)
Business Management Software
Calculated Industries
Canon USA, Inc.
Contex Scanning Technology
Cylix, Inc.
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Drytac
eDistribution
EFI
Ervin Leasing Company
GBC
GEI Wide Format Solutions
Hewlett-Packard
Image Products of California
KIP
Kyocera Mita America
MV Software Company
Mark Bric Display Corp.
Michlin Products Corp.

Nashua Corporation
National/Azon
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Paradigm Imaging Corp.
Pinnacle Infotech, Inc.
PLP Digital Systems
Precision Paper
Promark Technology
Quality Media & Laminating Reprographic Technology
ReproMAX
Ricoh Corp.
Seiko Infotech
Sepialine
Spicer Corp.
SuperBrush LLC
Technesis
Technical Image Products
Techparts
Thoroughbred Software
Triangle Reprographics
TST/Impreso
Unibind
Valley Supplies, Inc.
Vertigraph, Inc.
Wide Format Imaging
Xerox

Speakers and Education

Keynote speaker and sales guru Jeffrey Gitomer, author of The Little Red Book of Selling *and* Customer Satisfaction is Worthless, Customer Loyalty is Priceless*, works the crowd during his main stage session.*

Clarke Langrall, Jr., presents "Advanced Planning Techniques for Business Owners," his unique seminar on gaining long-term financial success.

Chuck Gremillion moderates the panel discussion "Best Practices in Charging for Digital Services," featuring Betsy Kahn and Chuck Hayes, members of the IRgA Digital Services Committee.

Opening session speaker David Watkins, chairman and senior principal of WHR Architects, offers his perspective on the direction of the AEC industry and its effects on the reprographics industry.

Networking

The convention provides numerous opportunities to meet new people, catch up with old friends, see the latest technology and share business ideas.

At the All-Industry Networking Reception, outgoing president Michael Shaw poses with some of the IRgA staff members who make the convention run smoothly—from left, Nicole Boland, Tracy Garcia, Maura McVey and Greta Nitzke. (Photo by Anne Yearsich)

Service Schmervice!

Advance to super customer service by following the lead of these three shops

By Ed Avis

Do you keep your shop open late to finish a big job for a good customer? Do you quickly fess up when you've made a mistake? Do you hand out boxes of chocolates to good customers at Christmas?

Stop patting yourself on the back! That stuff's chump change compared to what some of your colleagues are doing.

Read on for three stories of REAL customer service. When these three repro pros flex their customer service muscles, customers swoon!

What Happens in Vegas… Gets Fixed in Vegas

Lisa Mawson, vice president of operations for OCB Reprographics in Southern California, says her firm has a clear philosophy when it comes to customer service: "Whatever it takes for the client. We don't sit there and try to analyze it – is it our fault, is it their fault – we just get it done for the client. We make sure our clients have what they need."

Mawson's favorite example of their superior customer service happened about two years ago. OCB put together several large presentation pieces – full-color LightJet prints mounted under clear Plexiglas – for a client's tradeshow booth. It was a big project, two or three weeks of work. OCB wrapped up the job just days before the show, and shipped the panels directly to Las Vegas.

The next morning, a nightmare call from the client: SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH THE PANELS!

Now, inferior reprographers might have shrugged their shoulders, thrown up their hands, groaned a few excuses. Not OCB.

Eric Graydon, OCB's digital color manager, was on the next flight to Vegas. When he got there, he discovered that somehow moisture had seeped between the print and the Plexiglas. The prints themselves weren't seriously damaged, but the moisture was clouding the image.

Graydon gathered up the panels and drove to Mercury LDO, a sister company to OCB. At Mercury, Graydon took the panels apart and ran them through a lamination press to dry out the prints. He let them sit overnight, then put all the pieces back together again. Perfect!

He drove them back to the convention center in the nick of time – and saved the day for his client.

How much did this adventure cost? Who cares? It's all in a day's work at OCB.

"We look at it like our customer's reputation is our reputation," Mawson explains.

Cross-Town Delivery? Small Potatoes!

Do you brag when your delivery truck slogs through city traffic to pick up a job from a client deep in the suburbs? Try doing delivery and pick-up for Nevada Blue in Reno.

Most delivery and pick-up work for Nevada Blue is routine stuff – Reno's a decent-size city, and there's plenty of work right in the metropolitan area. But get outside the city and

suburbs, and you're in the middle of nowhere. And distances in nowhere can be doggone serious!

Judy Brooks, co-owner of Nevada Blue with her husband Jerry, remembers two times when those extreme distances prompted the firm to demonstrate its capacity for award-winning customer service.

About a year ago a local customer brought in a big set of prints to be copied. Everything was normal, except some sheets were not there. "They had brought us the bulk of the job, but some hard copies were missing," Brooks remembers.

Turns out those missing hard copies were in the possession of an architect who lived in the woods, 200 miles away! And he wasn't about to drive to Reno to deliver them to the Nevada Blue.

"So we drove three or four hours to his place and brought the prints back," Brooks says. "We were lucky there wasn't any snow on the highway."

They wrapped up the copy job and satisfied another customer.

But one long-drive story doesn't tell the complete tale of Nevada Blue's legendary drivers.

"I remember one time a customer needed a necessary part of a job – some hardcopy prints – that one of their consultants hadn't supplied them with," Brooks says. Where was this consultant? Oh, four hours outside of Reno, of course!

No sweat. "We drove up there and got it for them so they wouldn't lose the day," Brooks says.

So the next time your delivery driver asks for a day off because he spent a couple of hours stuck in highway traffic, show him this story. He'll quit his blubbering and thank heaven that he doesn't drive for Nevada Blue!

Cupid in a Delivery Truck

Do you give your good customers a box of chocolates at Christmas? Take some advice from Reg Garner, general manager of Triangle Reprographics in Orlando: A gift that grows will keep your firm in your customers' thoughts much longer than a gift that's eaten moments after you drop it off.

Every year around Valentine's Day Triangle's delivery trucks take on a new scent: Instead of toner and ammonia, the trucks smell like a flower shop! That's because they're full of African violets, about 1,200 of them – one for each woman employed by Triangle's customers.

"It's a tradition at Triangle," Garner says. "We've been doing this for 15 years."

