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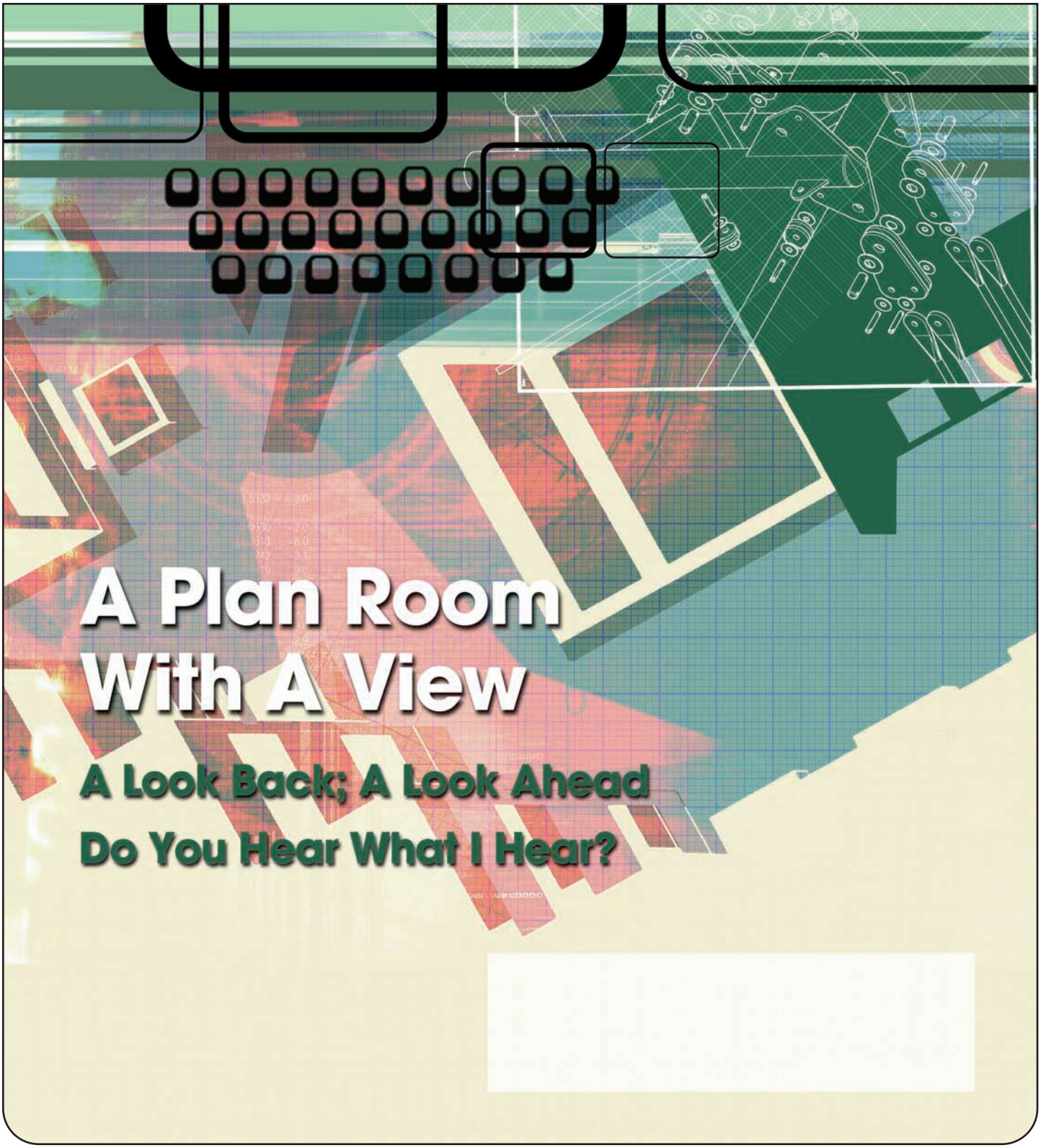

A Plan Room With A View

A Look Back; A Look Ahead

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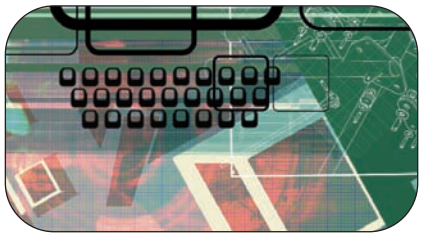
Features

6 A Plan Room With a View
By Scott Cullen
Some repro shop owners are looking to slam the door on plan rooms that are posting unauthorized blueprints on their Web sites. What's your take – are plan rooms uploading documents without asking permission?



12 A Look Back, A Look Ahead
By Rak Kumar
Recently retired Océ President and CEO Rak Kumar provides *REPRO REPORT* readers with an industry overview – past, present and future.

26 Do You Hear What I Hear?
By Navina Waterman
Changing technology and business climate are creating basic adjustments in how AEC firms do business. How you respond will affect your company's bottom line. Review the thoughts shared in this article and compare them to your company's direction.

Navigating the Digital Revolution

Watch for issue four coverage of:

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In This Issue

4 President's Perspective
17 Human Resources
18 Repronomics
19 Print I.T.
20 In the News
23 Association Highlights
32 Insurance Primer
33 Product Innovations
37 Classified Ads
38 End of the Roll

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Got Milk?

Bob Margolis
President
2003-04

A few weeks ago, one of my daughter's friend's fathers had come to our house to collect his daughter. We had never met before, so after a quick introduction we began to talk about golf, because he was wearing a Pebble Beach sweater.

Before too long, the conversation turned to "what do you do for a living?" This was excellent, because as it turned out, he was the president of a manufacturing company that I suspected could use some reprographics services. Not wanting to give the hard sell right up front, I continued to ask questions about his company. The more he talked, the more I was sure that my unsuspecting new best friend was in for a sales pitch.

Then I got nervous. I asked myself "What are you going to say when he asks me what I do?" The old question, what DO we do was going to come up again, and again I was not exactly sure how I was going to answer it. If this conversation took a "plans and specifications" tone, would I say I was a blueprinter? If the tone was heading more toward color graphics output, was I a graphics house?

As long as I have been in the reprographics business, we have had a difficult time defining our own industry. Back when many of our businesses were founded, we were blueprinters. When that term fell out of favor in the '80s (or was it the '70s or even the '90s?), we became reprographers. But just exactly what is reprography, or more to the point, how do we define it in simple, easy to understand language? We need words that communicate so much by using so little, like Got Milk?

One of the challenges that came from the IRgA strategic planning committee meeting recently was to define the industry. To come up with a slogan or tag line that clearly and properly defines the reprographic industry. I don't suspect that this will be an easy task, as tag lines mean different things to different people. With a little luck, we can come up with something simple and effective.

Another clear result of our strategic planning session was that the IRgA should not serve its members only, but instead serve the entire industry. That's an interesting concept, as our focus from the board has always been to serve our members, and not necessarily or at least not directly, the industry. By serving the members, primarily, we felt that we were serving the industry. Our industry has changed so much in recent years that our focus needed to change as well. As the IRgA, we will continue to represent and serve our members. However, by broadening our thinking, we can ultimately serve our members better by thinking industry-wide rather than membership-wide.

What does this mean to the membership? It means that as an association, the IRgA will be more focused on the philosophy that what's good for the industry is good for members. It sounds very similar, but the scope is quite different. We will be looking to expand the association and our membership base.

A larger and more diverse membership base gives us more leverage with convention sites, more vendors that want to support the association (because we attract more traffic at our trade show) and more attendance at our educational sessions. All of this will be good for our membership and good for the industry. As industry consolidation continues with both reprographers and vendors, we're finding that we have a smaller potential member base to serve.

In order to grow, we need to expand that base and serve more members. That's our goal, and that's our direction.

Got Prints?...nah. ●

Bob Margolis is president of Crest Graphics in Farmington, Conn. and is the 2003-04 IRgA president. He may be reached at 860/677-8817 or bmargolis@crest-graphics.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

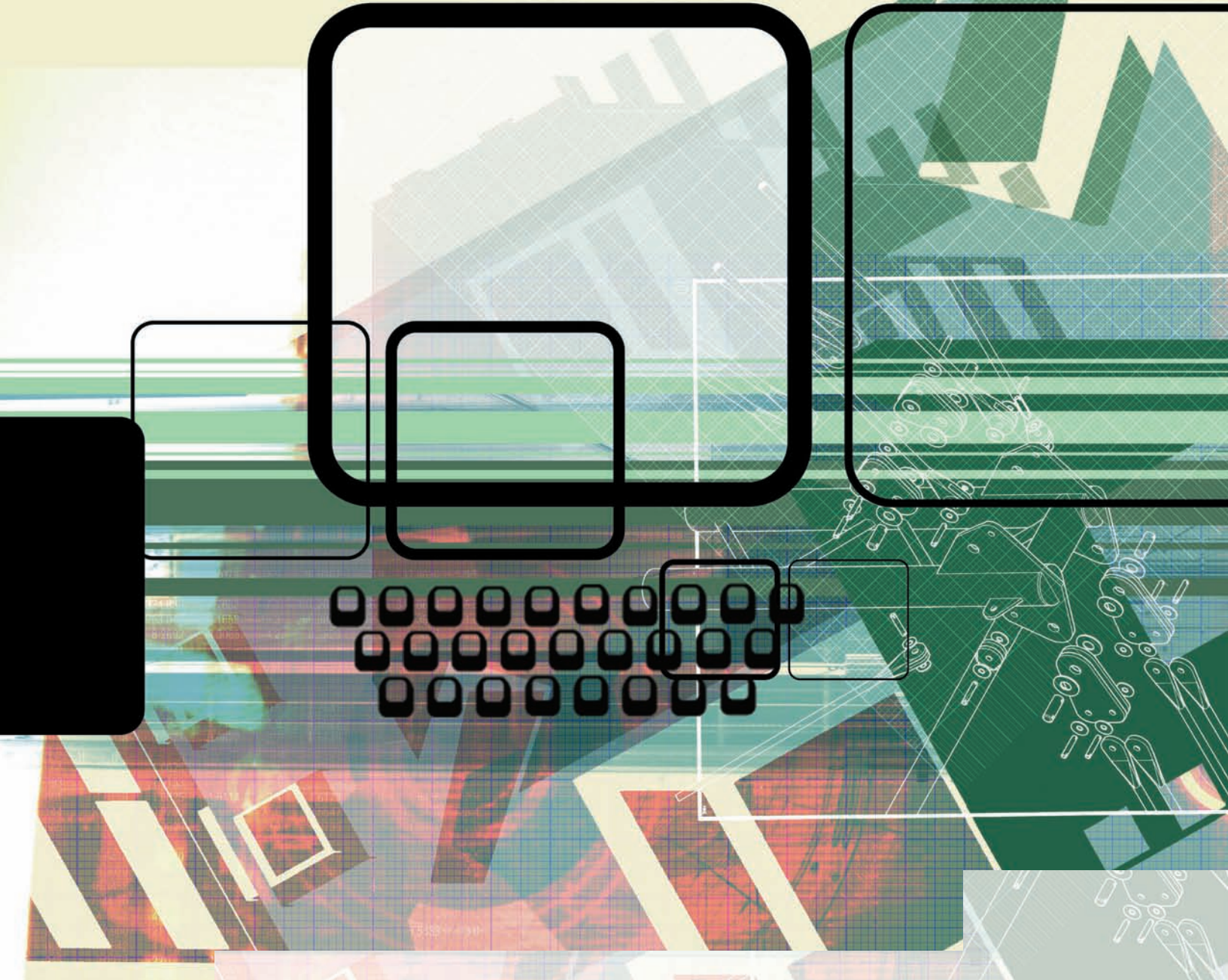
Dear *REPRO REPORT*,

Thank you for the fine article – "Making the (Almost) Perfect Match" – in *REPRO REPORT*, issue one, 2004.

Within our company, all the feedback on the article was positive. One of our production managers wants to give it to his customers so they understand what he is telling them on many occasions. The only comment that was made (by two of the readers) is that the reality check is that color operators need training to utilize the products described (color calibrating and matching software and hardware) and that comes with a price tag, although it is hardly overwhelming – but needs to be taken into consideration.

Cathleen Cushing Duff
Cushing and Color Chicago

Thank you, Cathie, for your comments. REPRO REPORT invites other readers to share their views with us. Send mail to: The Editor, REPRO REPORT, 401 N. Michigan Ave., Suite 2200, Chicago, IL 60611, or e-mail info@irga.com.



A Plan Room with a View

By Scott Cullen

It only takes a small, vocal minority to raise a ruckus and that's what's happening in the reprographics community where a contingent of repro shop owners, primarily in Wisconsin, are up in arms over what they say is unauthorized posting of blueprints in plan rooms and unrestricted access to these sites.

This group has made it their mission to raise awareness of this issue throughout the reprographics and architectural communities. Motives behind this movement revolve around concerns over lost revenues, intellectual property issues and security. This situation is creating a rift between some plan rooms, architects and the repro shops who have historically reproduced blueprints for plan room members and are the ones who claim they stand to lose the most if the situation continues unabated.

Setting the Stage

Plan rooms have long been a repository for blueprints and are an invaluable component for the building industry, particularly in the bidding phase where contractors review plans and decide what projects to bid on. In the days before the Internet, contractors, subcontractors and others would physically travel to the plan room to access these plans.

With the advent of the Internet, plan rooms have found that posting these plans online saves customers time and money because plans can be downloaded, viewed and in some instances, printed at the member's office or by the plan room.

But some members of the reprographics and architectural communities contend plan rooms are uploading documents without seeking permission from the architect or the building owner. In many cases, plan rooms offered outside the reprographics community offer no limits to access whatsoever.

