

# Enter the Metrix

Metrix, LithoTechnics' automated layout calculator, which can handle up to 160 individual jobs within a project, is producing an average 25% cost saving on running multiple jobs in a composite or ganged layout. *Print & Paper Monthly* reports.

**T**oy maker Hasbro produces board games such as Scrabble and Monopoly, and has extensive in-house print facilities in the US including a large format KBA Rapida 162. It needed to improve its unit costs and looked at ways of increasing the efficiency of print production. Typically, a single job would be imposed up on each sheet and run individually. Looking at just two jobs, Jim Hare, production manager, compared costs of running them singly or together. With better press utilisation, reduced make ready, reduced paper and a higher proportion of the sheet covered, the savings on two jobs amounted to around £2200.

Hasbro then looked at a wider range of jobs by running a full pilot programme using Metrix. This was used in manual mode to make it equivalent to conventional methods, so that just the savings in production could be calculated.

Eliminating 88 plates and the consequent 22 make readies, together with savings in press time and paper usage meant a saving of £13 000 in the two week test period. Translating the savings from the pilot study into a full production situation, with just 25% of the 900 jobs a year run on the KBA press ganged up, would result in savings of over £135 000 from the investment in a single copy of Metrix Production Edition, costing just £5495.

## Straight to the bottom line

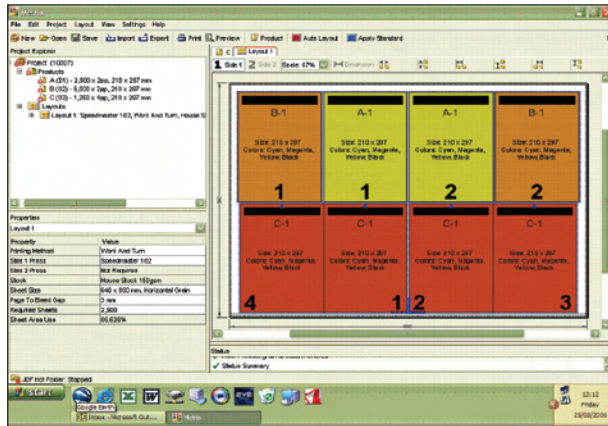
In an attempt to ratify these savings under UK conditions, Metrix' UK distributor, Positive Focus, in co-operation with MIS manufacturer Tharstern, ran sample jobs through the MIS using standard costs to compare multiple jobs run individually and ganged together. On a B1 press with typical 'A' size jobs an average saving of 25% was achieved. 'That is 25% going straight to your bottom line,' said Ivor Dixon of Positive Focus. 'It is no surprise to us to see this sort of



saving, it would probably be higher if we ran the mix of jobs that a commercial printer would handle in a normal day, with different page sizes, mixed single and double sided jobs and so on. A lot of the savings come from reducing the plate and make ready costs, but we are significantly more efficient at using paper, and if you print fewer sheets you use less press time to do it. Our co-operation with Tharstern has allowed us to identify clearly the areas where the savings are being made. We are happy to share that information with any printer who needs further convincing of the value this solution offers.'

### Hasbro project – comparison of two jobs run singly or ganged

Two individual jobs	Two jobs ganged up
8 plates	4 plates
2 make readies	1 make ready
Sheets required 30 274	Sheets required 21 350
Sheet utilisation 76.36%	Sheet utilisation 91.63%
Press time 5.36 hours	Press time 3.37 hours



### Making the savings

LithoTechnics' Metrix was developed in Australia, but has found favour worldwide with printers looking for greater efficiency through ganging. When ganging jobs together on one sheet, the system takes account of the number of each item required and physical properties like sheet size, paper grain and bleed. It is fully JDF compatible and will accept jobs from compliant MIS and also output CIP4 and JDF cutting and folding data, factors not taken into account in either of these exercises. The Production Edition of Metrix 1.7 produces fully imposed output as PDF, Preps templates or a JDF file for use with many proprietary workflows and RIPs. Single user and server based, concurrent user versions are available.

Positive Focus is offering an evaluation copy, which runs in full production mode for 14 days, for £225, credited back if the software is purchased at the end of the evaluation

period. Printers can try it, and prove for themselves just how easy it is to make savings.

Version 2.0 of Metrix will feature on Positive Focus' stand (528) at Digital Print World 2006. ■

### Hasbro pilot study results

Current practice	Metrix test
136 plates	48 plates
34 make readies	12 make readies
34 hours of make ready	12 hours of make ready
500 sheets per make ready = 17 000 sheets	500 sheets per make = 6000 sheets
136 plates @ \$50 per = \$6800	48 plates @ \$50 per = \$2400
34 make readies @ \$814 per = \$27,676	12 make readies @ \$814 per = \$9768
17000 sheets of make ready paper @ formula = \$2611	6000 sheets of make ready paper @ formula = \$922
Net cost of pilot @ current method = \$37 087	Net cost of pilot using Metrix Software = \$13 090

### Something for everyone

Metrix is set to revolutionise thinking on imposition, ganging and layouts with its new version 2.0. Positive Focus insists that this product is quite unlike any other on the market. 'It is scalable, so we have simple products that will suit the B3 market, especially digital, going right up to 3.6 metres square for the large format point of sale market,' said Mr Dixon. 'You no longer have to buy a product that is overkill for your needs, there is a tailored solution for most market segments, priced according to the features it delivers.'

The strength of the product has been the ability to gang jobs together and optimise layout. The limitation was that it could only do this for relatively simple flat and folded work, and only on a single signature. Version 2 introduces the ability to work with bound publications as well, allowing multiple signatures, each of which can have a different layout, according to the optimisation requirements. Commercial printers can now mix and match simple jobs along with brochures, catalogues and other multi-page publications, saving plates, paper and press time. Products can be grouped on the sheet according to special finishing requirements, like foiling.

MiniMetrix, the entry level software, comes in single user B3 and B2 versions, priced at £1548 and £2298 respectively, handling up to 40 or 80 jobs in an automated layout. It also handles bound work, but output is limited to an imposed PDF, complete with marks.

Larger operators have the choice of Metrix Commercial (£3398) handling both flat and bound work with up to 16 jobs in an automated layout, Metrix Ganging (£5498) for flat work only, but with up to 160 jobs in a layout, or Metrix Max (£6748) combining the features of both.

Metrix Read-Only has no ability to calculate gang layouts, nor can users modify layouts. It displays on-screen projects contained in the database (saved by one of the other Metrix editions), or imported as JDF via the user interface or hot folder. A typical use is to enable users to see the layouts exported as JDF from MIS systems, and to print them out as a report. It is available as a 10 user license at £873.