They order the African violets from a local grower for about $2 each. Triangle's salespeople come up with a list of the firm's best customers. They assemble all the names of the women employed there – sometimes calling the CEO to make sure they haven't left any off – and then print 4x5 cards with their names and a Valentine's greeting. They stick the cards into the violet pots, and load up the trucks.

"It's a fun time at Triangle," Garner says. "I take some of them out myself and deliver them. It's a joint effort between our delivery staff and salespeople."

The big Valentine's Day delivery starts four or five days before Cupid's big moment. Sometimes when they make the delivery they learn that the recipient still has last year's violet growing on her desk. And sometimes not just last year's: "One lady took us back into her office and she had a dozen African violets, and she looked forward to a new one every year," Garner says.

It's safe to assume that every time that customer tends to her collection of violets, she thinks briefly of Triangle Repro. Do you think your customers remember that tub of popcorn you dropped off during the holidays? Yeah, right.

Customer service is essential for a successful repro shop. The basics are a given: fixing mistakes, offering prompt delivery, remembering clients on holidays.

It's when your firm takes the extra step – like the three described here – that you advance into the realm of the super customer service providers. ●

Ed Avis is a freelance writer in Chicago.
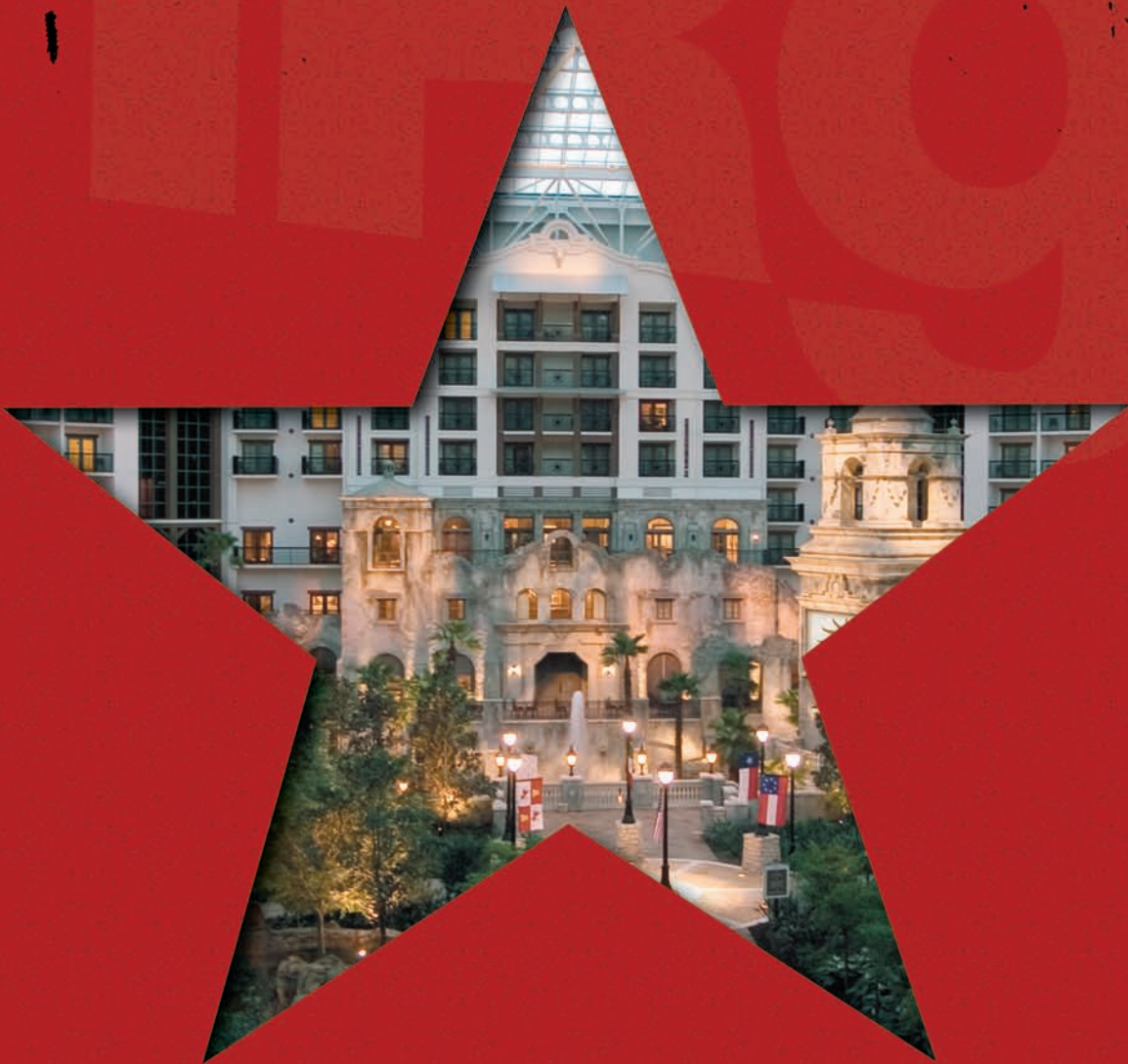
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Have You Got It Covered?

The devastation of last summer's hurricanes was felt around the country and around the world. The survivors were without food, clean water and – to their dismay – many were without insurance. Flood insurance is one of a number of insurance coverages not automatically included under a homeowner or business policy.

Here is a list of coverage areas that may not be on your current policy. Some of these may not be relevant to your business, but you may find you're missing some of the policies that are necessary to get you up and running after a crisis.

Flood coverage. Many people in hurricane paths and flood zones do not purchase this coverage because they do not own their residence. Of course, their personal belongings are also not covered for flood damage. Flood insurance is required coverage by mortgagees and lienholders if you are in a flood plain. The Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) administers this program. There are limits on the amount of coverage available and the deductibles are usually much higher than on other property coverages such as fire, theft, wind, etc.

Flood coverage can be purchased even if you are not in a flood zone. It is not available through FEMA but must be purchased from an insurance company. Depending on the location of the property, flood coverage can be reasonably inexpensive. Many policies do provide for backup of water or drains, but this coverage does not extend to surface or flood waters.

