



Case In Point

PROOFING SOLUTIONS

EFI Colorproof Is the Right Approach for Quality Graphics



Company Profile

Quality Graphics, based near Toledo, Ohio, provides manufacturers with the printed materials that keep their businesses running – operator and assembly manuals, catalogs, brochures, and price books. It offers a range of services including mailing for select clients. The company tallies \$5 million in annual sales and counts national furniture manufacturer Sauder Woodworking Co., Ingersoll-Rand Company Limited, and scaffolding manufacturer Bil-Jax® Inc. among its hard working clients. The commercial sales division, which accounts for \$2 million of the company's revenues – with \$1.5 million of that in color work, relies on two conventional, mid-sized, sheet-fed Heidelberg® presses. The workhorse is a 4-color press.

Challenge

Quality Graphics needed a cost-effective, efficient, high quality, ICC-based ink-jet proofing solution – one that could reliably simulate press color output and complement its new direct-to-plate prepress workflow.

Solution

It chose EFI® Colorproof™ XXL with Best™ technology paired with an Epson Stylus® Pro 7600 wide-format inkjet printer.

Results

Quality Graphics has reduced color proofing costs by 90 percent, cut a day off production time and significantly increased productivity, profit margins, efficiency and staffing flexibility. It's poised to add even more volume without investing in additional proofing equipment and to move, seamlessly, to an Adobe® PDF (Portable Document Format) workflow.



An inefficient system

Five years ago the commercial sales division at Quality Graphics was struggling with the inefficiencies of an analog prepress operation. “Our previous system caused us just infinite problems from day one,” says Steven Miller, Vice President. “We were outputting film, proofing to Matchprint™ and creating plates from the same file.”

“For us it’s been a set-it-and-forget-it process... The administrative overhead is next to nothing. The staff calculates and prints and in the meantime they’re doing something else.”

— Steven Miller, Vice President, Quality Graphics

The division wasn’t running the volumes needed to efficiently operate a laminate-type proofing system. “But our fundamental problem was that we were using the wrong approach by having a million-dollar press try to match a hundred-dollar proof, rather than the other way around.” Trying to match press output to proofs was expensive, frustrating and highly inefficient, wasting hours and labor.

“The driving force for change was our desire to move to direct-to-plate to eliminate film in our workflow,” Miller says. But managers at Quality Graphics knew little about proofing options. “At that time, about 1999, inkjet technology was in its infancy for consideration as a contract-level proofing system. There are still those today who say that inkjet is not a contract-level proof. That’s fine. I love competing against those folks.”

The right approach

“EFI Colorproof was the only software system that made us believe we would not have to invest in an expensive, high-end proofing system, which can cost as much as \$100,000. Colorproof did what we thought it should – it controlled the management of the color match at the proof stage, not at the press stage. It makes sense to move control to an area where the costs are much lower. If we can hit a consistent target on press, I want to make sure that we can proof to that target.”

Equipment cost – a fraction of the cost of other proofing systems – was another deciding factor for Miller. Installation was painless. “It was a one-day deal. It just worked.”

Quality Graphics uses EFI Colorproof XXL with a Roland Hi-Fi JET™ FJ-50 and an Epson Stylus® Pro 7600 wide-format inkjet printer, which handles the lion’s share of the color proofing volume. “Colorproof with the inkjet output has streamlined our whole proofing operation,” Miller says. “It makes the management of ICC colors seamless. It’s really straightforward.” He places a high value on working with the International Color Consortium® (ICC) profile format. “It gives us a community of peers, a resource for problem solving.”

“We’ve cut the cost of proofing by 90 percent and we’ve cut a day off a typical four-day job. It’s accurate, consistent and reliable.”

— Steven Miller, Vice President, Quality Graphics



EFI Colorproof is now the only color proofing system at Quality Graphics. “We use it for anything that requires accurate color matching – specifically process color matching. That’s the area where Colorproof really shines. What may be more important, there are no color issues. It’s accurate, consistent and reliable.”

Productivity soars

EFI Colorproof has delivered significant savings and remarkable gains in productivity. “We’ve cut the cost of proofing by 90 percent and we’ve cut a day off a typical four-day job. Today, the three people in our commercial prepress department produce twice the volume that five people produced with our old system. What portion of that would I attribute to our proofing workflow – the EFI Colorproof and inkjet solution? About 20 to 25 percent of it. And it’s an enabler for all the other savings in that department.”

And the solution performs! “For us it’s been a set-it-and-forget-it process. Once you establish your device characteristics – those ICC profiles – there’s really no management to it. The administrative overhead is next to nothing. The staff calculates and prints and in the meantime they’re doing something else.”

That efficiency created a delightful problem for Quality Graphics. How to log concurrent time when operators work on two jobs at once? Luckily Quality Graphics also uses EFI PSI™. The powerful management software with a Windows® interface gives them tools and reports to manage accounts payable, estimates, job costing, scheduling and much more. PSI allows operators to log concurrent time on the same or multiple jobs.

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New markets and a bright future

EFI Colorproof with inkjet output has opened new markets for Quality Graphics. Auction houses that sell equipment or real estate and that work on the tightest deadlines possible now use last-minute, color images in pre-sale brochures. “It’s allowed a segment of our business that wasn’t accustomed to paying the cost of color to enter that market. It’s created a market that didn’t exist for us.”

EFI Colorproof accepts a wide range of file types, including Adobe PostScript® and PDF files, which suits Miller’s plans for expansion. “We’ll be making the move to PDF workflow and quality here soon. We can move to PDF easily, without proofing being a stumbling block. Also, it’s such an efficient proofing system that we have considerable excess capacity. It will allow dramatic growth in volume without any more investment in hardware or software; that means higher profit.

“Bottom line – if we had to make the choice again, after five years of experience, we’d choose EFI Colorproof with the inkjet output. I wouldn’t even look at anything else.”