"Plan rooms are scanning and copying even though these plans are copyrighted and aren't offering any kind of document control and we're blowing the whistle on them," says Kevin Rowe, president of Western Blueprint Co. and WorldPlanRoom.com, a service that provides a secure location for viewing and ordering plans.

"Once these things are on the Internet, you have no idea who has these plans," opines P.J. Vidani, president of Green Bay Blueprint Company in Green Bay, Wis. "Building owners and architects don't always realize their plans are being posted on a Web site or that those plans are now available for viewing by plan room members and others," says Vidani. "They'll never know because there's no paper trail."

"Architects don't even know that their intellectual property is being compromised," adds Jim Inzeo, vice president, of A&E Graphics in Milwaukee, Wis.

Brenda Hartwig, reporter with F.W. Dodge Corp., one of the oldest national construction, news service publishers and plan rooms in existence, offers a different perspective.

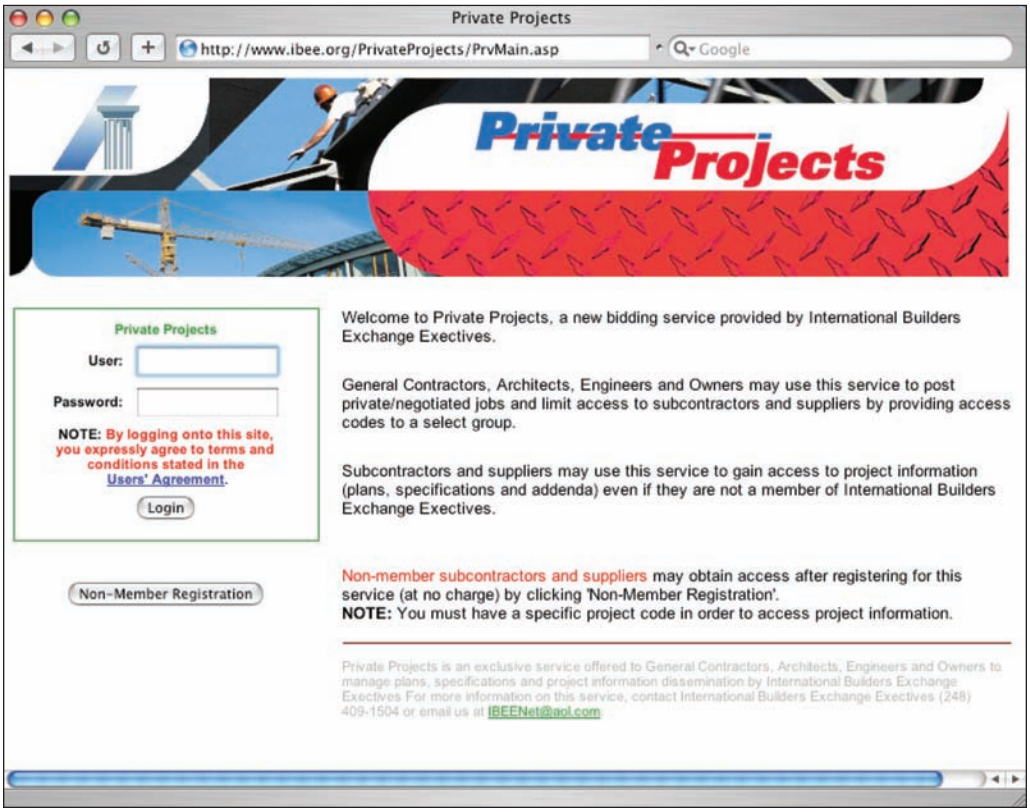
In the days before the Internet, contractors, subcontractors and others would physically travel to the plan room to access these plans.

"Most of our customers aren't downloading plans for copying," says Hartwig.

For Hartwig and many other plan room operators, posting this information electronically is a natural.

"We had to do something to be more competitive and our customers wanted to go electronic," says Hartwig.

She reports one customer is saving $10,000 annually on company cars and insurance because they can do estimates online rather than physically driving to the plan room and viewing plans. Another customer is doing



Adding Value

Some reprographics organizations, such as American Reprographics Company (ARC), owner of the PlanWell program, are creating their own secure Web sites for the posting of blueprints. ARC licenses this plan room program to the reprographics community.

"PlanWell has plan room capabilities plus full construction documentation and can handle all documents our customers would need to use," explains Kumar Wiratunga, director of digital operations for American Reprographics. For Wiratunga, it's not so much a product that allows repro shops to compete against plan rooms, but one that allows them to add value to their existing services. "We don't want to just be in the business of putting marks on paper," says Wiratunga. "We provide services beyond access to the document. That's what we need to focus on and what will make the reprographics industry more successful."

Similarly, WorldPlanRoom.com offers a tremendous amount of security. In order for someone to access plans of unclassified U.S. General Service Administration (GSA) projects, users must provide a Federal ID number, Tax ID number, a valid picture ID, a Dun & Bradstreet number and a business license number.

"We're taking the same disciplines found in banks and the insurance industry and importing that to the architectural world," notes Kevin Rowe, president of Western Blueprint Company and WorldPlanRoom.com.

Adds Wiratunga, "Collectively we need to focus on what's going on in the industry and react to it in a way that makes sense and doesn't erode the revenue streams we currently have."

twice as many take-offs and saving one estimator's salary plus the costs of company cars.

Reprographers Take Action

Rowe, Vidani, Inzeo and others aren't appeased and are out to inform architects via the AIA (American Institute of Architects) and building owners about this situation.

"We don't like plan rooms taking away our business," says Vidani. "We're also Americans and think this is sloppy. If we get the AIA on our side, we can reduce the insanity of uploading these documents on Web sites."

Are plan rooms uploading documents without asking permission?

"No," says Dennis Hall, president of Hall Architects in Charlotte, NC. "My experience is that they will ask you if it's okay to post your documents online," maintains Hall, who notes that in some cases it's understood up front that plans will be posted online. "Ninety-nine out of one hundred times we say 'yes' unless the client doesn't want it out there. Plan rooms are trying to serve their members and making the design professional mad is not the way to serve their members."

"Even if it is a copyright infringement, assuming [the repro community] is right, as a repro business they have no standing to complain," says Fred Butters, a former architect and an attorney with Thomas M. Keranen & Associates in Bloomfield Hills, Mich. "Only the author has that right."

Some architects *are* complaining. David Raysich, president and managing partner of Plunkett Raysich Architects, is one of those architects concerned about his intellectual property.

"Anyone can go onto these builder's exchange Web sites and view these documents," says Raysich. "Then to let anyone make a copy without our permission is terrible."

Raysich describes this situation as similar to what the music industry is going through with downloading music without permission.

"They're printing our intellectual property and making a profit off it," Raysich said.

Adds Butters, "When you give these plans to a plan room, the expectation is that they're going to make them available to the contractor community for inspection, and putting them on a Web site is just another iteration of that."

The Builders Exchange Network (BXNet), a non-profit association headquartered in Bloomfield Hills, Mich., also takes exception to the copyright infringement issue. BXNet represents more than 100 association-related plan rooms serving some 60,000 contractors in the U.S. and Canada.

"There's no question the drawing belongs to the design firm and we're not putting them up for the purpose of copying," says BXNet Executive Vice President Brenda Romano. "Plans are placed in plan rooms and posted electronically to facilitate the bidding process. If the design community doesn't know we are doing this, I'd be surprised because in some cases they're sending us electronic documents instead of paper."

She concedes there may be some architects who don't know.

"Then we have to do a better job of educating the design community on how this works," said Romano. "It's never been our intention to do this undercover in dark of night in a trench coat."

Romano doesn't agree with those who say these plans are being posted for anyone to see.

"You need to be a member of an association and you need to go through pre-qualification," Romano explains.

She adds that plan rooms have established sophisticated tracking procedures that can tell who looked at the plan, for how long and what section of the plan was viewed.

Meanwhile, Rowe stands firmly beside Vidani and Inzeo in believing things are out of control.

"Our industry is in huge violation of protecting information," says Rowe. "We need to know who has these plans and who is printing them."

A Time of Transition

Romano describes this as a transition time for the building and construction industry and that those who are crying foul are trying to stem the tide of technology.

"This is not a new concept," says Romano, who believes that posting documents electronically isn't all that different from when plan rooms were making this information available to members on microfilm. "What's new is using the Internet. This has been going on for the past eight to 10 years, but has been rapidly accelerating recently."

Unfortunately, she says, when people hear 'Internet,' they think an open public forum, and she emphasizes that this is most definitely not the case.

Even Vidani admits uploading of blueprints to Web sites is being driven by technology issues and by customers.

"You can't fight technology and customers like it," concedes Vidani.

But that's not going to stop him from trying to put a stop to what he sees as an insecure and irresponsible way of doing things.

Reviewing the Issues

Besides copyright infringement, two other issues keep cropping up: security and lost revenues. In the aftermath of 9/11, some individuals note that blueprints of hospitals, airports and schools can be easily accessed thus creating a security risk.

"Plan rooms are in total violation of security," responds Vidani. "If something happens, it will reflect poorly on the entire industry."

"It would be foolhardy of us to create anything that loose in structure," responds Romano. "We've taken some sophisticated steps to protect the integrity of the drawings. Our relationship with the architect depends on it."

"Plan rooms in general do a very good job of policing these documents," adds Hall. "There's probably nothing on these drawings that sensitive. Every general contractor and sub-contractor has access to that information and just by nature of having something constructed, that information is public," says Hall. "This is kind of a red herring. You can go on the Internet and even get plans of the Pentagon."

Looking past intellectual property and security issues, perhaps the biggest concern of the repro community is lost revenues. Rowe believes that for plan rooms to survive they have to get into the print for pay business.

"I-Square Foot and Dodge Reports are in the repro business, yet don't want the hassles of document distribution,"

Some members of the reprographics and architectural communities contend plan rooms are uploading documents without seeking permission from the architect or the building owner.

says Rowe. "In many cases they don't tell the architects they are doing this."

Hartwig and Romano disagree.

"Maybe a small minority of plan rooms are reproducing documents but not full sets," says Romano. "My feeling is

Raysich describes this situation as similar to what the music industry is going through with downloading music without permission.

that most plan rooms don't have this capability and don't want it. Plan rooms do not want to be print shops. We're not set up for it nor do we have the equipment. We have limited ability to make copies for the convenience of our members but in many cases, business is being referred back to local reprographic firms."

"We've had an engineering copier in our plan room for years and only sell a few copies a month," says Hartwig.

She also points out that few of Dodge's customers have plotters and doesn't think this would represent a serious loss of income for repro shops.

"The prime contractors and sub-contractors will still need plans," maintains Hartwig. "We'll never get away from paper."

Hartwig also points out that when Dodge puts work out for bid, they have the repro company's name on the reports as a company that will handle the reprographics work.

That doesn't appease folks like Vidani who eventually sees this situation eroding revenues.

"We see it as a future problem and want to nip it in the bud," says Vidani. "If we lose 20 percent to 30 percent of our business, it's going to put a lot of people under."

Solutions

A number of solutions have been proposed to this problem but none seems to have universal appeal. One is placing a watermark across the blueprint by the architect or reprographer with a notation that this is not to be posted online. Other solutions involve posting of non-printable PDFs versus TIF files. The latter solution still won't stop someone from viewing a plan and stealing a design, but Inzeo says it will at least make it more difficult.

Other reprographers are protecting their revenue stream and adding value by offering customers plan room services. American Reprographics Company's PlanWell program and Western Blueprint Company's WorldPlanRoom.com Web site are two examples of how repro firms are looking to add value (see sidebar).

Vidani believes the system needs an overhaul. For one, owners must be notified in writing how their plans will be distributed. He also contends that plans shouldn't be allowed on Web sites where they can be downloaded and routinely printed.

"Only secure Web sites that show a 'thumbnail' sketch of the plan should be allowed," adds Vidani.

In addition, Vidani says repro shops should only issue plans to authorized subcontractors and that plans should be issued with a deposit and returned once the bidding process is completed and/or after construction. Most significantly, he believes repro shops must notify plan owners who has copies of those plans.

"I love the Internet," says Vidani. "I post drawings on my Web site but I don't allow them to be downloaded and printed for security reasons. If plan rooms like Dodge would function like a repro shop and keep records of who got what for owners and architects, I'd be okay with it."

Hartwig concedes that if architects or building owners don't want their plans uploaded to the Dodge Web site, they'll honor that request. Hopefully, she says, they'll reconsider and we can come up with a solution that will allow us to upload plans. Similarly, Romano acknowledges that architects want assurances that if plans are uploaded to a Web site, an end user can't print them unless they go through a local repro shop.

"We have the ability to do that, but it's a pain on our end," says Romano.

Ultimately, the issues being raised on both sides may be part of a natural evolution of the industry, and transitions will have to take place, whether the various players like it or not.

"None of us think we're going to turn the clock back on the electronic distribution process; it's too convenient," says Romano.

Meanwhile, Inzeo is a bit more optimistic after a recent meeting with plan room representatives, architects and members of the reprographics community.

"At least there's a dialogue where there wasn't before and hopefully we'll find a solution that meets everyone's needs."

Raysich isn't so sure and wouldn't mind cutting the plan rooms and building exchanges out of the loop altogether.

"It's our intellectual property and if we're not satisfied, we're not going to release the information to them," Raysich said.

"Plan rooms have been around for a long time and for all of this time there's been a cordial relationship between the plan room and the architect," notes Romano. "The relationship between plan rooms and reprographers has historically been pretty good. We don't want to change that. The last thing we want to do is create an us against them mentality."

Rowe admits that it's unrealistic to assume that some sort of meeting of the minds will take place and the issue will be resolved to everyone's liking. While some would like to see some sort of national standards in place, Rowe concedes that this would be difficult.

"This is an industry where everyone does things a little differently."

In the end, Rowe feels the architectural community will have the final say so on this issue.