Earthquake coverage. This is not normally included under a standard homeowner or business policy, but it is more widely known that earthquake coverage needs to be added to an insurance policy. The cost of earthquake insurance depends on the proximity to

fault lines as well as the construction of the building. Masonry-constructed buildings actually have a higher insurance rate than frame buildings.

Mine subsidence. This policy covers the sinking or shifting of the ground surface resulting from the collapse of an underground mine. Any state that has or has had coal mining could be at risk. Most states have set up Mine Subsidence Insurance Funds to reimburse insurance companies for claims. Some signs of mine subsidence can be the sudden appearance of cracks in a building's foundation, exterior walls, and basement or garage floors. Steps may appear to pull away from the frame of the building. Doors may swing open, shut or become jammed. Windows may start sticking, jamming or even breaking. There may be separations between the walls and floor. The state funds will designate certain counties within the state that may be at risk for mine subsidence. These counties will all qualify for the coverage that can be added to a standard homeowner or business policy.

The above exposures have a commonality in that the state or federal governments may provide reinsurance, emergency response and loans to insureds that suffer a loss. Though wind is a covered peril on most standard policies, this isn't always the case. Coastal states that are subject to hurricanes may have to deal with "wind pools" to purchase this coverage.

Employee theft. Did you know that if an employee steals money, property or a vehicle while employed, there is no coverage under a standard policy? There is also no coverage for forgery or embezzlement. This coverage can usually be endorsed by adding "employee dishonesty" or "crime" coverage to the policy. Robbery and burglary can also be included.

Business income and extra expense. Most business owners would not go without disability coverage for

themselves, yet let their businesses go without loss-of-income coverage. This is one of the most overlooked and necessary coverages to have in a business. Business income coverage pays the necessary continuing expenses, including profit, from a covered loss. Business owner policies will traditionally provide this coverage automatically. Package policies do not, and the coverage must be endorsed on. Most businesses without this coverage that suffer a large loss will not reopen.

Did you know that if an employee steals money, property or a vehicle while employed, there is no coverage under a standard policy?

Though these are the most notable coverages not automatically included in a homeowner or business policy, there are more – including machinery breakdown coverage, off-premises power failure, property off premises- that may not be on your current policies. A good place to check for these coverages is your policy exclusion section. There may also be a "policy enhancement" endorsement which will give back some of these coverages.

Don't wait until after a claim to discover what coverages may be excluded under your insurance policy. Now is the time to check for gaps! ●

The St. Paul Travelers Companies and Acordia of Indiana are respectively the insurance carrier and agent for IRgA. IRgA members are invited to contact Patty Sears at Acordia to discuss how this program can benefit your company. She can be reached at 866/441-3936, ext. 7640.

Storage Space: The Final Frontier

By John Marquardt

I'm a sci-fi geek. Nerd. Dork. Whatever. Ever since I was a kid, it was one genre that really got my imagination going. I'm not sure why it's so fascinating to me. I guess it's the human endeavor part, the idea or promise of what we can be.

When I was reading or watching sci-fi as a kid, it all seemed so far off and unattainable, but many of the ideas and technologies that my futuristic heroes took for granted are here. Except for interstellar travel, I think in many respects we've surpassed the commonplace trinkets and toys that made up those fictional worlds and made them fascinating. In that spirit, for the last 10 years or so I've kept a running list of sci-fi tech that is in our every-day lives (in no particular order):

- Lasik – lasers that fix your eyes. Awesome!
- The Internet – 'nuff said
- Cell-phones and Bluetooth – a personal, planet-spanning communications device. Most models even look like the communicator Captain Kirk used. Plus my Bluetooth headset is way smaller than that big computer on the head of Lando Calrissian's henchman.
- Two autonomous rovers on Mars. On MARS!
- The Space Shuttle – it needs work, but we used it to fix satellites. Not too shabby
- The Hubble Telescope
- Desktop computing power
- Dr. Stephen Hawking – brilliant scientist completely unable to speak or even move, uses a computer to get around and talk (also pretty much right out of an episode of Star Trek)
- The Human Genome (finally)
- Predator Drones
- Spaceship One – private space-travel – the beginnings of space-tourism
- Google Earth

- 4D ultrasound – WOW!

There are several others, but you get the idea. We have all this technology at our disposal, yet our staple mass-storage medium is a clunky old spinning magnetic platter: the hard drive. It might as well be punch-cards. It's so junky that we have backups, and backups for our backups. Just about every other aspect of our computing experience has had major technological advances – CRTs to flat-panels, floppies being replaced by flash-memory of various configurations, wired networks to wireless networks, processors…OK, our processors are basically from 1970, but they aren't really holding us back yet.

Let me fill you in on just how junky hard drives really are. We are packing so much into this antiquated technology that at any given time your hard drive has tens of thousands of errors going on. That's right. The hard drives on your desktop or in your servers or laptops have errors – and LOTS of them. The way hard drive manufacturers deal with this is through error-correction. Just like when you have a scratch on a CD-ROM, it can be corrected through algorithms that look at bulk information from the collection of data and determine which parts were read from the disk incorrectly. Since a bit can only be a 0 or a 1, if there is an error, the programming in the hard drive just changes to the other value. It's happening constantly as you use your computer.

This is basically how the S.M.A.R.T. system works. When enabled, the number of errors is logged and tracked. If there is a large jump in the number of errors being corrected, this might indicate that your disk is on its way out. It will slow down as it works harder and harder to correct all the errors it's finding and begin to warn you about impending drive-failure. Move the data to something just slightly less junky until the next time it happens. By the way, you might

want to put all the information on tape (TAPE? Like an 8-track?) so that if there is a catastrophic drive failure, you can put it in your Walkman and recover that lost information. The problem is, it's usually too late before you can do anything about it. Enter another piece of science fiction that is available today: SpinRite from Gibson Research ($89 at www.spinrite.com). This program isn't cheap as far as little utilities go, but it's a bargain compared to losing data. When you start having a lot of errors and slowdowns, SpinRite recovers your data and moves it to a safe spot. Highly recommended.

