

Metrix gangs up for profit

Ganging print jobs has become a simple and quick procedure with the release of Metrix from LithoTechnics. Steve Crowe talked to Rohan Holt about his latest print planning software innovation.

The complex and time consuming job of maximising the number of print jobs combined into one "ganged" job has been made easier with the worldwide release of Metrix, the print planning software solution from LithoTechnics Pty Ltd, under the direction of Rohan Holt.

Rohan Holt came to the attention of the local industry in 1995 with the release of his first (very successful) attempt at imposition software, SuperImpose. (It's a marvellous story of a very young print planner who wanted to take the monotony out of his job, so he designed a computer programme at his kitchen table in Wollongong, with no previous programming experience.)

His company, Holt Software, was ultimately bought by US software specialist ScenicSoft in 1999, and SuperImpose morphed into UpFront. Creo bought ScenicSoft in late 2002, and Rohan returned to Australia to start work on new software developments in the specialised area of print estimation, imposition and planning.

The result is Metrix, which he describes as "the next step on from UpFront, although we're not competing with UpFront", and, "a software application which automatically calculates optimal layouts for printing up to ten different products on a single press sheet, while considering such details as grain direction and bleeds".

It achieves this in detailed production reports with dimensioned scale diagrams, and exports industry standard digital files which will fit into any prepress workflow and also CIP3-compliant finishing equipment.

Metrix uses a layout calculator, or engine (with a patent pending), which takes in parameters from each job to be "ganged", and configures the press sheet in the best layout to cater for demands like



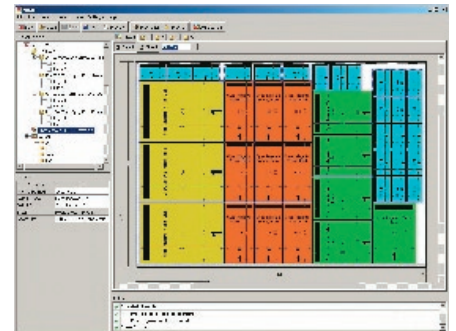
Rohan Holt of LithoTechnics: Metrix takes the pain out of ganging print jobs.

bleeds, stock grain, and cutting and folding requirements.

According to Rohan Holt, printers who regularly "gang" jobs can save hours on each plan, with every aspect of it done automatically in seconds. There are also significant savings to be had in paper stocks, as up to 30 per cent more work can be included on a press sheet using Metrix, making a total cost saving on the job of about 15 per cent. Ganging multiple products reduces the number of makereadies and plates consumed, saving both time and plate costs.

To add to the time savings, CIP3-enabled bindery equipment can automatically receive appropriate makeready data directly from Metrix.

LithoTechnics is a full member of the CIP4 Organisation, and Metrix fits with present MIS and workflow programmes currently using industry standard JDF files.



A screen example of several jobs combined on one press sheet.

"The hype about JDF whether it is this year or next year or in five years, is going to turn into something real. There are going to be some real gains. They're talking a common language — that's a miracle! Let's use it and take the opportunity it presents," said Rohan.

Holt's plan for Metrix is a two-pronged release, with different level products to suit the particular needs of printers. Metrix will be available as a shrink-wrap software package in Australia directly from LithoTechnics, and internationally through representative suppliers.

It will also ship in two versions — the Standard edition will interest printers with no need to integrate the programme with digital prepress or finishing, and the Production edition enables automatic data sharing of job parameters from digital prepress right through to the bindery.

Also under discussion is the release of Metrix through OEMs as an integral part of proprietary workflows. "I hope to leverage some of the relationships I made in my time at Scenicsoft in Seattle, where I learned a lot about the business of software," said Rohan.

LithoTechnics will be exhibiting Metrix at drupa 2004 in the JDF parc, in hall 4, stand A33. For more information contact LithoTechnics on (02) 4225 1103, or check www.lithotechnics.com for a demonstration of Metrix. ■