"That's who we all work for," says Rowe. ●

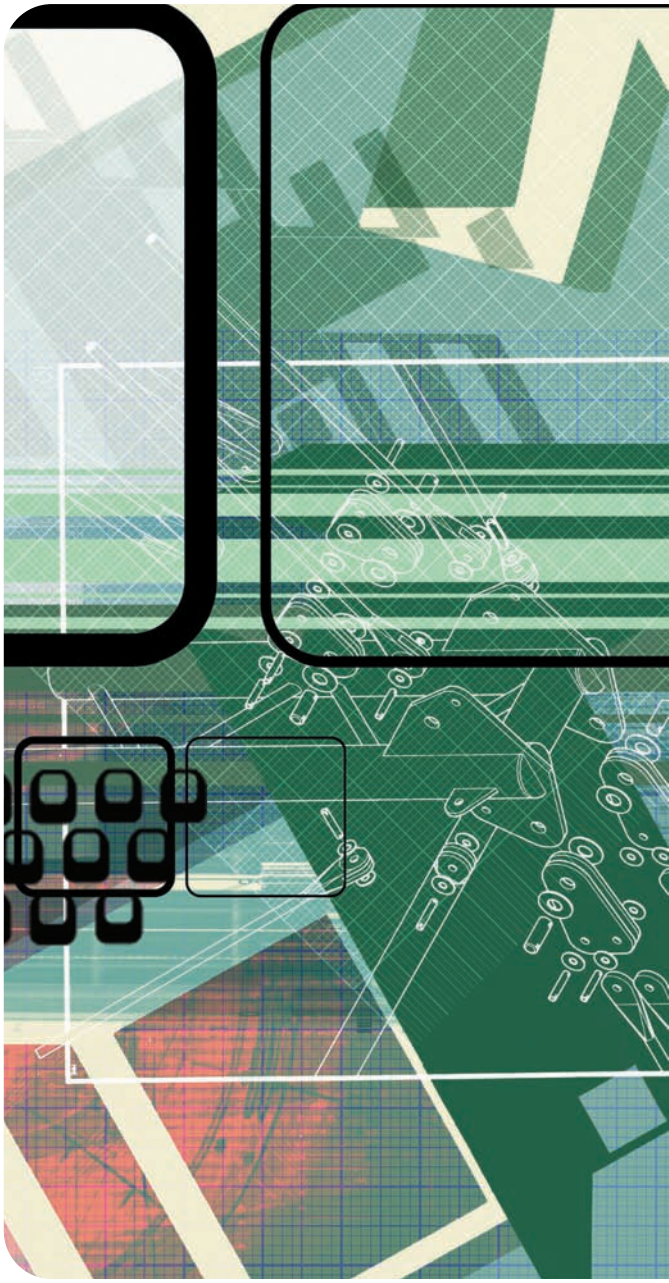
Scott Cullen is a freelance writer and editor who has been writing on imaging technologies and office equipment trends and issues since 1986. You can reach Cullen at culcom@voicenet.com.

IRgA Continues to Monitor Activity

The IRgA continues to work with its members on the sensitive issues created by growing technology use. Several sessions at the IRgA 78th Annual Convention and Trade Show in South Florida focus on reprography, plan rooms and electronic file transfer.

Watch *REPRO REPORT* for continuing coverage.

Plan rooms have established sophisticated tracking procedures that can tell who looked at the plan, for how long and what section of the plan was viewed.



A Look Back – A Look Ahead

By Rak Kumar, Retired President and CEO of Océ Display Graphics Systems

How It All Started

During the last five years, use of wide format digital printing for all types of short run graphics has become widespread. However, the use of digital techniques to produce wide format graphics goes back some 20 years when Harry Bowers first used a Xerox ECP-42 color electrostatic printer, his proprietary RIP software and a VAX computer to produce graphics.

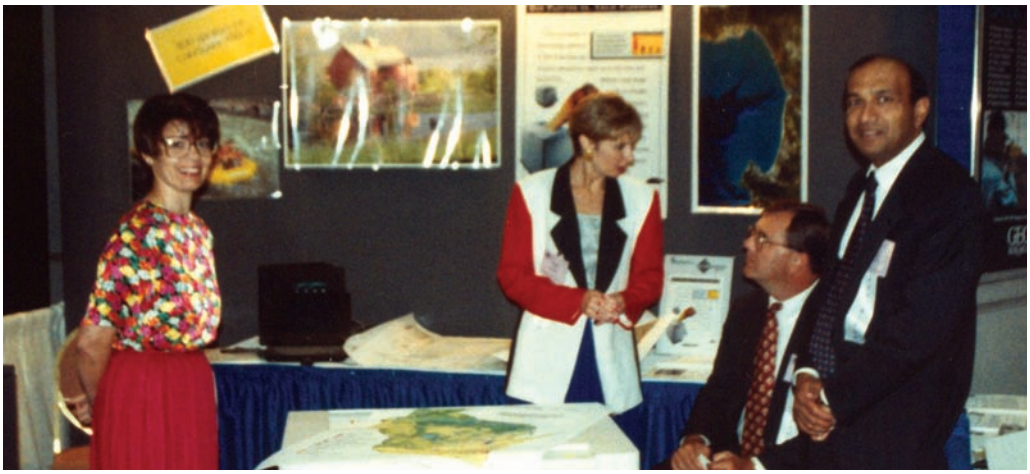
These early raster printers – which imaged media by putting down a collection of dots – were designed to replace the vector plotters for computer-aided design (CAD), mapping and seismic applications by offering users both line drawings and images from the same printer.

Due to the million-dollar price tag of Bowers' initial systems, the industry had to wait five years for the PC revolution to make digital printing an economic reality. In 1990, Bowers and Romit Bhattacharya of Specialty Toner Corporation started Cactus, the first true wide format digital printing systems provider.

Many of the early adopters of these systems were the reprographics service bureaus that saw this as a natural extension of their CAD plotting services. Repro shops found that they could add display graphics to their mix as a profitable product line with little additional overhead or capital investment. Since raster-based printers could produce both line drawings and images, a natural second market was born for this group of digital printing pioneers.

At about the same time Art Cleary (founder of Vutek) developed the first eight-foot wide airbrush system to produce very low-resolution, distant-viewed graphics, which was followed by a 16-foot wide airbrush machine. Soon after the market saw billboard printing systems from Vutek, and James Gandy's Signtech systems (Gandy is now with Gandinnovation, manufacturer of the Jeti printer).

The market continued to develop slowly until 1994. Then Raster Graphics, a Silicon Valley start-up, introduced the Digital ColorStation 5400 (DCS 5400), the first five-color, high speed, electrostatic printer designed specifically for wide format graphics applications. The DCS 5400 became one of the most widely used production printers for display graphics printing.



Rak Kumar (far right) on booth duty in the early days. Also pictured are Director of Communications Kelli Ramirez (far left) and former employees Linda Long (center left) and Mike Milliken (center right).

Around this time Onyx Graphics, a competitor to Cactus, organized the first digital printing users' group where users of Onyx IMAGEZ raster image processing software (which has since evolved into the market-leading Onyx PosterShop® brand) could exchange ideas and learn new techniques from each other.

In 1995, this group became the Digital Printing and Imaging Association (DPI) with a clear mission to promote wide format digital printing through trade shows and seminars. 3M's missionary work in promoting Scotchprint® graphics using these digital systems was also a key contributor to the development of the display graphics market. Today, the Scotchprint® brand is accepted in the industry as the highest standard for quality and durability.

Up through the mid-1990s, the use of these digital systems was still limited to large service bureaus including reprographics firms, photo labs and pre-press shops that could afford the $100,000 plus systems that were based on electrostatic or superwide airbrush technology. Printer manufacturers realized they had an opportunity to create demand for wide format printing, but needed to dramatically reduce the entry costs for print providers.

Repro shops found that they could add display graphics to their mix as a profitable product line with little additional overhead or capital investment.

Wide Format Digital Printing Goes Mainstream

The next major breakthrough in this industry took place when LaserMaster (now ColorSpan) introduced a low cost inkjet system based on an Encad CAD printer. Shortly after that, Encad introduced its own graphics printer and became a darling of Wall Street. These printers were widely used for indoor applications such as exhibit

Right: Rak Kumar (left) discusses 5442 shipment with Vice President of Manufacturing Dave Devine.

graphics, point of purchase displays, event signage, posters and promotional displays.

Finally, HP entered the market and became the defacto standard for low cost printing systems overtaking the market developed by ColorSpan and Encad. This signaled a technology shift, away from the expensive (though fast) electrostatic machines and toward affordable (though slow) inkjet technology. The challenge to printer manufacturers was to find a way to increase speed while keeping capital costs reasonable.

The Océ Arizona 180 is one of the most successful outdoor graphics systems in the world.

In 1996, Raster Graphics introduced the first outdoor-durable high-speed inkjet printer called the Digital Screen Press Arizona (now known as the Océ Arizona 180). This printer, along with 3M inks, became one of the most successful outdoor graphics systems in the world. The graphics produced on these printers adorn buses, trucks, London taxicabs, buildings and airport and shopping center walls.

On the superwide front, Vutek continued to dominate the industry while a number of new players from Israel including Nur, Matan and Idanit, began to emerge in this segment. These superwide machines are popular for creating vinyl billboards, oversized banners and building wrap panels such as those used at the 2002 Olympic Games in Salt Lake City. Today, the superwide segment is almost saturated, and is beginning to see some competition from Chinese vendors, though this is still mainly limited to Asian markets.

For the first 15 years of this digital revolution, the screen printing industry took a 'wait-and-see' attitude to wide format digital printing. Curiously during this period, the reprographics industry did not take advantage of its early entry into this field, to aggressively expand beyond their architectural/engineering/construction customer base. Many new digital-only service bureaus were formed to expand the market beyond paper graphics into bus wraps, banners, textiles, point of purchase graphics, etc. Consequently, there is no single vertical market – repro shops, photo labs, screen printers, service bureaus – that holds the majority market share for producing wide format display graphics.

In the late 1990s, some digital printing shops began taking a serious look at textile printing. While the technology had previously existed with electrostatic printers using dye sublimation inks and heat transfer presses, the promise of direct printing to fabrics using inkjet technology became alluring as a way to increase revenue. Textile printing, however, has remained a niche market and has not caught on as other application-driven markets, such as vehicle wraps.

HP held onto its number one status in the low cost market until 2003, when a small Japanese company called Mimaki introduced a low-cost solvent inkjet printer that could print on a wide variety of uncoated media, dramatically lowering the operating cost of these printers and making a substantial dent in HP's dominance of this market segment.

The Emergence of Flatbed Technology

During the last few years, printer manufacturers finally realized that screen printers needed the ability to print on rigid materials while providing sufficient performance to make short volume printing possible. The introduction of a high-speed flatbed printer in 2001 by Inca Digital, a small UK-based company, led screen printers to embrace digital printing on a wider scale. Now flatbed printers dominate the industry trade shows and press, and have captured the attention of all segments of the market because of their ability to offer many potentials: reduced set-up costs, faster job turnaround, wider range of rigid and flexible substrates, reduced or eliminated workflow bottlenecks and reduced materials and operating costs. This technology also promises to open new markets, from traditional point-of-purchase/display graphics to unique items such as custom furniture.

Every day, many new applications are expanding the use of digital printing to produce wide format graphics. Flatbed printers are imaging onto snowboards and tabletops; roll-based solvent printers continue to produce miles of pressure-sensitive vinyl materials for vehicle wraps; and high-quality thermal inkjet printers dominate the exhibit graphics industry. Trade shows are filled with banners and displays outside the exhibit floor, and offering the opportunity for exhibitors to 'sponsor'

a wide format graphic has become a source of revenue for some of the industry associations that produce trade shows. This industry is also expanding into developing countries through the availability of very low cost systems and inks from Chinese manufacturers.