Your hard drive has a list of all your files and their locations, commonly referred to as a partition table or allocation table. As you might guess, this thing is vital, and of course, it's no safer than any other information on your hard drive. Hard drives are so junky and our operating system's interactions with them are so prone to errors that your computer keeps a copy of this table on another part of the disk for when (not if) this fails. Sometimes it gets the list back automatically, and sometimes you just can't access any data on your junky hard drive anymore…at all. More science fiction, this time in the form of TestDisk. This plainly named program accesses just about every known file system and repairs it. If your partition table is fried, it can use the copy – if that doesn't work, it can rebuild the table based on file-system examinations. Great stuff, and it's available for free under the GNU Public License at www.cgsecurity.org.

Both of these programs can be loaded onto a bootable CD or flash drive and run independent of the currently installed operating system. ●

Formerly the I.T. manager for Engineering Repro Systems in Minneapolis, John Marquardt is an industry speaker and educator. You can reach him at john@offblue.com.

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Reconsider Your Customers

Doug Hoek

Our daughter, Leslie, recently came home from college for the weekend. While she was home we went shopping and eventually found ourselves standing at the checkout counter in a store called the GAP. It was while standing at that counter with other customers that I noticed something taking place there that might provide a valuable lesson to our industry.

What happened was neither unique, nor rare, nor exceptional in any way. In fact, what I saw at that checkout counter happens there regularly; it is normal, it is customary, in a sense it could be described as boring.

Everything in and around business is geared to serving, maintaining, and capturing customers. Imagine the waste, inefficiencies, and atrophy generated by a company trying to sell its products and services to the wrong people.

I learned a lot standing at the GAP's checkout counter and would like to share some of that with you. What I learned was the importance of accurately recognizing customers and identifying them properly. Though that may seem elementary, it might actually be more complex than it first appears.

Actually, identifying our customer base is a critical piece of strategic information our industry needs to pay attention to. In light of the tremendous changes taking place within and around reprographics it behooves us to clearly understand and appreciate exactly who our customers are and exactly what they need and want.

Everything in and around business is geared to serving, maintaining, and capturing customers. Imagine the waste, inefficiencies, and atrophy generated by a company trying to sell its products and services to the wrong people. Imagine the potential shrinkage or damage an industry might inflict on itself if its bona-fide customer base was left vulnerable to the seductive wiles of a competitive industry.

A Gap in the GAP

It had been quite some time since I had visited stores like the GAP. To be honest, and, I suppose, betraying my advancing age, I felt a bit out of place. I excused myself and waited for Leslie and my wife in the mall on one of those benches available for people like me. Occasionally Leslie would wave from inside the store and point to either a new pair of jeans or a new blouse that she was trying on.

Though my wife had gift coupons for the GAP she did not have enough of them to cover the total cost of Leslie's purchases. About 20 minutes later I was summoned back into the store to pay the remainder of the bill with my credit card. When I pulled out my VISA a bulb clicked on in my head, and I experienced the clarifying epiphany.

As I laid the VISA card down on the counter I noticed several other parents doing the same for their children. The clerks at the GAP were busy finalizing the sales they had made to people like Leslie with people like me. And I do not think that process was unique, rare, or exceptional to that store on that afternoon; I think people like me pay for the purchases of people like Leslie all the time.

Around the entire counter were older people paying for the purchases made by younger people. As stated earlier, I felt a bit out-of-place in the GAP; the GAP was not designed or operated for me or people of my generation, the GAP is designed and operated for Leslie and people of her generation. The lights, the floor, the shelving and fixtures, the music (oh, the music),

and the employees walking around with communication devices hanging from their ears, colored hair, and jeans with holes were all there and orchestrated to attract and address people like Leslie and her generation.

That was the epiphany: Even though Dad was paying the bill, he was not the customer. And, the GAP clearly recognizes and understands that. The GAP knows that Leslie, and thousands like her, are their bona-fide customers and they cater to their wants and needs. Parents for the most part are there to provide transportation and to facilitate payment.

In fact, if the GAP was to focus on people like me, the people that pay for the clothes, they would be making a big mistake, wouldn't they?

Therefore, we have identified a gap at GAP – a gap of about 25 or 30 years between the ages of their customers and the ages of those that pay the bills of their customers – and the GAP has a very good understanding of that gap. The customer is not always the one who pays the bill.

The proper identification of the client base is critically important for the growth and survival of any industry, especially industries experiencing significant change, such as the reprographic industry.

Examine Your Firm's Customer List

How about you and your business? Can you accurately identify your customers? Are you concentrating on those people and firms that really use your products?

Let's take a look. Pull out your latest list of customers, usually organized in order by amount of sales. Take a look at the top 20 entries which very likely accounts for between 65% - 90% of your business volume. My guess is that in almost every case 17 or 18 of those top 20 companies are either architectural, engineering or general

contracting firms. Of course, they are! What else would we expect? Architects, engineers and general contractors are the very core of our industry; they are our customers.

Or, are they?

There is no doubt that they facilitate and pay for the largest print orders that come through our shops. In every metropolitan area it is the large content providers that facilitate large print orders and generally pay for them, too.

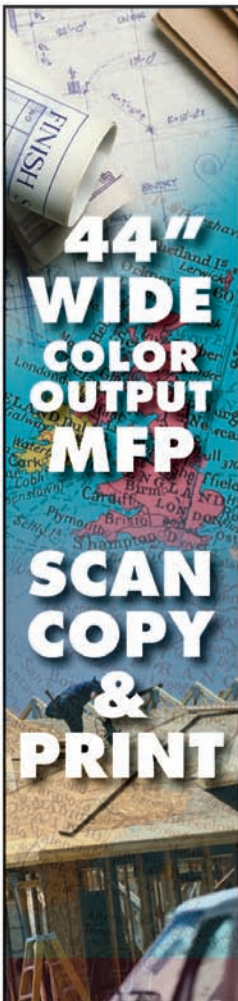But I am wondering if we have missed something. I am wondering if somewhere along the line because those companies consistently generate our largest print orders if we have not mistakenly, or at least somewhat inaccurately, identified them as our most important customers. Does an architect or engineer use 125 or 150 sets of documents, or do they just facilitate and pay for the order? If we were standing by the counter at the GAP would those architectural and general contracting firms be analogous to the older people paying the bills, or the younger people wearing the clothes?

