

Partners, allies, collaborators and the Marriage of Figaro

There was a time when “partner” was a word only used by cowboys and prospective couples. Now it seems like every vendor is locking arms with someone. I don't ever recall seeing more press releases announcing “partnerships” and “alliances” and “working relationships”.

It takes two to tango, but in the case of technology- and print-based companies, the dance may involve many more partners, all simultaneously. Let's dig into the mailbox and see who's paired with whom these days.

One of the most talked-about joint efforts in the printing industry has to be the Adobe-Agfa-Heidelberg-MAN Roland initiative to create a universal job ticket, the proposed Job Definition Format (JDF).

Already there have been grumbles from non-invitees about being excluded from the discussions. But the four parties involved say they will be taking their proposal to the standards committees as soon as JDF debuts at DRUPA, the industry's gigantic extravaganza coming up in May in Dusseldorf, Germany. Agfa, Heidelberg and Creo have also announced that they will all support the concept of open connectivity between Apogee systems and Prinergy workflows. Meanwhile, Harlequin and Harris Publishing have said that they will be working on their own brand of digital workflow. And Xerox has entered into what it calls a “non-binding Memorandum of Understanding” with Presstek to develop digital imaging technologies for forthcoming Xerox printing products.

Players in the print-dotcom market have been positively mating like monkeys.



New e-commerce company printCafe absorbed infotech systems providers Hagen Systems and Logic Associates, then engaged Banta Integrated Media and R. R. Donnelley's Logistics division; Printware struck a deal with Printnation.com to mar-

ket its CTP products on-line; printing e-commerce hopeful Noosh has jumped into bed with electronic distribution provider Vio, who in turn has bonded with Quickcut on its digital ad checking and delivery service; Collabria has enticed Imation to market its proofing products and services through the Collabria.com website; Impresse.com, another of the new wave of print e-commerce providers, has linked up with iPrint.com and PaperExchange.com to expand its range of offerings; and DAX has integrated RealTimeImage's very hot new Internet-based soft proofing system into its portfolio of services.

In the creative sector, we see Toronto-based stock photo distributor Firstlight teaming up with giant Getty Images (who just swallowed FPG) to sell Corbis Images in Canada. We witnessed lots of activity by Corel as it cozied up to Macromedia in order to get Flash into CorelDraw and its Linux products, while successfully courting the remains of MetaCreation for its prime graphics products.

After years of trying to go head-to-head with Adobe in the desktop printing market, Hewlett-Packard finally decided to kiss and make up, and in fact proudly announced its newest PostScript DeskJet printer, complete with Adobe PressReady.

The compelling reason for all of this in-

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ternecine development can be summed up in four words: “Getting to market faster”. Nonetheless, it’s a far cry from the days when the suggestion that two prepress companies might join together to produce a better product with easier integration would have been met with a snarl and an expletive.

Speaking of two prepress companies joining together — aren’t we excited to see the new CreoScitex merger? Could anyone have ever predicted that a bunch of Canadians would swallow one of the most prestigious names in electronic prepress? And to think that it happened despite Creo’s affiliation with Heidelberg.

I guess it should make us proud that a Canadian company has assumed such a major position in the graphic arts industry. And I’m pleased to report that the first published essay by a CreoScitex executive appears in this issue.

In a treatise entitled *Is There a Manufacturing Model for Commercial Printing?* on page 38, Gord Pritchard, senior commercial print specialist at CreoScitex, theorizes with Shane Steinman about what printers must do to adjust their print production processes to the changing requirements of the market.

Shane also provides a first look at Adobe’s new software suite for prepress production, InProduction (page 46).

And we have one other piece in this issue which should be of interest to the print crowd. Lerrick Starr sums up what he has been investigating in the prepress arena at and since Seybold Boston, with a report beginning on page 51.

But lest the digital artists and designers in the audience think you’ve been neglected, I strongly suggest you flip first to page 30, where you’ll find *Building Interactive Rich Media Web Sites* in which Bob Connolly reviews the latest tools for creating monster bandwidth websites, including a glance at Adobe’s new LiveMotion. From there, go to page 42 and read Peter Dudar’s comprehensive assessment of just-released version 9 of FreeHand from Macromedia. After that you may be ready to study up on producing special Photoshop type effects using tips supplied by Ben Willmore (page 34).

It never hurts to review the fundamentals of computer system maintenance, so for all of us we have Lidka Schuch’s and James Belardo’s *10 Ways to Keep Your Systems Running Clean* on page 18. And while you’re in the mood, take a minute to read page 56, *How to Not Make Money*, and learn how a printer discovered that making money is easy, but hard to explain when the RCMP comes calling.

Finally, in anticipation of the federal government’s new program to support the Canadian magazine industry, we take a long hard look at how this country’s magazine publishers stack up in the global picture. *Canadian Magazines: An Industry in Decline* attempts to put the Canadian Magazines Fund into perspective — and left me less enthusiastic about the future of being a publisher in Canada.

But I guess it beats being a barber (weren’t you wondering how I’d work Figaro into this?). **G**