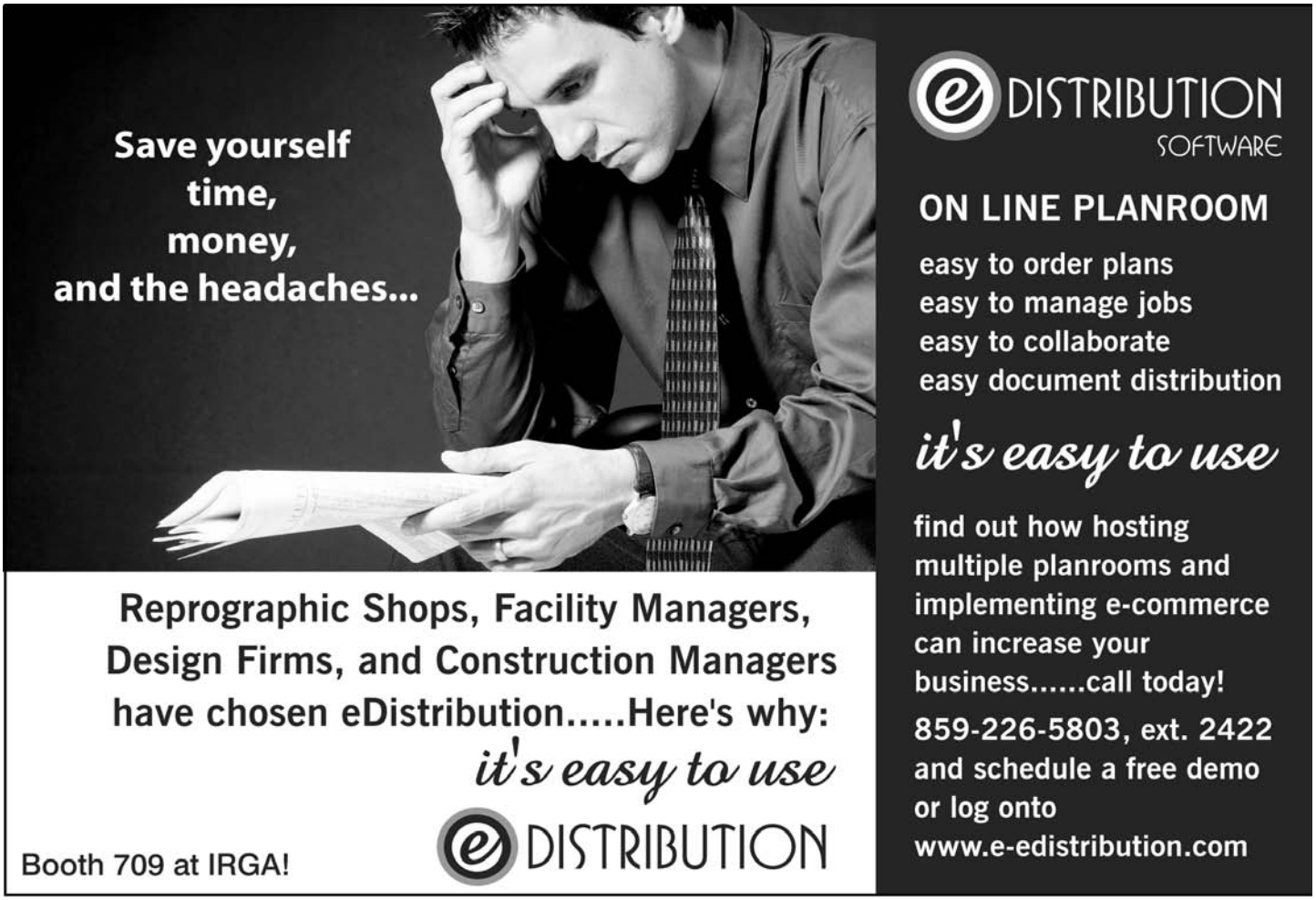
Increasingly more of the traditional screen printing jobs are being done on digital printers. One significant acknowledgment of the adoption of digital printing is seen in the name change of one of the largest industry organizations – SGIA. In the early 1990s, it was SPAI (Screen Printing Association International), then changed its name to SGIA (Screen printing and Graphic Imaging Association) when digital printing was still in its infancy and the DPI was placed under its auspices. Late last year, the organization changed its name yet again to Specialty Graphics and Imaging Association.

What the Future Holds

Looking to the future, the environmental concerns with today's solvent inks will drive the industry to soft solvents and ultraviolet- (UV) curable ink systems. The UV curable ink systems will become the standard for production printing applications due to their environmental safety, as well as their flexibility, in the wide range of media that can accept UV inks.

As for the print engines themselves, image quality will continue to improve and emerging gray scale inkjet print head capabilities will be

The DCS 5400 was the first five-color, high-speed electrostatic printer designed specifically for wide format graphics applications.



Printer manufacturers realized they had an opportunity to create demand for wide format printing, but needed to dramatically reduce the entry costs for print providers.

able to produce photographic quality prints. In addition, price performance and raw printing speeds of digital systems combined with lower ink prices will begin to encroach on more of the traditional short-run printing methods which have been based in photographic and screen printing technologies. The quality of Chinese manufacturers' products will continue to improve and this will further facilitate the use of digital over traditional methods.

On the systems manufacturers' front, it is not yet clear whether the ink manufacturers – Sericol (investors in Inca), 3M, Sunjet, Flint – will become the dominant players, or if the equipment manufacturers – Vutek, Océ, Nur, Mimaki – will still have a role to play.

One final observation: with the exception of Vutek, all of the early pioneers including Xerox, Cactus, Onyx, Signtech, Raster Graphics, LaserMaster and Encad have been acquired or no longer exist. This consolidation has been good for buyers of digital printing equipment by promoting the survival of only the best technologies and providers. ●

Thank You Rak

The IRgA thanks Rak Kumar for his dedicated service to our industry and wishes him the best on his retirement.

About the Author

Rak Kumar retired from his position as president and CEO of Océ Display Graphics Systems in February 2004. He was previously responsible for the daily operational activities of Océ Display Graphics Systems, composed of Raster Graphics, Onyx Graphics and Cymbolic Sciences which were acquired from Gretag in 2000.

Prior to its acquisition by Océ, Kumar was executive vice president of Gretag Imaging Group and general manager of the Professional Imaging Division. Kumar joined Raster Graphics in 1991 as president and chief executive officer, and is widely credited with successfully steering Raster Graphics from the relatively flat CAD and GIS markets to the burgeoning display graphics market.

Prior to Raster Graphics, he held management positions with Digital Equipment Corp., Precision Image, Phoenix Data Systems and Applicon. He holds a master of business administration degree from the University of British Columbia, and a master of mechanical engineering degree from the University of New Brunswick.

Your Future Depends On It

By Debra Thompson

There is no doubt that it is very difficult to be a business owner today. Every day, owners must develop strategies to overcome new challenges and deal with a changing workforce and tougher competition. This must be done in the midst of an economy that is still suffering the impacts of 9/11. The good news is that it looks like the economy may finally be bouncing back, as many businesses report they will be adding staff this year.

The downside is that we are going to experience additional challenges finding the top performers we all want in our business. The baby boomers are retiring and there is going to be a significant shortage in the labor pool as the smaller X and Y generations replace them.

It already is becoming more difficult to find the right people. A recent article in *Business2.0* provided some other sobering statistics about the fact that technical education is not keeping pace, resulting in critical shortages in certain technical skills. Our industry will be affected directly by a shortage of desktop publishers and database administrators. Consequently, the keys to your future success are your ability to retain your top performers and your actions to get them fully engaged in the business.

Marcus Buckingham highlighted this issue of engagement in his book, *First, Break All the Rules*. This book reported on the most extensive survey of companies and their managers ever conducted by the Gallup organization. This study reported on the low number of employees who were really engaged at work. The key aspect of this information was that the companies that achieved higher employee engagement levels also achieved higher profitability and employee loyalty and retention. When the dust settled, they found that determination of the engagement within an organization can be simplified to just 12 questions (The Q12). Count the number of "yes" answers to these questions and you will know whether your employees are engaged or not. Sample questions include:

- Do I know what is expected of me at work?
- In the past seven days, have I received recognition or praise for good work?
- At work, do my opinions seem to count?
- In the past six months, have I talked with someone about my progress?

Roger Herman and Joyce Gioia sounded a similar theme in their book, *How to Become an Employer of Choice*. They cite the habits of businesses that are successful in attracting and retaining high performers. If you examine the Buckingham questions and the Herman and Gioia recommendations for becoming an employer of choice, you will find the same message: the essential ingredient for keeping employees and keeping them happy is frequent and open communication.

Whether you call it feedback or flowdown or surveys or meetings or briefings, the central focus needs to be on keeping the employees aware of what is going on. It runs the gamut from discussing the status of the company to providing feedback on individual performance.

It involves goal setting for the company and for individuals and reporting on the status of meeting those goals.

It involves win-win situations so that both the owners and the employees feel that what is going on in the business is for their mutual benefit and if they work together, they can make it even better than it is.

It involves taking care of your people. And it thrives under enlightened leadership, providing the vision, the resources and the motivation that makes things happen.

A recent issue of *Employment Management Today* discussed a survey conducted by RoperASW involving nearly 3,000 in-depth interviews of employees. "When employees receive regular performance reviews, nine out of 10 express faith in senior management, more than five out of 10 are optimistic about the company's future and more than seven out of 10 say they are loyal to their employers."

The keys to your future success are your ability to retain your top performers and your actions to get them fully engaged in the business.

Just think! The one area where you could improve confidence and loyalty is in the giving of the much dreaded performance appraisal. This fact correlates with data from the books mentioned earlier. Employees want to know what is going on, they want feedback and they want to know how they fit into the future. In reality, it all comes down to communication.

Your future success depends on a competent, stable, well-led workforce. Central to that is the need to find the right people, define the processes that get the job done right every time. Above all, engage in the communication that will hold it all together. Work now to build a workplace that attracts and holds top performers by focusing on open and honest communication. ●

Debra Thompson, president of TG & Associates, is a speaker and consultant specializing in human resources in the graphics industry. You can reach Thompson toll-free at 877/842-7762 or debra@tgassociates.com.

China's Growth is Our Opportunity

By Brett Scully

I don't think you can pick up a business-related magazine without reading about China. Most articles are spewing the same thing, outsourcing and job displacement.

As a person who has traveled to China well before it was an open economy, I see the birthing of this now free market, awakening giant as a miraculous opportunity for other countries to spark their own national GNPs. Think about it. If even 10% of the Chinese are driving cars in 2015 or 2020, that will mean more than 100,000,000 cars will have to be produced to feed the demand, which is equal to almost two years the current worldwide production capacity of all auto companies in existence today.

China has quadrupled their GNP in the last 25 years.

How will that demand be met? From new Chinese companies, new joint ventures between Chinese and Western companies, as well as more cars built here in the good ol' U.S. of A. That is only one of the myriad other industries that will blossom from having a soon-to-be gigantic trading partner that needs our goods and services as much as we need theirs.

We've Seen It Before

Some people have a hard time with this view on globalization. However, I'm sure the corn and soybean farmers of 1840 in Cleveland would have never believed that factories and steel mills would supplant their fertile Lake Erie farms before our Industrial Revolution turned this part of Ohio into a manufacturing base.

Americans are resilient folks. We must realize that economic evolution is taking jobs to China, and this is because they are slowly transitioning themselves from a predominantly agrarian society to their new Industrial Age, just as we did more than 150 years ago. During this time, America is also transitioning into a predominantly service economy, with more hard goods slowly being displaced by intellectual assets and technical proficiencies.

How long might it take for our society to make such a massive change in education that would allow the displaced factory worker a modern profession in this new world? You actually see this happening today by the record amount of 'Wall Street Darling' for-profit colleges and new sprawling technical/medical/service education offerings catering to those wanting to learn new a new trade.

This American resilience and ingenuity will slowly allow the natural progression of our current fiscal culture to reach a new plateau.

Shifting Powers

China will change the world in more than an economic sense. As in all periods of time, one predominant nation ruled the world. Since the Industrial Revolution, the United States has held that post. Look back a few hundred years and it was the English and Spanish vying for the number one spot. Go back 500 years and you find the Turkish, and still further back a couple millenniums you see the Romans and Egyptians as the folks calling the shots.

In 50 years, it is going to be China. By way of its exponential economic growth and its slowly changing political climate, China could mathematically be three to four times our GNP by the year 2100.

Nations will have to continue to unite in existing regional groups to help quell the rough patches that will ensue from this changing of the guard. Three secondary powers will end up bonding even further – the NAFTA group (U.S., Canada, Mexico, Caribbean and South America), the EURO-zone faction (All Europe, and soon to be Russia and Middle East), as well as ASEAN partners (Japan, Korea, Australia and South East Asia).

Trade within these groups will be almost completely without tariffs or barriers, and trade between groups might have minor restrictions for political reasons, but will trade in a Darwinian survival of the fittest exchange, truly exploiting the real capabilities and resonance of every country in the world.

Consider the Possibilities

I don't mean to spook anyone with my theories. I will be long dead by the time any of these predictions could ever come to fruition. I'm just a fellow that likes numbers and statistics, and the digits spell it out. China has quadrupled their GNP in the last 25 years. If they ever achieve our standard of living (another quadrupling of their current per capita GNP over the next 25-50 years), their economy would surpass all of the other nations output in the world, COMBINED.

What does any of this have to do with blueprinting? The contemporary skyline of both Beijing and Shanghai today are as cutting edge as *Architectural Record* could have ever imagined. American and European architectural firms have designed more than 80% of the skyscrapers in the 15-year boon of these great, now ultra-modern, cities. I don't think you can find one architect that would take the opposing view that the emergence of this growing nation has benefits only for any advancing generation of tomorrow. ●

Brett Scully is vice president of finance at Lakeside Blueprint in Cleveland, Ohio. You can reach Scully at bscully@lakesideblueprint.com.

The Liberation of the Geeks

By John Marquardt

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of a secure 802.11 wireless network." I don't recall the exact phrasing, but it was something like that. So after 200-plus years, we finally achieve the dream of our founding fathers. Wireless networking, also called "wi-fi" by the *committee for lame and inaccurate terms*, has come on so fast and strong that it's common at…Starbucks!

802.11 is a real committee within the IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers) that sets guidelines for manufacturers to follow in developing networking hardware and software. They're called the 802 committee because the IEEE divides up the specifications with a numbering system (they're engineers, cut 'em some slack) and networking stuff is 802.

Standards within 802 are further specified by a decimal. For instance 802.3 are Ethernet networking standards and 802.11 are wireless networking specs. Within 802.11 are further specifications delineated by letters. At the moment, the popular ones are 802.11b (11Mbps) and 802.11g (54Mbps). There are other standards like 802.11a and a more secure draft called 802.11i and several others with varying purposes.

Wi-fi works a lot like Ethernet. You can have two computers with wi-fi cards, and they can talk to each other with no other hardware involved. This is called 'ad hoc' and usually you need to set a checkbox in the driver somewhere to run in ad hoc mode. More often, you'll have several computers with wi-fi cards all connecting to a network through a wireless access point. This works just like a hub or switch and allows several computers to talk to each other or the Internet through the wireless link; the area around a wireless access point is usually called a hotspot.

It's important to note that 802.11b is very common and inexpensive but runs at only 11Mbps, or about the same speed as 10baseT Ethernet. 802.11g runs at 54Mbps and these devices will usually step down to 11Mbps to talk to a 802.11b access point, but the 802.11b-only devices won't step up. It's also important to note that a single 802.11b device talking at 11Mbps over a 54Mbps access point will force ALL the other wi-fi devices on that network down to 11Mbps – this is the major hurdle in my mind for getting more 'g' hotspots to the public – especially for free.