We might want to imitate the GAP by identifying those that actually use (consume) our products and services as our customers, and those that pay the bills as something else (something very

That was the epiphany: Even though Dad was paying the bill, he was not the customer. And, the GAP clearly recognizes and understands that.

important without question, but something else nonetheless). If we do not do that we may leave an important sector of our client-base unprotected and vulnerable to the seductive wiles of a competitive industry. ●

Doug Hoek is the president of Veenstra Reprographics in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Océ Debuts Fleet of Large-Format Printers at IRgA

Océ unveiled five new color printing systems and two monochrome printers at the IRgA Convention and Trade Show in Orlando.

The new color printers give graphics users high-speed, dual-ink print systems for producing high-quality, outdoor-durable graphics. These solutions address the growing demands for color in engineering, CAD and GIS applications and provide outdoor graphics users with production speed and the convenience to place the printer in any environment.

The **Océ TCS300** is a large-format inkjet color printer is aimed at eliminating wait times and streamlining document output. The Océ TCS300 delivers an affordable solution for a broad range of users seeking to meet increasing demands for large-format color and monochrome CAD documents.

The **Océ TCS500**, the successor to the Océ TCS400, is an integrated print/copy/scan system that uses concurrent processing to increase speed and efficiency. The system is ideal for handling quantities of large-format technical documents such as detailed CAD line drawings and complex GIS files as well as other color technical documents.

The low-volume **Océ CS2044** and **Océ CS2024**-with printing widths of 44" and 24" inches, respectively-produce clear line drawings and brilliant color graphics suitable for CAD, GIS, and display graphics. The option to add two additional RIPs for enhanced CAD or PostScript processing allows the systems to grow with users' evolving demands.

The **Océ CS9065** is a high-quality, production-speed printer that uses either low-solvent or eco-solvent inks to create outdoor-durable prints. Users find flexibility in where the unit can be operated (i.e., light industrial, print shop or office environments) through its dual-ink capability. The Océ CS9065 is perfect for short-run print jobs and is designed for light- to mid-

volume production environments where high-quality output and outdoor durability are required.

For monochrome printing, the new **Océ TDS320** and **Océ TDS450** extend the company's selection of large-format systems for engineering and CAD documents. The Océ TDS320 is an economical, entry-level solution for large format print, copy and scan needs. The multifunction system delivers high image quality and reliability, while keeping time-consuming operator interaction to a minimum. The system is designed for smaller engineering and architecture firms as well as department workgroups.

The Océ TDS450 multifunction system provides monochrome quality and productivity plus adds the flexibility of optional color scanning. The Océ Direct Scan optical system offers image quality and reliability. The Océ TDS450 has an intuitive and fully customizable interface and offers effective workgroup printing of black-and-white documents.

For more information, visit www.oce.com.

Mutoh ValueJet Released

Mutoh America Inc.'s new 51" ValueJet Printer is designed for outdoor durable printing applications.

The ValueJet uses a combination of Mutoh's new X-Rail design and piezo print head technology. It has 1440 total nozzles and variable dot technology to produce outdoor-durable, photo-quality images at resolutions of 360, 540, 720 and 1440 dpi using Mutoh's Eco-Ultra inks, which last up to three years outdoors without lamination.

The ValueJet offers 10 print modes, including the new 540x720 dpi mode for banners. The ValueJet incorporates a new and exclusive Mutoh printing technique that reduces banding typically associated with bi-directional inkjet printing. The ValueJet also has a variety of production speeds to choose from including 60, 80 and 100 square feet per hour at 720 dpi.

The printer includes a starter set of Eco-Ultra ink, a Mutoh version of

Amiable SE software, and a one-year on-site warranty. The ValueJet is priced at $14,995 and is available for shipment beginning in June 2006. For more details, visit www.mutoh.com.

GEI and Canon Team Up for Wide-Format Color

GEI Wide Format Solutions and Canon U.S.A., Inc., have joined forces to produce a new multifunction printer specifically designed for AEC, GIS and CAD wide-format color applications.

GEI's adjustable "repro-stand" fits over Canon's imagePROGRAF W8400 wide-format printer and holds a Colortrac scanner, desktop computer, monitor, keyboard and mouse. GEI also adds a comprehensive suite of software applications to these components to form a truly multifunctional system.

For more information, visit www.geiwideformat.com.

Rose Introduces New Frames, New Finish

Rose Displays, Ltd., has unveiled variations to its FreedomFrame aluminum front-load snap frame-Back-to-Back FreedomFrame and Do-It-Yourself FreedomFrame.

Back-to-Back FreedomFrame is designed for double-sided, mid-store graphic display. This new version integrates two FreedomFrames, connected back-to-back for display on both sides. A universal clip rail in the middle of the two frames accommodates Rose Displays' Cable Clip and MultiClip accessories for a variety of hanging options.

The Do-It-Yourself FreedomFrame ships unassembled with corner brackets and four rails cut to the specified size. Each rail has adhesive tape backing for easy wall mounting. The DIY option contains no backerboard.

FreedomFrame can be ordered in any size ranging from a minimum dimension of 8" x 8" to a maximum of 46" x 94". In addition, the frames are available in several profiles, including a modern straight-cut edge, a new square profile or the original round configuration. All

versions of FreedomFrame are available in a variety of finishes: clear anodized, black anodized, and new Champagne anodized. Custom colors and wood finishes are also available; minimum orders apply.

To learn more about Rose Displays' FreedomFrame or to request the latest Rose Displays catalog, visit www.rosedisplays.com.

Energy Efficient Scanners from Ideal/Contex

Ideal has added two new energy efficient scanners, manufactured by Contex, to its product line. These new "green" scanners are certified Energy Star Compliant by the U.S Environmental Protection Agency.

The Crystal HS 42 scanners are designed to give environmentally conscious professionals the best in energy-efficient, high-speed monochrome scanning with the additional option of quality color scanning for special jobs. The scanner's 42" imaging area handles large E-size/A0 engineering drawings, architectural sketches, blueprints, sepias, detailed maps, drawings and large color posters. The Crystal HS 42 comes in Base and Plus models.

The Chroma HS 42 wide-format energy efficient color scanners incorporate the latest in imaging technology for high-quality full color scanning and copying. The scanner's 42" imaging area handles large color posters, architectural sketches, detailed maps, drawings and fine art at high speeds.

