

IBT Story:

Imposition automation – an extreme make-over

An interview with Stephen Pratt, Director of Technology, IBT, Troy, NY.

Interview conducted by Joanne David, vice-president of Ultimate Technographics Inc.

Integrated Book Technology is at the forefront of On-Demand short run book manufacturing, one of the most demanding printing specializations today. IBT is known to set the bar high for its production, quality control and service teams. From publisher file approval to a bound case or paper book completed in as little as a one day turn around, there is one thing that keeps it all together—Impostrip On-Demand Digital. Because a book run can be as short as one, prepress imposition must be automated at its extreme.

IBT has reached impressive production records thanks to the dynamic imposition technology that makes Impostrip On-Demand unrivaled. IBT succeeded to reduce its prepress processes to making few judgment calls a day. The load of work is taken over by Impostrip Hot Folder manager that takes files and arrange them intelligently according to the printer and the particular finishing requirements. The IBT plant hosts 2 Xerox Docutechs, 6180 and 6115, and 3 Nuvera 120s, all are driven by one imposition solution: Impostrip On-Demand Digital priced at \$2800.

Total Hands-Off—How is this Possible?

IBT was instrumental in working with Ultimate Technographics R&D team to develop the best possible approach to a *total hands-off* prepress production. That's a tall order, yet Ultimate delivered: 'Impostrip On-Demand Hot Folder is extremely fast,' says Stephen Pratt, Director of Technology. "We don't do any imposition any more except for job planning, i.e. taking the time to look at a job and deciding which press, at that specific moment, will print the job. Once we have decided, we then drop the files in the Impostrip On-Demand Digital Hot Folder dedicated to the device on the network and Impostrip automatically aligns all the imposition dynamically with the upper left corner respecting the presetting of the hot folder. This makes a big difference in speed and efficiency.'

"To give an example, we get hundreds of Legislative Bills per day from New York State. They are all different. The files are dropped into our FTP. We use Impostrip On-Demand Digital's dynamic hot folder and what used to literally take hours to prepare, is now completed in 8-12 minutes. The beauty of it is, at the end of the year, when the State asks to bind all the Bills in one single book, we do not need to do anything, Impostrip assemble all the Bills with all blanks in one book to be bound.

"Books are an important aspect of our production. We exploit Impostrip On-Demand Digital to automate our book production. What I like about Impostrip is that pages are imposed dynamically where 100 different page sizes can be handled by very few hot folders. In our case this means that 5 hot folders handle 99% of our work totally hands-off."

One single hot folder per printer

"I set my imposition folders not based on page sizes but on sheet sizes. I have one hot folder for the Nuvera 18.5 x 12.5 where I can produce all my 4 ups. I can drop books with varying trim sizes (5 x 8 , 4 x 6) and up to a 6 X 9 trim and they can all be imposed automatically with the same hot folder. Impostrip prints out the files to the Nuvera and it is extremely fast.

"Same for the DocuTech 9.5 x13 sheet size into which I drop books of various formats: 6 x 8.75, 6 x 8.5 or 5.5 x 8.25 etc. We also dedicate one Impostrip hot folder for the DocuTech 14 1/8 x 14. I use it to impose 7 x 10, 6.5 x 10.5 etc. Like wise on 8.5 x 11 sheet hot folder set up, I can place any 2-up page sizes I want. This is why I can truly say that 99% of our work is processed using only 5 hot folders.

NO time for human errors

“Many printers, when talking about automation, talk about automating job tracking using an MIS or automating pre-flighting” continues Steve. “It never extends to the level of covering prepress automation where imposition is hands-free. Most are still using imposition software that requires manual steps. We used to do that too, but we wanted to eliminate as much human errors as possible. Our core business is book printing, when we need to print different types of jobs that are outside of our regular printing norms, we perceive them as problematic and time consuming, in need of a lot of manual adjustments, etc... Now with Impostrip all those various jobs are handled in the same automated manner, using dynamic hot folders. It reduces labor cost and allows us to accept more work. It also means less paper waste since those jobs are not only automated, they are done right the first time. In short run printing, this is crucial.”

“When we received the governor’s speech, it was 2:00 in the morning. We took the file, preflighted it, imposed it and 10,000 bound books were ready to be delivered at 9:00 a.m. There is no room for mistakes. This is what makes our reputation.”

“The automation we enjoy does not compromise the functionalities we need. A tremendous advantage is the automatic bleed control that On-Demand Digital offers. When possible, we set trim box in Acrobat and send files regardless of how much bleed comes in the gutter where we staple. We do not need to worry about it, you can set Impostrip’s hot folder to impose based on the trim box and it will trim the excessive bleed correctly respecting pre-set margins. We first tested on each Xerox printer to calculate the offset and included this in the Impostrip hot folder set up so the folio numbers are perfectly backing up automatically, all the time.

The best feature: affordability

“I would say the best feature of the software is the fact that it is affordable. It amazes me to see the amount of technology we get for the price. It is impressive to see the automation, the quality and the precision that we obtain off our Xerox equipment. I was very impressed also by the service we get from Ultimate.”

Steve did not let this occasion pass without requesting a new feature for his plant. It is all about automating odd jobs now. Watch the next update of Impostrip On-Demand Digital to discover how we will rise to the challenge, one more time.

Imposition is strategic

Steve made Ultimate very proud when he declared that thanks to its’ imposition software Impostrip On-Demand Digital, Ultimate will be one of the manufacturers to contribute to the continued growth of 25-30% projected this year.

BOX 1 - Text in a box:

The first Xerox Docutech retires

It was installed at the plant in Troy New York in 1998 and it has been producing 24-7 even since. Curious to know how many clicks? Half a billion. To be precise, the accountant at IBT did a quick calculation of the total number of clicks: 469,951,388. For a book printer, it means at least a billion pages!

BOX 2 - Text in a box:

Where is the future growth of IBT’s business?

Q:

Where your company sees business growth in the future?

A:

Distribution publishing...where printing can be done locally for larger distribution in many locations.

Q:

Your core business is Book printing. How do you view competing with China?

A:

Print short runs or runs of one, efficiently at a very short turn around time - nothing that can be done in China.

Q:

Do you think the printing industry can compete or co-exist with the internet?

A:

I say, we compete against "battery life". You want to read a book on the internet, make sure you do it before your battery runs out or your file gets lost with the next crash. USA is the largest consumer of books in the world. We are now talking about customizing books where teachers can buy chapters off the internet to constitute the material for his next course. This is only one example. The need of using the most up to date information requires publishing on-demand, there lays the greatest potential for on-demand digital printing.

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