With a wired network, you don't have to worry too much about random people using your network. Surely you would notice a wire coming out of your building, running across the street and into the van outside.

With wi-fi, all of your communications are just 'out there' floating around and anyone within range can see what's going through your wi-fi connection. Some people even do what's called war-driving where they drive around with a high-gain antenna and a global positioning system setup all connected to a laptop. As they find hotspots, they are mapped and cataloged. Later they are uploaded to a database available on the Internet. Related to this is a practice known as war-chalking. A chalk line is drawn on the street or sidewalk with special characters describing the speed, type, range and services of a wi-fi network.

There is a way to encrypt the communications called WEP – wired equivalency protocol. With WEP, you create a key that each computer and access point must have in order to communicate. This key can be in 64 or 128-bit flavors, with the latter being more secure. Unfortunately this encryption method has been cracked and it's fairly trivial to download a utility that determines the key for a particular network in a couple days or so. It's possible to rotate keys, but that can get cumbersome.

Despite this, if you're going to have a wi-fi network you MUST enable WEP at the very least. It might not be hard to break into your network, but it's harder than an unprotected network so at least make yourself an undesirable target.

With wi-fi, all of your communications are just 'out there' and anyone within range can see what's going through your connection.

There is also a security spec that addresses this well-known WEP crack, but it's not as common. If you're a corporation, one solution is to place the access point outside your firewall. This puts people into basically the same place as if they were connecting from a random point on the Internet. If you need to access services within your network wirelessly, standard practice is to use that access point outside your firewall and use a virtual private network to get inside.

Wireless doesn't mean painless. It is liberating, fun and can even save money, but it should be approached like any other network idea you implement. Know the product, stay on top of patches and firmware updates, audit frequently and never let your guard down. ●

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

QUICK VIEW

Companies in the News:

AIIM

Consolidated Reprographics

Drytac Europe

InteliCoat Technologies

Mutoh

Océ North America

3M Commercial Graphics

Xerox Corporation

Drytac Europe Receives Award for Quality

Drytac Europe received the international quality award ISO 9001 by the Minister of State for Industry and the Regions from Jacqui Smith MP at the company's manufacturing facility in Bristol. Drytac Europe, which manufactures laminating and mounting products for the graphic arts and framing markets, has recently achieved the ISO 9001 standard for its entire management operations, an outstanding achievement for a manufacturing facility that has been in operation for only six years.

Speaking at Drytac, Smith said: "The cornerstone of a quality organization is a good management system, no matter how large or small the company is. This award shows that Drytac has identified its customers' requirements and has satisfied them. I am delighted to be here today to present them with this symbol of recognition. I'm most impressed that Drytac, as a young company, has been able to achieve ISO 9001 – especially in today's competitive market. I am also particularly pleased that the Government's Knowledge Transfer Partnerships Initiative has allowed the company to acquire new knowledge and expertise."

Accepting the award on Drytac Europe's behalf, company owner and director Richard Kelley commented: "Achieving ISO 9001 has meant 18 months of hard work by all Drytac Europe employees. As part of our commitment to quality improvement, we will continue to develop our systems and service, and have already set ourselves a new goal of working towards the Investors In People standard."

Group Forms to Develop PDF Standard for Engineering Work

Several industry organizations and vendors are working on establishing standards and best practices for use of the Adobe PDF (portable document format) in engineering workflows. The initiative is led by AIIM (International Authority on Enterprise Content Management), and NPES (Association for Suppliers of Printing, Publishing and Converting Technologies). The PDF Engineering (PDF/E) Working Group brings together representatives from Adobe, Agile, Bentley Systems, Hewlett Packard, Océ, Intel, PTC, Layton Graphics, Dell and UGS PLM Solutions.

"The working group's goal is to achieve consensus on a standard that will improve document collaboration and print accuracy within engineering workflows, both inside companies and with extended enterprises of partners, suppliers and customers," said Ivan Koon, senior vice president, Intelligent Documents Business Unit, Adobe. "An established standard will enable organizations to streamline engineering workflows that incorporate diverse sets of complex documents, resulting in improved productivity and the ability to more quickly deliver better products to market."

The joint committee formed under AIIM and NPES will identify issues to be addressed as well as proposed solutions, and will develop a draft document for presentation to an international joint working group of the ISO (International Organization for Standardization) for development and approval as an international standard. The proposed draft document is to be submitted to ISO in December 2004, with an anticipated publication date of mid-2006.

You can register to participate on the committee at www.aiim.org/pdf_e.

Xerox CEO Urges Printing, Imaging Industries to Shift Focus

Too many organizations focus on the wrong side of information technology – putting too much emphasis on the "technology" and not enough on the "information."

That's the message Anne M. Mulcahy, Xerox Corporation chairman and chief executive officer, delivered in March during her keynote address to 2,000 professionals involved in digital printing, imaging, content management and information technology at the AIIM/On Demand Conference and Exposition in New York. She said Xerox is determined to help customers with smart document management services that free people to spend more time on content and less time dealing with technology issues.

"The "I" in I.T. is getting bigger, and the "T" is getting smaller," Mulcahy added. "Today the focus is on what really matters: information. It's not just about finding better ways to print; it's about better ways to work."

Océ Announces Successful Completion of Business Process Improvement Initiative

Océ recently announced the successful completion of its Enterprise 2 (e2) business process and technology platform. e2 consolidates business processes – such as order entry, customer service, finance and payroll – of separate Océ North America operating companies onto one technology platform and enables Océ to provide a single point of contact to customers for products and professional services.

The completion of the e2 system is the latest stage of a broader, ongoing Océ North America initiative to perfect the customer experience, increase operational effectiveness and drive sales growth through improved coordination of its operating companies. Since November of 2003, Océ has combined its two largest operating units in North America, expanded its Six Sigma process improvement program, re-branded its document management services unit as Océ Business Services and consolidated its North American finance unit.

"Of all the process improvements made over the past year, e2 best represents the concept of One Océ," said Ronald E. Daly, chairman and CEO of Océ North America. "Océ is known globally for its technology leadership and its ability to please the customer with extraordinary service. With e2, we're extending our process improvements to meet our customers' drive towards operational excellence and working to become the easiest company our customers do business with. Improved services and efficiencies through e2 will serve as catalysts for increased customer loyalty and growth."

The e2 project consolidated seven business processes onto a common technology platform running SAP® and other commercial and proprietary applications. With e2, authorized Océ associates can access information on order entry, service, finance, sales and marketing, human resources and payroll, logistics and professional services. The standardized systems will be used across Océ North America operating companies and will link to corporate systems in Venlo, the Netherlands, the location of Océ corporate headquarters.

3M Receives ISO 9001:2000 Certification

3M Commercial Graphics has received ISO 9001:2000 certification following an audit by Underwriters Laboratories Inc. ISO 9001:2000 certification addresses 3M Commercial Graphics' quality management systems in order to demonstrate 3M's capability to meet customer requirements, including understanding customer needs, meeting their requirements, keeping customers informed and measuring satisfaction.

"This certification further illustrates our strong commitment to providing quality products and consistent service to our customers," says Tom Bohlsen, ISO coordinator for 3M Commercial Graphics. "To receive this designation, we not only have to have well-defined and working processes in place to ensure customer satisfaction, we have to demonstrate and document that we're following those vital processes to the benefit of our customers."

The certification, which required more than a year of preparation and days of independent auditing, covers not only the development of products, but also covers the steps used to introduce new products and 3M's customer service. ISO 9001:2000 registration is valid for three years. ISO-certified companies must successfully complete extensive external evaluations to ensure ongoing conformity to international ISO standards in order to retain certification.

InteliCoat Technologies' Magic® GFPHOTO Media Helps Mutoh Win DIMA Shoot-Out

InteliCoat Technologies, a manufacturer of coated paper, film and specialty substrates for imaging and electronic technologies, announced that its Magic® GFPHOTO photo paper for solvent ink jet printers played a critical part in Mutoh's recent win at the DIMA (Digital Imaging Marketing Association) Digital Printer Shoot-out at the February 2004 trade show in Las Vegas, Nev. Mutoh's Falcon II outdoor printer won first place in the 50" to 72" solvent ink jet category with an image printed on Magic GFPHOTO media.

Magic GFPHOTO is a solvent ink jet-compatible 6-mil glossy photorealistic paper ideal for high-resolution gloss posters and displays. Its specialized coating offers a high degree of whiteness and color gamut with an extremely smooth surface for high photographic resolution.

"As one of the first to market with a solvent ink jet glossy photorealistic paper, we are gratified to see the positive response of the digital imaging community to the product," said Ed McCarron, product manager at InteliCoat Technologies. "It is clear from this award that there is a real demand for – and appreciation of – high-quality coated media as a welcome alternative to vinyl media for the new generation of solvent ink jet printers."

NEWS BITS

Océ Names Presidents for Two North American Units

Océ appointed Joseph R. Marciano the president & CEO of Océ Business Services, Inc. and Patrick Chapuis the president of the Wide Format Printing Systems Division of Océ North America, Inc. Marciano has been interim president of Océ Business Services since last July, and Chapuis has been vice president of the Wide Format Printing Systems Division of Océ France S.A. since November 2002.

"We have conducted worldwide searches to find the best leaders to take each of these businesses to the next level in their development," said Ronald E. Daly, chairman and CEO of Océ North America. "It is gratifying that we were able to find the top leaders within the Océ organization."

Daly continued, "While we were searching, Joe Marciano made a number of significant contributions as the interim president of Océ Business Services, making him the obvious choice to lead this company full time. Joe helped OBS gain significant new business from major clients, shepherded the company successfully through its re-branding from Archer Management Services, attracted a large amount of technical talent from the Océ organization and elsewhere to bolster OBS' capabilities in document management solutions, and initiated a large investment in management training and development for the OBS organization. These achievements have made OBS a more effective provider of productive document management solutions for our customers."

"Patrick Chapuis has been running the wide format business of Océ France and is a rising star in the Océ group," Daly added. "His tenure in Paris has been distinguished by the addition of a number of significant new accounts. We are pleased to move Patrick into this larger assignment."

Chapuis takes over the Océ Wide Format Printing Systems division from S. Joyce Virnich, interim president of the division. Virnich returns to her position as vice president, marketing for WFPS.

Consolidated Reprographics Gets a New HQ

Costa Mesa-based Consolidated Reprographics, a leading provider of imaging services in Orange County, the Inland Empire, Arizona and Nevada, has completed its move to a 43,000-square-foot facility at 345 Clinton Street in Costa Mesa that combines its corporate office, warehouse and largest production center under one roof. CR's airport-adjacent production facility at 3182 Pullman Street has moved to the new address. The new phone number for CR's Costa Mesa facility is 714/751-2680.

"This move benefits our clients as well as our company," said CR President Mark Sipes. "We're totally digital now – the ammonia-using diazo machines that used to turn out odorous bluelines are gone, replaced by more ecologically sound, archival-quality plain-paper-copy machines. We're easier to find – the building is just off the 73 freeway at Bristol and Red Hill. And it brings together many of our departments that were housed in different buildings, some miles apart, which will undoubtedly increase our efficiency and internal communication."

Additionally, Consolidated Reprographics acquired Action Blueprint, Corona, Calif. Action has been providing architectural printing services for 16 years. The company's name has changed to CR, but owner-operator Wendy McManigal and her eight employees will continue to provide their personalized customer service along with printing services in large- and small-format black & white and color, mounting and laminating, plus incidental drafting supplies and plotting media.

"More services and products will soon be added that will make work much easier and more efficient for the area's professionals," said Sipes. "With this location in Corona, CR is strategically positioned to better serve the entire Inland Empire."

CR's other Orange County locations include Anaheim, Laguna Hills and Tustin, in addition to two Las Vegas shops, San Bernardino and a new location in Phoenix. The company's Web address is www.consrepro.com.

Looking for a Little Guidance?

The IRgA offers publications designed to help reprographers succeed. Please check https://secure.sba.com/irga/secure/store/index.cfm to see publications that may provide you with valuable tips and techniques. Members can purchase publications at highly discounted rates:

Title	Member Price	Non-Member Price
Job Description Sample Guide	$50	$150
Fundamentals of Large-Format Color Management	$25	$50
Managing Large-Format Digital Files	$10	$20
Mounting and Laminating Equipment and Materials Buyers Guide	$45	$90
Large-Document Copier Buyers Guide	$25	$50
Digital Glossary	$7.50	$15
Copyright Law Basics	$15	$25
Strategies for Successful Transition in the Digital Era	$7.50	$15
Selling Wide-Format Digital Imaging to Retailers	$5	$10
Marketing to Litigation Graphics and Presentation Art Markets CD-ROM	$35	$70
Marketing to Potential Trade Partner Markets CD-ROM	$35	$70
IRgA 2002 Compensation and Benefits Study	$99	$249
2003/04 IRgA Operating Ratio Study	$99	$249
Industry Journal Vol. 1 - Business Strategies	$30	$99
Industry Journal Vol. 2 - Facilities Management	$30	$99
Industry Journal Vol. 3 - Small Format Imaging	$30	$99

Regional Reprographic Conventions

Central Reprographic Association
September 30 - October 2, 2004
Marriott Hotel
Dallas, TX
Contact: Phil Hudson
940/723-0591

Eastern Regional Reprographic Association
October 21-24, 2004
Hilton Mystic
Mystic, CT
Contact: Joan Rowley
860/444-9627

Southeastern Reprographic Association
October 13-16, 2004
Hyatt Regency Atlanta
Atlanta, GA
Contact: Dan Floyd
404/256-0112

Western Regional Reprographic Association
September 16-19, 2004
Resort at the Mountain
Welches (Mt. Hood), OR
Contact: Monica Estrada
323/728-9500

New IRgA Members

Active

Winslow Reprographics Inc.
Sacramento, CA

West Coast Lines
Brookings, OR

Advanced Blueprint & Copy, Inc.
Saint Louis, MO

Image Direct
Chicago, IL

Associate

Royal Sovereign International
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IRgA Membership Directory: Keep it Handy

IRgA Headquarters has mailed the 2004 Membership Directory to all members. To the untrained eye, it's simply a well-organized listing of names and contact information. To those in the know, it is the single most important resource you can have.