Both scanners feature high resolutions, easy maintenance, user-replaceable parts and Automatic Thickness Adjustment Control.

See www.ideal.com for more information.

LexJet Low-Cost Banner Products

LexJet has a new line of solvent banner products. The line consists of high quality, low priced scrim vinyl banner substrates for UV-curable, solvent, and eco-solvent printers.

The new LexJet Solvent Banner Line includes: 11 oz Gloss and Matte Banner, 13 oz Gloss and Matte Banner, 15 oz Premium Gloss and Matte Banner, 13 oz Super Smooth Blockout Banner, and a 9 oz Premium Mesh Banner with Liner. These banner products range in price from 11 to 29 cents per square foot. Profiles are located at www.lexjet.com

Drytac Retractable Banner Stand

The latest addition to Drytac's line of retractable banner stands offers a combination of improved engineering and a new low price. The Retractable II offers upgraded engineering and enhanced durability.

Graphics wind out of the all-aluminum base for display, then roll back in for storage and transportation. The Retractable II comes complete with a padded transport bag for extra protection.

The Retractable II stands 82-3/4" x 33-1/2" wide and weighs less than 6.5 lbs. It is available to authorized Drytac graphics producers for under $50, not including the optional display light.

For more information, visit www.drytac.com.

PLP Supports KIP 7000

PLP Digital Systems, Inc., has announced its support for the KIP 7000, the first production-volume 600 dpi wide-format printer on the market.

With the PlotWorks Printer Interface for the KIP 7000, PLP's customers can now enjoy 600 dpi production-volume printing at 13 D-size sheets per minute. Existing customers may opt to add this component to an existing PlotWorks system. The PlotWorks Printer Interface for the KIP 7000 is fully compatible with PLP's OpCenter software, providing the ability to track the status of every job, on every printer, in every location.
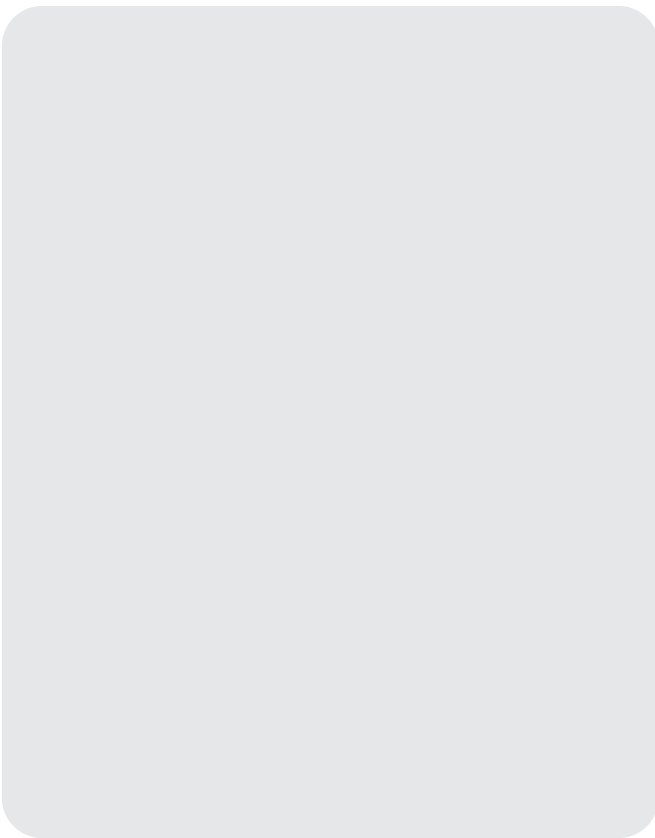
The KIP 7000 Printer Interface for PlotWorks and the KIP 7000 printer are available now. For more information, visit www.plp.com.

New Colors for Neschen Pro Gloss Sign Vinyl

Neschen Americas has added six new colors to the Neschen Pro Gloss line of adhesive-backed sign vinyl. The new colors are Ice Blue, Light Blue, Violet, Forest Green, Soft Pink and Turquoise Blue.

According to Neschen, Pro Gloss vinyl offers a smooth, high-gloss surface, yet is easy to handle, cut and weed. An advanced pressure-sensitive adhesive formulation contributes to its durability in a wide range of commercial sign applications. Pro Gloss vinyl is 3.2 mils thick (including the adhesive) and is rated for outdoor life up to five years. It is resistant to mild acids, alkaline, salts and most petroleum based oil, grease and aliphatic solvents. For more information, or a free sample, contact Neschen Americas at 800-257-7325, or visit www.neschenamericas.com.

Oracal Imitation Gold Media

Oracal Series 751 High Performance Cast and Series 651 Intermediate Cal are now available in Imitation Gold.

Oracal Series 751 High Performance Cast combines the benefits of a cast film without the typical cast film price. It has been specially developed for use in a wide array of applications, especially those with high durability and conformity requirements. Now available in 82 vivid colors, this eight-year, 2-mil film is ideal for high quality vehicle and fleet graphics, long-term

permanent signage, marine graphics, banners, building fascia, general signage, window graphics or any other high-performance application.

Oracal's highest performance calendered film, Oracal Series 651, features a proprietary formulation that provides cast-like performance at a competitive cost. This 2.5-mil, six-year film is now available in 61 high-gloss colors and features a permanent, solvent-based adhesive and a 78-lb. PE-coated liner. Series 651 can be used on flat surfaces, simple curves and contours, and is an excellent choice for intermediate applications ranging from vehicle applications to outdoor banners.

Oracal Series 751 and Series 651 are available in the following widths: 12" (651 only); 15" punched, 16", 20", 24", 30" punched, 36" (white and transparent only), 40" (Series 751 white only) and 48". Both films are available in 10- and 50-yard lengths.

For more information, see www.oracal.com.

Jeti 3324 UV Roll-to-Roll Printer

The Jeti 3324 UV roll-to-roll (UVRTR) prints at fast speeds without the use of conventional heaters used to dry solvent inks. The fully automated six-color printer comes in 300 or 600 dpi format options.

