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QX-Tools Customer Spotlight: Reader's Digest

International Publisher Reader's Digest Association, Inc. Uses QX-Tools to Streamline Fully Electronic Workflow

Coordinating and tracking the creation of complex promotion packages throughout several departments and through numerous stages of development and approval cycles requires teamwork, discipline, and the right set of tools. During a typical month, the Promotions Division of the Pleasantville, NY Reader's Digest Association, Inc. develops and produces 30 promotional mailings, each of which may include 5 pieces, or individual QuarkXPress documents, for a total of 150 QuarkXPress documents per month. In order to make her department's operation as efficient and cost-effective as possible, Promotions Graphics Technology Manager Laura Cappasso-Fiorenza searches out and tests a wide range of hardware and software products that will enable her staff to make the most of their fully electronic workflow. After evaluating numerous XTensions packages based on their implementation of specific tasks, Cappasso-Fiorenza's department settled on Extensis Corporation's collection of QuarkXPress XTensions, QX-Tools, as one of its standard software applications. "QX-Tools helps us maintain accuracy in our QuarkXPress documents. It takes away the need to do a lot of rework, and saves us an incredible amount of time," says Cappasso-Fiorenza.

QX-LAYERS A HIT WITH PROMOTIONS DIVISION

Within the Promotions Division of Reader's Digest Association, several groups are involved in the creation and development of each promotional mailing. The development group provides specifications for the design and production of a printed piece, such as margins, location of name and address fields, folds, bleeds, trim and die cuts, if any. The creative team, including a group of art directors and a group of copywriters, contributes artwork and text according to the goals of the project. The personalization group adds personalized information such as the recipient's name and address. The lettershop group indicates folds, perfs (perforations), perf cuts, and/or die cuts for the printed piece; the prepress group makes sure everything is in position and ready for the outside vendors to create film separations, proofs, and the final printed product.

Before integrating QX-Tools into its workflow system, each group in the Promotions Division would create its own layout for the same promotional piece, oftentimes actually recreating the work that had previously been done by another group in the form of an entirely new electronic document or as a mechanical tissue or acetate overlay. Now, using QX-Tools' Layers component, QX-Layers, each group has its own layer within the same QuarkXPress document, eliminating redundancy and saving time for each group. For example, the development group's layer includes document-specific information such as size and trim marks, name of the document, key number, and margin and positioning guidelines. The

creative group's layer includes text boxes for the copywriters' text and picture boxes for the art directors' graphics. Each group can see another group's layer but can't modify the information contained in that layer. "It's very important for each group to work according to the other group's specifications," explains Cappasso-Fiorenza. "At any time we can go back and show a layer just like a mechanical overlay to make sure we're within the guidelines that have been previously specified. The nice thing about QX-Tools is that it not only lets us assign objects to specific layers, we can also alternate between hiding or showing the various layers according to what stage of the development cycle we're in."

QX-SCALER AIDS PRODUCTION AND PREPRESS

The Scaler component included in QX-Tools version 2.0, QX-Scaler, is extremely attractive to the Promotions Division at Reader's Digest. "A lot of times we're using electronic files from the Magazine Division or the Books Division in our promotion pieces," says Cappasso-Fiorenza. "We'll have to take a two-page spread and shrink the entire thing down to fit into a brochure. Instead of saving the pages as an EPS (Encapsulated PostScript) file that we wouldn't be able to modify in any way, QX-Scaler gives us control over all aspects of the image." Using QX-Scaler, the Promotions Division can shrink the text boxes included in a magazine cover, for example, and those text boxes can then be modified for foreign-language translations. The group doesn't have to worry about embedding text in uneditable images with QX-Scaler.

QX-TOOLS' OTHER COMPONENTS A "BONUS"

In addition to their standardized implementation of QX-Layers, each of the different groups within the Promotions Division utilizes the various QX-Tools components according to its own needs. Using QX-Bars, for instance, Cappasso-Fiorenza has helped build custom palettes for each group, and the QX-SmartBar offered in version 2.0 will further enhance the staff's use of custom tool palettes. "While QX-Layers is our favorite component in QX-Tools," comments Cappasso-Fiorenza, "we see the other components as an added bonus. Even our prepress suppliers and other outside vendors are using QX-Tools."

Concludes Cappasso-Fiorenza, "*QX-Tools is worth the price for QX-Layers alone. The other great components found in QX-Tools are icing on the cake.*"

TOOLBOX: PROMOTIONS DIVISION, READER'S DIGEST ASSOCIATION, INC.

Hardware

50+ Macintosh and Power Macintosh computers

Software

QuarkXPress

Adobe Photoshop

Adobe Illustrator

QX-Tools 2.0

The Reader's Digest Association, Inc. is the preeminent global publisher and direct mail marketer of products that inform, enrich, entertain and inspire. Headquartered in Pleasantville, NY, The Reader's Digest Association has 21 international operating companies.

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