Why?

Thinking of adding a certain piece of equipment? Call a fellow IRgA member in southern California or upstate New York and benefit from their experience. Struggling to package a new service? Maybe that fellow you met at the IRgA convention in South Florida can provide a marketing angle you haven't thought of. What was his name again? You get the idea. Expert assistance is at your fingertips in the membership directory.

Contact Erin Beekhuis at IRgA Headquarters to update your directory listing. Beekhuis can be reached at ebeekhuis@irga.com or 312/673-5979.

Members: Post Free Classifieds Online

IRgA members are invited to post free online classified ads in the members-only section of the IRgA Web site. Each member company is allowed to post five ads at any given time, and ads will remain online for 60 days. Go to the members-only section of www.irga.com, and click Classified Ad Posting to take advantage of this member benefit and place your ad today.

Members: Online Training Available 24-7

Can't make it to one of the Mounting & Laminating seminars? Have some questions on the basics or just need a quick refresher? Members can access tutorials, a troubleshooting guide and an online textbook in the members-only section of www.irga.com. Select Online Education Series, and answers to some of the most common mounting and laminating questions are only a click away!

Be Clear with Your Employees – Put it in Writing!

Is it time to upgrade your employee handbook? Or perhaps you need to create one for the first time? The IRgA can help.

The newly released *IRgA Employee Handbook Sample Guide* includes handbooks from five IRgA member companies demonstrating industry best practices.

One print copy and one CD of the new handbook will be sent free to each member company. Additional copies can be ordered at www.irga.com. The member cost is $49.

The handbook was developed under the direction of the IRgA Education Committee, which includes Bryan Thomas, Thomas Reprographics, Richardson, Texas; Mike Carter, Lynn Imaging, Lexington, Ky.; and Betsy Kahn, Copycat Print Shop, Inc., Wilmington, N.C.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TOPIC	PAGE
Letter from Management	3
Introduction	4
Information	5-7
Hours of Work and Earnings	8-9
Benefits	10-17
Days Off	18-26
Employment Policies and Terms	27-39
Necessary Rules	40-44
A Closing Word	45

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Get real.
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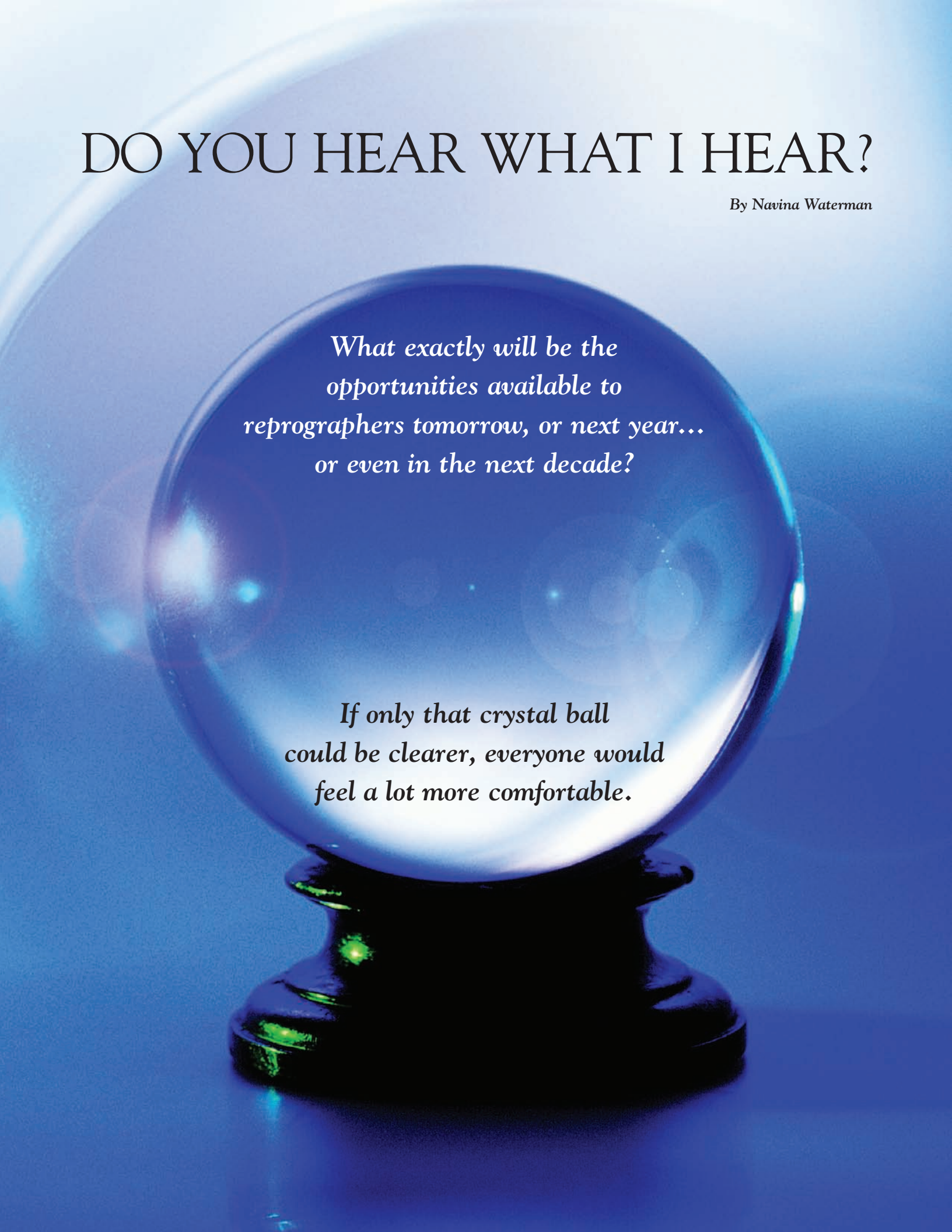
Visit us at the IRgA show in booth #308 May 19-22 in Hollywood, FL.
Call 925-945-7296, or email info@planwell.com for more information.

DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?

By Navina Waterman



What exactly will be the opportunities available to reprographers tomorrow, or next year… or even in the next decade?

If only that crystal ball could be clearer, everyone would feel a lot more comfortable.

On Larry King Live*, Bill Gates once shared these three keys to success:*

- *Being in the right place at the right time*
- *Having the vision of where your industry is going*
- *Taking immediate and massive action*

You may or may not like Microsoft or its CEO, but there is no quibbling with the fact that Bill Gates knows about success.

Being in the Right Place at the Right Time

Many industries, including reprographics, are in the midst of change. Generally a time of change presents both opportunity and danger. For now, let's assume that you are in the right place at the right time.

Having the Vision of Where Your Industry is Going

Notice that Gates' emphasis is on the future, not the past or even the present. What exactly will be the opportunities available to reprographers tomorrow, or next year...or even in the next decade? If only that crystal ball could be clearer, everyone would feel a lot more comfortable.

Let's start with the foundation. What is your most important asset? Customers! Granted, there are many other necessary factors that all work together – employees, management, capital, equipment, ideas, technology, attitude and much more. But without customers, none of the others would matter. Just how well do you know these customers who are so all-important to your business? (see sidebar)

Changing Business Dynamics

While the reprographer's customer mix has changed over the past few decades, AEC clients still account for a majority of most companies' revenues. Understanding where the AEC industry is headed is therefore key to providing it with meaningful services. Just what is happening in AEC?

Interestingly enough, firms in the AEC community currently face many of the same challenges as those in the reprographics community. For instance, an animated discussion regarding increasing commoditization of services, which occurred at A/E/C Systems in Orlando in February, could just as easily be held at the IRgA Convention in May. These business challenges are brought about by a changing business climate – shifting demographics, globalization, technology, governmental regulation (and/or deregulation), as well as the effects of terrorist attacks.

AEC customers are demanding more… and want it faster, with increasingly compressed timelines. The keynote speaker at A/E/C Systems, Oren Harari, could just as easily have been speaking to reprographers when he said: "Exponentially rising customer expectations demand speed and quality."

He went on to explain that the best competitors must be willing to change and improve.

"How can we one-up the technology rather than hunker down and protect the past?" asked Harari.

If you can't differentiate your services, someone else will.

Harari warned, "New competitors often come from totally unexpected directions."

Change is rampant in the AEC world. Many trends created outside the AEC industry have put their stamp on how AEC firms do business. For instance, increasing demands for mixed use developments, downtown revitalizations (which often include major public projects such as sports stadiums and/or museums and cultural centers) and 'green' building projects force firms to adapt to a customer base with vastly different demands than a few decades ago. But the need to make each project profitable for each of the business entities involved hasn't changed.

Generally a time of change presents both opportunity and danger.

For an industry that has long consisted of three distinct entities – the architect or designer, the engineer and the constructor – the increasingly touted integrated design-build methodology brings considerable change in overall dynamics. This essentially vertical integration creates long-term relationships among the three, rather than the former shorter-term, project-by-project relationships of the more traditional design-bid-build methodology.

Since reprographers have long been at the center of the 'bid' aspect of design-

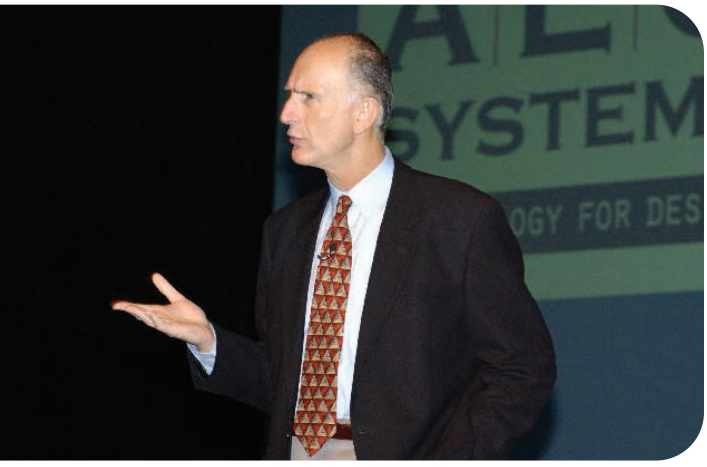
bid-build, the threat of its disappearance from the equation deeply affects our industry, particularly as design-build gains market share. Of equal importance is the corresponding shift in influence. Who are the decision makers in design-build? In addition to the architect or engineer, reprographers must clearly now develop closer working relationships with owners and developers.

What is your most important asset? Customers!

Bidding continues to be a major component of most projects, but even here the implications for the reprographer are changing.

Peter Morin of Rhode Island Blueprint notes that, "The biggest change I've noticed recently is that we are seeing more and more bid sets being distributed via CD. This can cut out a lot of print revenue. Although some of it will be recaptured through the subs, who do not have the in-house printing capability, a lot will never be seen by the repro house."

Reprographers must find ways to replace this lost revenue.



Oren Harari exhorted attendees at A/E/C Systems to use information technology to cut costs and improve customer service while differentiating services from more static competitors.

Information Technology Impact

In addition to changing business dynamics, AEC firms are also facing changing information technology needs and capabilities.

In a liability reduction/risk management session at A/E/C Systems, Michael Ingardia of SMC in Overland Park, Kan., stated, "The good news is that computer technology represents the fastest changing industry in human history. The bad news is that computer technology represents the fastest changing industry in human history. Today's new toy is tomorrow's extinct dinosaur."

Computer related trends and issues, which specifically affect both the AEC and reprographic industries, include:

- Software systems integration
- Imaging and workflow
- Wireless technology
- Intranet and Web portals
- Project management
- Security

A lot of these seem inextricably intertwined. For the most part, reprographers either share the same issues or are involved in providing services that address them. The key is to find unique ways to resolve problems and market solutions.

Software systems integration involves being able to share financial, project, marketing and human resources information between systems. A major breakthrough would eliminate multiple entries of the same data into separate data systems. In many offices, this could exponentially increase productivity. While this is a popular topic of conversation, unfortunately it is much more complicated than it sounds. A number of software vendors are tackling the problem, albeit still in quite limited ways.

Imaging and workflow involves scanning and integrating paper and digital workflow. Some reprographers have made inroads into providing services to address these needs. This is definitely an area with potential for the reprographics industry.

Wireless technology currently creates quite a buzz in the AEC industry. Field personnel gain communication directly with each other, office personnel and outside entities. Many in the industry expect wireless to revolutionize many aspects of project management.

Intranet and Web portals. Brett Scully of Lakeside Blueprint in Cleveland provides a great analogy with the airline industry:

"Think about it," Scully said. "Five years ago, you call XYZ airlines, wait for pre-recorded BS (be told not to hang up or you would lose your place in the queue, and they would be with you in approximately 10 minutes, if you were lucky). When you finally got the agent and the long clock started ticking, it would still take (another) five to 10 minutes to find and pay for a flight. How do we do it now? I go to xyz.com, log in, pick my flight and pay – all in about 45 seconds!"

"The same is true for blueprinting," Scully continues. "In the OLD WORLD, a customer calls, 'I'm looking for the XOXO project. How many electrical drawings are in the set? How much is it to purchase? I'd like two sets sent to XXX plumbing'... tick/tick/tick...blah blah blah...more time's wasting. We might spend as much as five to 10 minutes with the customer trying to communicate opaque information – just like the wasted time on the phone with XYZ Air's representative! In the New World, log into the plan room, look at drawings, order drawings, pick delivery destination – DONE. Give the power of transparent information to the client, so they don't have to waste time trying to extract it from us."