The head carriage hosts 24 Spectra print heads, while ink designation is four heads per color allowing for six color combinations. The Jeti 3324 UVRTR print speed is 650 sq. ft/hr in best mode and 1050 sq. ft/hr in production mode with 300 dpi. With the 600 dpi option print speeds will begin at 350 sq. ft/hr in best mode and 650 sq. ft/hr in production mode. The Jeti 3324 UVRTR is designed to print on media types such as frontlit, backlit, adhesive vinyl and virtually any rolled substrates.

The printer also includes an onboard camera used to tune the heads as well as automatic cleaning and wiping.

The Jeti comes with a one-year warranty on all parts, including print

heads. For more information, visit www.gandinnovations.com, or call 210-344-9566.

Roland SOLJET PRO Inkjet Printer/Cutter

Roland DGA Corporation has introduced the 54" SOLJET PRO III XC-540, its fastest wide-format integrated inkjet printer/cutter.

The XC-540's top print resolution is 1440x1440 dpi, and the maximum print speed is 441 sq. ft./hr. The machine also features a more robust six-color (CMYKLcLm) ink system designed for both 220 ml and 440 ml cartridges, a new precision firing pattern, an integrated tri-heater system for accelerated drying times, and a built-in media feed and take-up system accepting rolls weighing up to 66 lbs. It includes the Windows-compatible VersaWorks 2.0 RIP software. The integrated tri-heater system dries media for immediate finishing, installation or collection by the take-up roller, even in high-speed printing mode, and the DU-540 dryer/blower system is optional for increased productivity.

The XC-540 is designed for banners, signs, vehicle and fleet graphics, labels, decals, POP displays and more.

The XC-540 is based on Roland's print/cut technology, which delivers printing and contour cutting on one device without any steps in between. To further streamline the production process, the XC-540 includes Quadralign, Roland's four-point optical registration system, which allows users to remove prints, laminate and simply reload them for precision cutting. Quadralign automatically realigns the cutting path and compensates for skew and distortion.

The SOLJET PRO III XC-540 is listed at $29,995. The optional dryer/blower system is priced at $2,995. For more details, visit www.rolanddga.com

GEI 4636 Wide-Format Printer/Copier

GEI Wide Format Solutions, a Visual Edge Technology Company, has added an all-digital multifunction device specifically designed for the mid-volume user market.

The GEI 4636 can produce 8 D-size printer per minute and features 4-roll paper capacity, 18" x 24" cut sheet printing and wireless scanning. It incorporates multiple security features, including erasable data HDD and encryption. The optional Embedded Scanner allows the copier to be upgraded for scanning to e-mail and to use utilities like Web Image Monitor and TWAIN Driver. By adding the 4636 Controller the system can be upgraded to support network printing from Windows, MAC and UNIX. With the Scan Option, the GEI 4636 can also be upgraded to advanced scanning, image editing, merging and archiving.

For more information, visit www.geiwideformat.com.

New BannerRail Can Handle 8' Posters and Thicker Media

Mark Bric has added a new heavy-duty aluminum BannerRail to its display line. This new aluminum railing can handle posters and banners up to 3/32" thick. The product is sold as both individual components as well as pre-finished kits.

The new slide-in aluminum railing comes with a clear-coat anodized finish, in lengths up to a full 8'. Each railing kit comes complete with end-caps, hanging eyelets and other finishing accessories.

Visit www.markbric.com for more details.

Oracal RapidAir Technology

Oracal USA's ORAJET Series 3551ra features the company's new RapidAir technology for faster, easier installations.

Ideal for partial vehicle wraps over simple corrugations, flat surfaces and rivets, as well as general signage, conformable Series 3551ra features an air-release liner and a solvent-based, repositionable adhesive. The 7-year, 2.75-mil Series 3551ra features a smooth, ultra-glossy surface.

Series 3551ra is the first Oracal product to feature RapidAir technology, an intersecting design embedded into the liner that creates a system of channels in the film's adhesive. When the film is applied to the substrate, the channels allow the release of trapped air, creating a smooth, bubble-free application.

ORAJET Series 3551ra Inkjet Media is offered in 164' rolls in widths of 30", 54", 54" reverse wound, and 60".

For more information, visit www.oracal.com.

Durst Rho 600 Pictor Printer

Durst Phototechnik AG's Rho 600 Pictor Flatbed UV Inkjet Printer comes with Durst's proprietary, 30-picolitre Quadro Array print head technology for crisp, color-accurate images at true 600-dpi resolution. Available with white-ink printing capability, plus special-effect varnish and spot colors, the Rho 600 Pictor can print directly onto virtually any surface up to 62" wide and 1.58" thick at print speeds of nearly 200 sq. ft./hr.

The Rho 600 Pictor is controlled by a Linux workstation, and the RIP system combines Durst printer software with an integrated Cheetah RIP.

The new printer works best with the Rho Flexible Ink Set and Rho Rigid Ink Set. The Rho Flexible Ink Set is ideal for such flexible substrates as vinyl, transparencies and blue-back paper. The Rho Rigid Ink Set is formulated for rigid materials for which adhesion is often a problem.

The Rho 600 Pictor Flatbed UV Inkjet Printer will be available in Europe in July. Durst US is now taking orders for August delivery. Visit www.durstus.com.

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Positions Available

State of Alabama-Sales Manager: Large, growing reprographics company looking for motivated **sales manager** to lead a current sales staff of six. Maintaining existing accounts and expanding into document management, EDMS, color and FM's are the company's main objectives. Need qualified leader with reprographics background, track record and experience. A thorough knowledge of the AEC, construction market (project management and bid management a plus) and imaging services a major benefit. Customer service skills an absolute must. Must mentor, train and be an effective closer. Excellent benefits, 401K, major medical, disability insurance, car allowance, paid vacation, base salary plus commission on results. Respond in confidence to jdavis@algraphics.com.

C.T.I/Valueline is looking for 1 **outside sales pro** for the desirable Orange County sales area. We are the largest pure distributor of A & E media in California (no equipment and no repro). Just media and supplies to the end user. Base plus commission plus medical. Opportunity for 6 figure income for the right sales professional. Confidential replies to cdavis6730@aol.com

Reprographic MGRS. Leading Reprographics Company in the Tampa Bay Area is currently seeking **qualified candidates for color, Digital Services and Management** positions. Fax Resume Attention Chris Charles 813.229.8643 or E-Mail flrepro@flrepro.com.

