

This is an article written by Kevin Karstedt for Boxboard Container Magazine. Mr. Karstedt has a monthly article titled "Digital Connections" which he discusses issues of importance to Packaging Printers and Converters related to Digital Pre-Press and related technologies. His firm consults with Consumer Product Companies, Packaging Converters/Printers and Graphic Service to execute package graphic development in the most efficient manner possible. They also provide marketing and product research for System Developers with products and services targeted at the Packaging Marketplace.

We hope you find the information contained in this article valuable. This and other articles on Digital Pre-Press and related technologies can be found at [www.karstedt.com](http://www.karstedt.com). Find out how Karstedt Associates can help your company by calling 716-992-2017.

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### BCI - February 2001 **Empowering Control**

I recently had a very enlightening conversation with a good friend and client. One reason this conversation was so enlightening was that it was with one of the most forward thinking people I know related to digital graphics development in packaging. This conversation centered around identifying the needs of each participant involved in the development and execution of packaging graphics.

We listed out the key players in the process and what drives them. As the discussion unfolded it became clear that each group was looking for the same thing from their own perspective. They were all looking for control.

#### **What does control mean?**

Control means different things to different people. Consumer product companies are looking for control in many areas. To the brand manager control means getting products to market faster, capitalizing on brand equity, increasing market share and profit margins. To the packaging buyer control means JIT inventories, decreasing costs, increasing quality, making their job easier and attaining their goals.

Within the packaging converter's plant control is also a widely sought after commodity. To those in corporate management control means customer satisfaction, quality enhancements and cost reductions. To the plant manager control means increased equipment utilization, scrap reductions, quality enhancements, faster changeovers and enhanced customer satisfaction. The graphics manager sees better control allowing them to give the press room exactly what they want when they want it, reducing reworks and late night phone calls.

#### **Enabling Control**

With the need for control established and the idea that it means different things to different people lets move on to how control can be attained. For the past twenty years the graphic arts industry has been developing and refining digital tools to enhance the print production process. In the past few years

these tools have found their way into all areas of the process from design, purchasing, marketing and printing. If the goal is control the enabler is a well designed and implemented *digital workflow*.

### **Control Gained**

Properly implemented, a digital workflow will enable far reaching process control. Addressing the control issues of the consumer product company a digital workflow provided by a converting supplier will allow the converter to react more quickly to printing and delivery requirements.

### **Design to Production – End to End Integration**

A truly integrated digital workflow will have close ties between graphic design and graphic production. This will enable graphic designs to be developed and approved in a much more effective manner using digital collaboration and project management tools. Last minute changes can be incorporated into graphic design and transmitted directly to prepress and printing facilities for production. This allows the brand manager to get the freshest designs and market information incorporated into their products.

With end to end process integration color and image consistency can be attained on a global level. A customer can be assured that the look and feel of their products will be the same from printing plant to printing plant, from printing process to printing process and from country to country.

### **For the Packaging Converter**

The largest thing a digital workflow will yield the converter is an enhanced ability to provide customer satisfaction. With the pressures being exerted on converters by customers for quality enhancements, JIT inventories and price reductions one of the bullets in your gun should be a good digital workflow.

End to end integration also means that the converter will know what is coming and how it will arrive with more accuracy. This gives them much more flexibility in forecasting for raw materials and machine usage.

In the graphics area a digital workflow can enable efficient prepress production and plate delivery. With the ability to maintain strict process controls throughout the entire prepress process printing plates, either offset or flexo (CTP or conventional), that meet the exact needs of the pressroom can be delivered.

Benefits that will be seen on the pressroom floor are many. The biggest benefits will be seen in quality improvements. With better register and overall fit digitally imaged plates will yield faster changeovers and less changeover scrap. Digital prepress workflows give a level of process control that will enhance the ability of the pressroom to “run to the numbers” with much more accuracy. Press fingerprinting and SPC techniques can be greatly enhanced.

In a world that seems out of control, the implementation of a well conceived and implemented digital workflow can help you to gain the competitive edge that being IN CONTROL can give you.

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*I invite calls and e-mails on this and all Digital Connections topics and will include your comments were possible. In the mean time....think digital.*