Project management. Our industry has long revolved around paper in various shapes and sizes. Will it continue to do so? At A/E/C Systems, almost every speaker at some point alluded to the need to do away with paper. One speaker even gave a detailed and

Christian Burger, Burger Consulting Group, discussed key trends in technology and how to plan for them at an A/E/C Systems seminar. "You must figure out how to digitize, index and store your mountain of paper or get overrun," said Burger.

precise account of how paperless reporting functions would result in a 25% overall increase in productivity. Yes, we have heard about and been joking about the 'paperless' society for many years and yet there seems to be more paper than ever. So is it merely a change in type or is there in fact a paperless future for our society?

In an interview back in 1994, Bill Gates opined, "Today, the PC is used as a primary tool for creating documents of many types; word processing, spreadsheets, presentations. But by and large, when you want to find a document, archive it or transmit it, you don't really use the electronic form. You get it out on paper and send it. In the coming information age, access to documents, broadly defined, will be done electronically, just by traveling across a network. I'm quite content this will happen. I could be wrong about how quickly…"

That future has been fairly slow to arrive, but has gained tremendous momentum in the last few years.

Earl Reinke, formerly GM of Gilmore Reproductions in Ottawa, has unique insight into both the reprographics industry and the AEC community. He is currently the project manager for the design team of the new Canadian War Museum, a $100+ million construction project slated for completion in May 2005.

"Speaking from my experience on the current project," Reinke states, "there is still paper and lots of it, but we are looking for and finding ways to cut down on and/or eliminate the paper. A lot of information (RFIs, DIRs, CIRs, field memos, site visit reports, supplemental instructions and information bulletins) used to be printed in multiple copies and distributed. Now it is usually done via e-mail as a PDF attachment and the recipient then prints a copy or a portion of it if needed."

Consider mark-ups, documents that are not electronic by nature. Reinke states that on his project, even these are being scanned to PDF. He foresees an increasingly digital focus.

"The tools are now there to do mark-ups digitally as well," Reinke said.

In the past, it has been difficult to get 'the big picture' of a drawing on a small screen without a lot of panning and zooming. This problem is about to disappear. Technology advances now continually decrease the cost of increasingly large in-office flat screens – a 3' x 4' screen is not an unreasonable expectation for the near future. The inconvenience of being able to see only a small portion of a drawing at a time will soon be gone.

Another of the difficulties with going paperless has been resolved, or is in the process of being resolved, by

Walk the Walk

Hopefully you are talking to your customers every day. Instead of discussing the weather or the local sports franchise, consider asking each of them tougher questions such as:

"What is the most important business challenge you have faced in the last three months?"

or

"Just where do you see your industry/ firm headed?"

Understanding customers' problems, hopes and visions is crucial in deciphering where reprographics should be headed. If you only ask them how your company might help them, you will only get responses based on what they think you can do for them. What you really want are ideas and thoughts that can help you think outside the box.

How well do you know your customer?

- Their demographics
- Where they spend their dollars
- Their perception of you
- Their perception of your competitor
- Their satisfaction and/or dissatisfaction with current service
- What they need
- What they value
- How they perceive cost, value and price

Does your customer know you? And all the products and services you provide? **Is how they perceive you consistent with how you perceive yourself?**

Ask the tough questions, and then learn from the straight answers.

wireless technology, which gives better access to information of all types at the construction site. The development of digital 'paper' – essentially computer screens that can be 'rolled' up like paper – in several different formats may also be adopted. Many technical problems have recently been solved and this will likely be a viable product within the next few years. Digital paper would give the construction site access to full-size paperless drawings.

Reinke remarks, "This may not be as far away as we think. The demand and acceptance of it is there now!"

These business challenges are brought about by shifting demographics, globalization, technology, governmental regulation, as well as the effects of terrorist attacks.

Security is another hot topic in the AEC community, both physical and electronic. Terrorist attacks have created changes in design demands. While somewhat subtler, but nonetheless insidious, computer attacks have put the business world on notice that digital information is always at risk. Since sharing information is at the heart of AEC business, how to handle and keep data secure while still making it available to those who need to know is a tricky and intricate business.

In the liability reduction/risk management session at A/E/C Systems, Ingardia warned about dangers inherent in a 'paperless' scenario.

"With digital files, at least someone has access to read, copy, alter and forward information," Ingardia said. "Multiple saved versions of the document are often digitally indistinguishable from the original."

Ingardia went so far as to state, "The paperless office is not only a myth, it is a dangerous concept."

Revision control is clearly an important aspect of digitization of information. On the one hand, our customers are looking for paperless solutions and on the other hand, most of them are currently drowning in practically uncontrollable piles of paper.

Focus on Your Customers

Where are the opportunities for reprographers? Focus on your customers. What solutions to the bottlenecks or inefficiencies of 'the new way' of doing business can we provide? Consider which types of paper and digital services will remain in demand….and where.

Then look outside of the box. AEC firms are under tremendous pressure to fast track. Buildings that used to take three years to build are now taking two, made possible by faster communication and just-in-time supply management. Find ways to improve the speed, accuracy and control of all the information required to make this possible. Consider that the construction manager is increasingly required to be an information manager, a task that most are ill-equipped to handle. Can we make his job easier?

> *"The first rule of any technology used in a business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency."*
>
> *– Bill Gates*

One of the challenges Reinke faces is with proper document management, whether digital or paper. Some project participants do a much better job of it than others.

"In the hard copy world, it was usually a very efficient secretary or file clerk who did all of the filing," Reinke said. "Now the whole office staff is filing – often poorly trained and with few office standards."

He points out that electronically misfiling a document can be even less

forgiving than its manual equivalent. His design team uses AEC Central – Gilmore Reproduction's plan room. In addition to giving increased document control and accessibility during the project, he anticipates that the database at the end of the project will be an incredible asset.

Determining What's Ahead

As Gates pointed out, it's important to consider not only what is happening now, but also what will happen in the industry in the future. What will happen in the next 10 years?

Although data is increasingly becoming digital, it is still often 'dumb.' PDFs, for instance, are static.

Building information modeling (BIM) is in its infancy. BIM offers smart and coordinated data information management from beginning to end of a project lifecycle. It works both ways – change the drawing and the data changes…or change the data and the drawings change. Equally important is that it opens the way for automated data crunching and analysis. Smart information is on its way. If we are smart, we will place ourselves in the middle of that smart information.

While 3D has been important in the engineering community for some time, it is still in infancy on the design side. Before it is even established, it may be supplanted by something better.

NGI staff discussed reprographic solutions with A/E/C Systems attendees. NGI is a reprographics company headquartered in Tampa with locations in several cities throughout the southeast.

A/E/C Systems' attendees considered wide format color output options at the ABC Imaging booth. ABC Imaging is a reprographics company headquartered in Washington, D.C. and serving clients in many cities.

Consider that the construction manager is increasingly required to be an information manager, a task that most are ill-equipped to handle.

Virtual reality (VR) is coming closer to reality. This is much more than visual 3D. Envision Star Trek's Holodeck to imagine the potential with VR. What role will it play in A/E/C? Frankly, nobody is really discussing it yet, but at the least it looks like a natural successor to 3D for walk-throughs. (Editor's note: www.vrl.umich.edu can give you some idea of what is being developed.)

Security is bound to be an increasingly important factor in both construction and document management. If reprographers can position themselves as secure repositories and distributors of information, even this problem can be turned into an opportunity.

Taking Immediate and Massive Action

Harari could just as easily have been speaking to reprographers when he concluded that the most important factor for a business to succeed is how you differentiate.

"Globalization gives everyone the same information, resources, technology and markets – the ability to put these pieces together fastest and most economically separates winners from losers," Harari said.

This is your mission. Ladies and Gentlemen, start your engines! ●

Navina Waterman managed a reprographic shop for several years in the 1980s, held various technology and marketing positions with ReproCAD for 10 years and has been an independent reprographics consultant for the past four years. She can be reached at navina@earthlink.net.

Reprographers: Think Safety to Prevent Losses

Do you have an unlimited budget for insurance costs? Are insurance premiums becoming an increasing percentage of your overhead costs? Is there anything you can do to control these costs?

Of course, the answer to the first is no and the answers to the second and third questions are likely a resounding yes. Insurance costs are increasing for all industries, and reprographers are no exception.

Insurance costs are increasing for all industries, and reprographers are no exception.

In a previous article, we outlined a grouping of Workers' Compensation classifications that may be applicable to your business. We strongly recommended that you work with your insurance agent to make certain you are properly classified, both to meet state bureau regulations and to control the upfront and audit premiums appropriate for your business.

Insurance premiums are also affected by the claims that you have. Providing a safe work environment for your employees is critical to the longevity of your business. Some areas of concern for a reprographer are related to lifting, driving safety and ergonomics at the computer workstation.

Losses in any area can affect your Workers' Compensation modification, which must be applied by any carrier who writes your insurance. The goal is to have a modification that is lower than 1.00 and to have a loss experience that is better than average for your industry. Your losses are measured against those expected for the industry and that ratio goes into the calculation of your modification.

How do you control your losses and your costs? We go back to the safe work environment.

Lifting is one of the leading loss causes for reprographers. No one person should lift more than 50 pounds. Employees should be encouraged to wear back braces when lifting, to use proper lifting procedures (such as bending from the knee to support the back as you lift) and to have a buddy system set up to help lift heavier items. Forklifts for large loads are always recommended. Forklift safety classes are a great idea to make sure that the employees properly load the forklift, thus avoiding turnovers and possible injuries.

Another loss leader is automobile accidents. This type of loss hits you from two different angles – your Workers' Compensation and your auto policy. Both can drive insurance acceptability and rates, so control of this exposure is very important.

Future articles will include more specifics on auto losses, but here are some critical issues. First, driver selection is a key factor. Make sure to run (or ask your agent to run) motor vehicle records on all new employees and conduct regular updates on all drivers. Their personal driving habits are likely to carry over to their work habits for driving. You want to look for minimal violations and no substance abuse violations. The company should have a driving policy that defines who is authorized to drive on company business. Seatbelt usage, compliance with all motor vehicle laws, accident reporting and discipline procedures should be outlined to all employees who may drive. Vehicle maintenance is also imperative. Checking of tires and oil changes are basic practices that must be followed.

Last but not least are claims involving the usage of a computer workstation. Back strains and carpal tunnel (wrist injuries) are two areas common for reprographers. Stress and fatigue symptoms from working at computer terminals can be avoided with good posture, good work habits and adjustments to equipment. It would be beneficial to conduct meetings to discuss appropriate posture, keyboard angles, monitor contrast, wrist rests and stretch breaks.

Even the very smallest business can benefit from proper control of loss-producing conditions – think of the indirect cost of downtime if you are without a key worker – and the best protection starts from the top down. The issues presented here are not meant to be a full synopsis of what can occur nor are they a warrant of a complete and finite list of every issue you may encounter. However, they can provide some food for thought and hopefully will prompt you to ask your agent and carrier to help you in areas where you feel your operation could use some expertise.

Editor's Note: As an association member and/or an insured with the IRgA program, the IRgA-approved carrier (St. Paul Travelers Companies) and agent (Acordia of Indiana, LLC) can provide tools to help reprographers assess their risks and possible controls. Take advantage of this opportunity. ●

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.

3M Debuts New Cold UV Inkjet Printer

3M Commercial Graphics Europe and Spühl AG Switzerland introduced the 3M™ Printer 2500UV, a wide large-format, high-productivity, three-in-one UV printer for roll-to-roll, flatbed and textiles. This piezo ink jet printer consistently provides graphic manufacturers top quality components, from only one source including hardware, software, a wide variety of qualified materials, optimized inks, finishing and a broad range of services. 3M's approach for the commercial graphics markets also includes the option to license the Scotchprint® Graphics brand.

Manufactured in cooperation with Spühl AG St. Gallen, a manufacturer of engineered products, the new printer will allow graphic manufacturers to expand current capabilities and enter into new markets.

The printer's unique, light-curing system features a cold UV system in which chilled water is pumped between the UV lamps and substrates. This removes about 85% of the infrared heat, allowing the printer to print on temperature-sensitive substrates such as delicate fabrics, plastics and large, rigid sheets without warping. The printer's linear drive system does not use belts, resulting in a very high drop-on-drop accuracy. The maximum resolution is 726 x 600 dpi and is capable of four- and six-color mode printing, with a maximum speed of up to125 m^2/hour.

For more information, go to www.scotchprint.com.

Canon U.S.A. Launches DR-7080 C Color Production Scanner

Canon U.S.A., Inc., a subsidiary of Canon Inc., and a supplier of high-speed document scanners, recently rounded out its offering of high-performance DR Series scanners with the DR-7080C, a high-speed color document scanner designed for low- and mid-volume production users.

Incorporating the state-of-the-art scanning engine developed for the newly released Canon imageRUNNER C6800 multifunction device (MFP), the DR-7080C delivers outstanding image quality with optimized throughput and ease of use. The DR-7080C is the first product to leverage both imageRUNNER and DR-SCANNER technology.

Based on Canon's advanced image processing technology, the DR-7080C achieves the same speed, up to 70ppm in color, black-and-white or grayscale, at resolutions up to 200 dpi. The DR-7080C also introduces to this market several innovative scanner features found on Canon's top-of-the-line, high volume model, the DR-9080C Color Production Scanner, recipient of Better Buys for Business Scan-to-File guide's 2003 Editor's Choice Award, and mid-volume DR-6080 Production Scanner. The expanded capabilities include a high-speed USB 2.0 or SCSI interface, intelligent automatic image rotation, MultiStream™ support and 600 dpi optical resolution. Additionally, the DR-7080C comes bundled with Canon's scanning software, Capture Perfect v2.1. A dual sheetfed and flatbed scanner, the DR-7080C features an automatic document feeder (ADF) that can hold up to 100 sheets. The highly versatile device can scan long documents up to 21.3".