NGI, a fast growing provider of reprographics and digital imaging solutions in the southeast, needs **production management, customer service** and **sales** personnel for our expanding organization. This is a great opportunity for the right people to join one of the most dynamic teams in the industry. All applicants must be highly motivated, possess excellent communication skills and enjoy working in a fast pace environment. NGI offers competitive pay with incentive compensation, health/life/dental insurance, 401k, paid vacation and more. Reply to NGIresume@tampabay.rr.com. and reference REPRO REPORT in the subject line. EOE/DFWP.

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If interested, please send your resume to IRgA Box NV, 401 N. Michigan Ave. Suite 2200, Chicago, IL 60611 or email info@irga.com with subject: Positions Available - Box NV.

Opportunities

Midwest blueprint firm interested in **acquisitions or investments** from 50% to 100% in blueprint and related companies with sales of $3 million to $6 million. Looking for mostly financial and strategic planning involvement in ventures. Will pay cash/annuity for operationally strong firms in any financial condition. Contact Brett Scully, Lakeside Blueprint, at 216/281-1234; e-mail: bscully@eblueprint.com.

National Reprographics Inc. is looking for **acquisitions** within the reprographic and digital color industries. Interested in well-managed firms of any size located in larger metropolitan markets. Contact Doug Magid at doug@nrinet.com or (212) 366-7063.

Large Format Dealer Opportunities with **Mark Bric Display**: (www.markbric.com/usa) Preferred Dealer opportunities still exist in several cities and metro areas throughout the United States. Our world-class display hardware includes Mark Bric **BannerUp®**, **SnapUp®**, **Flexiframe®**, and more. Our high levels of product quality, brand recognition and customer service make us the only display products partner you'll ever need for your large format color output—from inkjet posters & banners to Lambda photo-quality trade show graphics to rigid sign boards on your new flatbed printer—our hardware covers all your needs. For immediate consideration, please contact Anita Clarke (aclarke@markbric.com) at **Mark Bric Display--800-742-6275**.

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Oce9800 Printer: 1-9800 Printer (Scanner not included) SN 980103405. Running beautiful prints, ASKING PRICE $30,000.00. Contact: Walter Walker, Graphic Reproduction (925)674-0900.

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Ad Index

Perception IS Reality

Steve Bova, CAE
Executive Director

Printing has been around since the invention of the Gutenberg press in 1450, and niche printing has been around nearly as long. For the past 80 years, since the IRgA was established, reprographers have been generally perceived by the AEC community as printers. Some refer to us as blueprinters, a few call us reprographers, but many refer to us simply as their printers.

Architects, engineers, construction firms and subcontractors view our business as one that provides accurate, reliable quality and fast service. Cost has evolved quickly up the priority ladder, which has caused our services to be viewed as a commodity. Competing on price alone is a game in which there are no winners.

As much as we would like to believe the contrary, the AEC community does not view reprographers as their partners, and they don't see us as being particularly proactive, professional or innovative.

These are but a few findings from a recent independent study conducted on behalf of the IRgA. The study polled architects, engineers and construction firms (including subcontractors) to gain their perceptions about the reprographics industry and predict what lies ahead. A white paper containing the full survey results will be available this summer.

As the reprographics industry has matured and technology has become ever more important, reprographers have had to make a critical decision: a) remain true to the AEC niche, b) diversify service offerings in other industries or c) maintain the niche business and seek growth through diverse offerings and industries. While reprographers can perform many different kinds of services for various industries, the focus of the IRgA's efforts in this study was on the AEC market.

The study clearly shows that printing will receive less emphasis with opportunities expanding in the areas of digital services such as online planrooms, electronic document management and storage, and security/protection of intellectual property, for example. At a very high level, the future of reprographics, and the ability to turn the AEC industry's perception to our favor, rests on our collective ability as an industry to become even more customer-service-oriented and technologically savvy.

Convention or Association?

Just as the reprographics industry needs to change the perception of the AEC industry, the IRgA needs to change the perception of reprographers that it is nothing more than an annual convention.

Now that the 2006 convention has come and gone, the reality is many industry people will not think about the IRgA until 2007 when it's time to register for the next convention and trade show. As executive director, it is my job to demonstrate to you that – as valuable as the convention and trade show is – there is so much more to the IRgA.

Three years ago, the viability of this organization was publicly questioned. Two successful conventions later, with a business model that works, the IRgA is on solid footing and its foreseeable future is no longer in doubt.

It's that time of year again to decide whether to renew your membership. The membership year begins August 1. The questions that many of you may ask are, "What is the ROI?" "What is the value proposition?" "How do I perceive the association?" "Is it something that can add value to my business?"

- You're holding perhaps the largest tangible benefit in your hands. Each issue of *REPRO REPORT* contains articles written to challenge your thinking, share different viewpoints and inform you of industry trends, all so you can stay sharp in your business.
- The *2005-06 Operating Ratio Report* is now available, complete with comparisons to the 2002-03 report. This benchmarking tool helps owners measure how their business fares based on industry averages and trends.
- The Digital Services Committee has issued an industry standard statement citing the current and best practices in providing and charging for digital services. Members are encouraged to use this document as a guide when setting their digital services practices and communicating them to customers.
- A white paper is being completed, showing comprehensive results of a survey seeking the perceptions of those in the AEC community about the reprographics industry.
- An educational needs assessment has been conducted and members have provided feedback regarding the areas of greatest need for education.

When the newly elected IRgA Board of Directors meets at the end of July in Chicago, not only will they be discussing the 2006-2007 operational budget, they will also be deciding upon new educational products and services we will make available throughout the year.

By the time you read this column, the IRgA will have conducted its first webinar, and other programs will be in development. Whether the education is a direct benefit to owners or helps to educate repro shop employees, there is value to the association offering continuing adult education for the reprographics industry.

The feedback I am hearing from reprographers and industry suppliers is that the IRgA is back. It's providing value and growing. I invite you to become or remain a part of a successful industry association that is continuing to add value to those within the reprographics industry. ●

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