The suggested retail price of the DR-7080C is $7,995. The Canon DR-7080C will be available in May 2004 through authorized Canon U.S.A. dealers, select distributors and Canon resellers.

For more information, go to www.usa.canon.com.

Apago Previews New Version of PDF Enhancer

Apago, Inc., a software developer of PDF workflow tools, announced version 2.5 of PDF Enhancer at the OnDemand/AIIM show. New features include document optimization and assembly capabilities and tools for the creation of electronic editions of print magazines and newspapers.

"PDF Enhancer is already one of the most powerful PDF optimization and repurposing tools available," said Dwight Kelly, president of Apago "We have continued adding powerful new features, such as font subsetting, to PDF Enhancer based on feedback from our customers. The process of converting a print magazine or newspaper to an electronic edition is labor intensive and expensive. Online content resellers, such as Newstand and Zinio, can charge publishers a processing fee for each issue. The new tools in PDF Enhancer can quickly convert a print magazine to an e-magazine, saving thousands of dollars in fees annually."

PDF Enhancer 2.5 can automatically merge single pages into one document, crop pages to the trim size, reduce the resolution of images, convert colors to RGB, remove unused elements, add metadata and secure the document to prevent unauthorized use. Newspapers often contain high-resolution half-toned images, which if simply scaled, would be illegible. PDF Enhancer 2.5 can "descreen" the half-toned images to produce a high quality grayscale image.

For more information, visit www.apago.com.

Océ PRISMA Solutions Tailored for Specific Business Environments

Océ recently announced the PRISMA Adaptive Workflow software family with four new solution sets designed to meet the specific needs of customers in a variety of business environments. Customers can still select from a broad array of PRISMA offerings, but they now have the added convenience of PRISMA solution sets geared to the application demands of their particular markets and operations.

The four new Océ solution sets include PRISMA for On Demand Publishing, PRISMA for Document Production Centers, PRISMA for Transaction Printing and PRISMA for Networked Office Environments. The new PRISMA solution sets deliver comprehensive end-to-end workflow capabilities and business benefits in easy to implement packages. Each solution set is specifically designed to

QUICK VIEW

Companies in Product Innovations:

Apago, Inc.

Canon U.S.A., Inc.

Konica Minolta

NUR Macroprinters

Océ

Spühl AG Switzerland

3M Commercial Graphics

add efficiency and speed the flow of work through consistent interfaces, an integrated design and advanced automation features. All of the PRISMA solution sets can also be further tailored, leveraging PRISMA compatibility with existing systems and processes to address the most urgent pain-points and business priorities of individual businesses.

The new Océ PRISMA solution sets are complete packages that include PRISMA Adaptive Workflow modules, Océ Professional Implementation Services, end-user training and robust servers. A host of options are available for the solution sets including software and server investment protection, data verification, document tracking, SAP support, and custom accounting, programming and integration services. These and other options provide additional capabilities to further simplify procedures and enhance the return on investment for Océ customers.

For more information, visit www.oceusa.com.

NUR Macroprinters Introduces NUR Fresco II Wide-Format Inkjet Production Presses and Faster NUR Tempo Wide-Format Flatbed Inkjet Press

NUR Macroprinters, a supplier of wide-format inkjet production printing systems for the out-of-home advertising market, introduced the latest new models in its NUR Fresco® series of wide-format production presses, the NUR Fresco II, and a faster version of the NUR Tempo™ wide-format flatbed inkjet press that includes new high speed operating modes at the International Sign Expo April in Orlando, Fla.

The new NUR Fresco II series replaces the NUR Fresco HiQ models in NUR Macroprinters' product line-up. The new NUR Fresco II models are expected to become the leading solution for print service providers that need both high quality and high production speeds.

The new faster version of the NUR Tempo can now deliver output at up to 882 square feet (82 square meters) per hour in four colors and up to 550 square feet (50 square meters) per hour in eight colors, making the machine faster, more flexible and even more productive than before.

"Based on the same, renowned platform as the current NUR Fresco machines, the new NUR Fresco II models add an impressive set of new features that take the NUR Fresco product line to new levels of productivity and versatility and make it an even more competitive product in the high-end segment of the market," said Itay Shalit, director of marketing at NUR Macroprinters. "We believe that the new capabilities make NUR Fresco II the most productive wide-format inkjet press in the market. And a new price point makes the unprecedented productivity of the NUR Fresco line even more affordable than before."

Adds Nachum Korman, president of NUR America, Inc., "Since its introduction at SGIA 2003, we've seen tremendous interest in NUR Tempo from both conventional graphics screen printers and digital print service providers. In the short time since the product began shipping, we've sold many units throughout the Americas. And we are experiencing heightened demand for product demonstrations from additional prospects at our New Jersey headquarters facility."

"The new speed modes for the NUR Tempo," continued Korman, "significantly increase the machine's overall throughput levels, which in the end means a faster ROI for our customers."

NUR Fresco II achieves higher levels of productivity, versatility and image quality. The new machines are based on the same platform as the original NUR Fresco machines, but add a new casing design (available with the

NUR Fresco II 3200 models only) and a variety of new features that take the NUR Fresco product line to a new level of efficiency. These features include:

- X-press 120 print mode with a speed of 1,300 square feet (120 square meters) per hour in 3200 models and 1,100 square feet (102 square meters) per hour in 1800 models
- Double-sided printing option for backlit applications (in 3200 models only)
- Improved NUR PrinTop operating software for improved ease of use including functions such as printed image preview, a job progress bar, enhanced calibration facilities and "Stop & Resume" and "Pause & Resume" options
- TRUE white-skip for improved productivity
- Optional vertical and horizontal cutters that allow for a complete tiling workflow and a streamlined finishing process

Older NUR Fresco printers can be upgraded to the NUR Fresco II performance level.

For more information, visit www.nur.com.

Konica Minolta Announces C350 and 1050 Products

Konica Minolta Business Solutions U.S.A., Inc. unveiled two new products at the On Demand Digital Printing & Publishing Strategy Conference and Exposition (On Demand), March 8-10, 2004.

Konica Minolta's C350 for the office workgroup environment features print/copy speeds of 35ppm B&W and 22ppm color, standard LL Enhanced PCL controller, standard network and advanced scanning capabilities and Simitri® polymerized toner. It offers options such as the Fiery® x3e+ controller with hot folders, auto trapping and spot-on color matching, booklet finishing and cover post-insertion. With the introduction of the C350, Konica Minolta is offering companies the chance to bring a high-quality color device into the office setting for the same cost as a mid-range B&W printer. For more information, go to www.konicaminolta.com.

Continue the Partnership...

Membership in the IRgA is an Ongoing Experience.

When asked to renew your membership, say YES, and reap the benefits detailed here for another year. Then, step up your involvement in the work of the association and see the impact…for you and your company, as well as the organization.

Contact the IRgA Headquarters at 312/245-1026 or info@irga.com to volunteer your services. There's no telling how great the IRgA can be when each partner contributes.

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- **Number of ads** – Acceptance of ads will be on a first-come, first-served basis.

Merchandise Mart

Océ 9476 PLOTTER/COPIER in "Scan to Print and Plot" configuration. Large quantity, available for immediate delivery. Good meters. Coming off Océ service, each unit has Océ "service letter". These are great machines for sale to end-users or expansion of FM operations. Call Tom McNew at DIGITAL ES 800/749-1138 or mcnew@digital-es.com.

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WANTED: $1,000 reward for information leading to the purchase of an Océ 9800. Contact Tom McNew, DIGITAL ES, 800/749-1138, mcnew@digital-es.com.

We Repair Skrebba Staplers. (Factory Authorized Service Agency) Model 23, 117 and all current models. Contact Zack & Associates Inc., 847/462-1460 or FAX 847/462-1580.

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FOR SALE: Xerox 8180 24" wide red and black printer. 36" wide scanner. Prints 1020-24X36 per hour. Reduces to 25% and enlarges up to 400%. Meter count-900,000. Asking price $6,500.00. Call Walter Walker at 925/674-0900.

FOR SALE: 6- Xerox 8855's; 3 Xerox Max 200's, please call Brett Scully eBlueprint.com at 216/281-1234, bs@2hr.com

Sintra/Gator cutter, Neolt 98" laser guided 1.18" electric board cutter-demo model $4850.00. Call 800/283-7290.

Opportunities

Midwest blueprint firm interested in acquisitions or investments from 50% to 100% in blueprint and related companies with sales of $3 million to $10 million. Looking for mostly financial and strategic planning involvement in ventures. Will pay annuity for operationally strong firms in any financial condition. Contact Brett Scully, Lakeside Blueprint, at 216/281-1234; e-mail: bscully@lakesideblueprint.com.

Positions Available

Wide/Grand-Format Imaging Specialist. Midwest graphics company seeks a Wide/Grand-Format Imaging Specialist. Candidate must be proficient in QuarkXPress, PageMaker, InDesign, Illustrator, Freehand, Photoshop, Publisher, Word, Excel and PowerPoint on both the Windows and Macintosh platforms. Must have experience outputting from PosterShop to large and grand format inkjet devices. Must be able to lift 100 lbs and have full range of motion for loading media. Experience on ScitexVision XLjet a plus. Fax resume to 312/357-0235 or e-mail to mal@emailbest.com.

Mounting & Laminating Supervisor. Midwest graphics company seeks a Mounting & Laminating Supervisor. Candidate ideally will have a minimum of two years experience supervising an M&L department. Must be proficient at various models of drymounting and laminating machines and substrates, seaming of vinyl and cloth banners, installation of vinyl letters and graphics, and use of manual trimmers and cutters. Must be able to lift 60 lbs. Experience in display graphic preparation and installation a plus. Fax resume to 312/357-0235 or e-mail to mal@emailbest.com.

We have several reprographic industry clients that are looking for motivated, relationship building sales people in cities throughout the U.S. These firms offer good compensation and benefits, long term employment with lots of room to grow, relocation, and more. If you are looking for a change, perhaps a new position, or just a new adventure... then one of these opportunities may be what you have been looking for. Please e-mail us at mblanekatz@earthlink.net. All inquiries and contacts will be kept completely confidential.

The IRgA – It's a 12-Month Experience

Steve Bova, CAE
Executive Director

It's here! After months of planning and promotion, the IRgA's 2004 Annual Convention and Trade Show has arrived. In fact, some of you may be reading this column onsite. For 78 years, the convention has been the industry's premier event – the one opportunity for the *entire* industry to unite and discuss important issues related to their business.

The convention is what the IRgA is known for. It's the only time the association comes face-to-face with its members – in a visible, tangible way. There is education, a trade show, social events, and lots more. Reprographers come for a variety of reasons.

In *The Experience Economy* by Joseph Pine, III and James H. Gilmore, the authors describe that work is a theatre and business is the stage. One can say the IRgA is on stage and creating an experience for those in attendance.

But fame is fleeting! The convention lasts but a few days. While the experience may be memorable, what about the rest of the year – what about those who could not attend? Where's the value? Where's the experience? Sometimes it's right in front of your face. You can't see it. You can't touch it. But it's there!

The Starbucks Experience

In *A New Brand World* by Scott Bedbury, former chief marketing officer at Starbucks and Nike, he explains that the coffee bean is a true commodity but is turned into a good when it is ground, packaged and sold. It's a *service* at the coffee shop, and an *experience* at Starbucks. The experience enhances the value, not the commodity itself.

Like reprographers, the IRgA is in the service business, which means the value of what the association provides is often intangible.

The IRgA Experience

I can present you with a menu of what the association offers and describe how value will be delivered in the future. You can then decide what's most valuable to you. Membership in the IRgA is indeed a 12-month experience.

For Less Than a Cup of Coffee…

The IRgA's fiscal year and membership cycle is August 1 – July 31, which means that members will soon be asked to continue their company's partnership with the association. As an alternative to looking at dues as an annual expense, look at it as an ongoing experience. You'll see that belonging to the association is a relatively nominal business expense over time.

Many IRgA member companies are smaller shops in the category of one to nine employees. For those that qualify for this membership category, the company pays less per month than for cable TV, and less per day than for a cup of coffee! For bigger shops, those with more than 50 employees, the monthly IRgA membership investment is equal to the cost of a dinner out or less than a Starbucks latte each day.

So, when you receive your membership continuation reminder in the next several weeks, consider the value offered to you and your company. Also consider that you need to participate, to step up to the counter and place an order, to have an experience.

The IRgA can only be as strong as its collective membership. The more members there are and the more successful the programs and services, the stronger the association can be and the more it can accomplish on your behalf.

We look forward to serving you! ●

Steve Bova, CAE, is executive director of the International Reprographic Association. He may be reached at 800/833-4742 or sbova@irga.com

The IRgA Menu

Sorry, no lattes, espressos or frappuccinos here. IRgA members have the following selection of delicacies:

- *REPRO REPORT* comes six times a year – chock full of industry news, trends and other information, as well as feature articles on important topics, new products, industry innovations and much more
- *REPRO REPORT Weekly* is sent 50 times a year to keep you up to date with what's happening within the industry and within the IRgA
- IRgA Discussion Forum – share ideas, ask questions and gain feedback from your peers throughout the year
- The Mounting & Laminating Seminar is run six times a year in various locations throughout the country, through our partnership with Drytac Corporation and GBC
- The Industry Journal Series continues this year with a publication in development on large color, which will be mailed FREE to all IRgA key contacts
- Salary Survey, Benefits Survey and Operations Ratio Survey, in alternating years to keep fresh data at your fingertips
- And, of course, the 2005 Annual Convention – which will be held May 11-13, 2005 at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas!

This is a partial menu to whet your appetite, as IRgA promises new and exciting ideas in the future. In the meantime, don't forget to renew your membership and take advantage of the full menu of advantages you and your company will enjoy.

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