



EFI Proofing Solutions Give Schawk Stamford the Right Colors and Savings



Company Profile

Schawk, Inc., the world leader in digital imaging graphic services to the consumer products packaging market, provides all prepress services for its Fortune 500 packaging clients. The global company, headquartered in Des Plaines, Ill., provides a host of services to packaging, advertising and promotional markets. It counts consumer product giants Unilever Bestfoods North America and Pepperidge Farm among its clients, along with household names like The Discovery Channel. Schawk Stamford excels in the breakneck world of consumer packaging, where global brand consistency is a necessity and speed to market is the driving force.

Challenge

The Stamford, Conn., facility of Schawk Inc. was poised to make the transition from an analog to computer-to-plate prepress workflow to accelerate the development of vibrant new packaging and speed client products to market. Schawk needed an accurate digital proofing system that could maintain the high-level quality standards and custom colors critical to consumer package printing.

Solution

Schawk's Stamford division chose EFI Colorproof™ with Best™ technology for color-accurate content proofing, and EFI Screenproof™ for content and color accurate halftone proofing.

Results

The proofing solutions enable Schawk Stamford to speed client products to market using lower-cost, digital proofs that accurately match press output. They've helped Schawk cut job turnaround time, increase productivity, reduce material costs and eliminate color variations and errors derived from human intervention, providing Schawk Stamford with the right colors and savings too!



Proofing for computer-to-plate workflow

Four years ago, when managers at Schawk's Stamford division began looking for a digital inkjet proofing system to complement their new computer-to-plate workflow, they chose the EFI Colorproof and Screenproof (formerly from Best). The reason? "Superior color management," said Frank Melchione, vice president of Schawk's Stamford division. Consumer packaging abounds with distinctive spot colors that identify brands to global markets. "We needed a proofing solution that could print those 5th, 6th, even 7th colors. These proofing solutions are capable of printing out more than 4-color separations and they allow us to print PMS colors accurately on an inkjet device." Along with standard CMYK, today EFI Colorproof and EFI Screenproof support up to 12 spot colors in the same job, including customized colors.

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Stamford, a division of Schawk Inc.**

"It's the best RIP technology for inkjet proofing that we've seen on the market. It's able to give us the subtleties in the highlights. It's able to keep the shadow tones open. It can produce a halftone dot. The color is

great. Through sophisticated color management profiling to a press sheet, back to the inkjet printer – you do get a good quality match. And that's what this business is all about."

Schawk's Stamford facility began the transition to digital proofing by first adding it to preflight operations, gradually integrating it into all major digital production functions. Schawk Stamford uses EFI's Colorproof, which produces color-accurate, continuous-tone proofs from various image file formats, and EFI's Screenproof, which uses the same one-bit files created for the press by the front-end RIP, to produce content- and color- accurate halftone proofs that predict the actual press output.

At Stamford, Colorproof drives three HP 3000 printers producing imposition and conceptual proofs. Screenproof drives two Epson 10600 printers producing preflight proofs of customer files and digital color keys on optically clear transparency film.

Screenproof for digital color keys

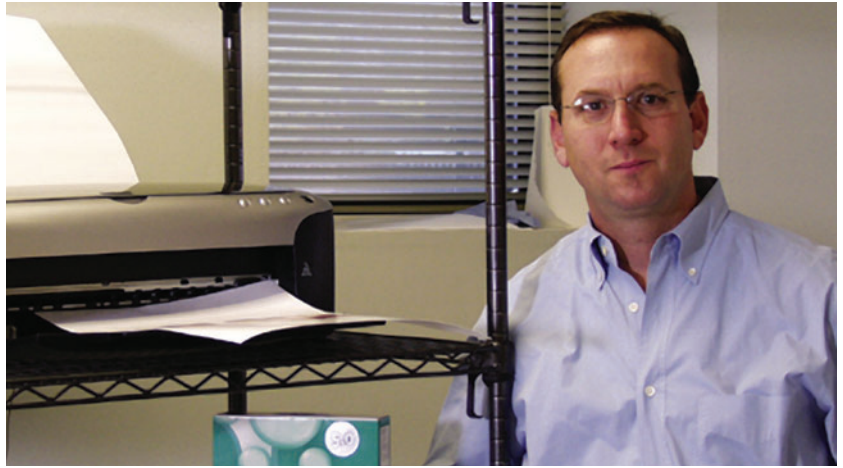
Joe Kapusta, manager of proofing at Schawk Stamford, is impressed with Screenproof's agility when producing screened digital color keys using an inkjet printer. "It's what I'm happiest about. Customers want a digital color key. They want to see how those layers fall against each other. With Screenproof, we can separate out the colors as we would for a press and print each one with all the PMS colors."

Screenproof, driving an Epson 7600 printer, is generating about 20 percent of the division's packaging contract proofs. "When we need contract quality, Screenproof proofing gives us another option."

In Schawk Stamford's 3D department, Screenproof drives an Epson 2200 that prints 3D contract color proofs for advertising. It enables Schawk Stamford to

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meet tight deadlines when producing eye-popping, three-dimensional ads and coupons for newspapers and magazines as well as matching color to publications' presses. "It's contractual color and with Screenproof we've been able to achieve that while giving our customers a lower-cost proof than those produced by the high-end proprietary systems," Melchione says. Now that EFI Proofing Solutions with Best technology have been integrated into all major digital production functions, Schawk's Stamford facility is projecting long-term savings.

“We’ve received the support required to make us feel comfortable for the long term. And we’ve received assistance in many areas of color management and inkjet proofing that has enabled us to build the highest quality proofing system possible.”

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Saving time and money

Savings have come from increased efficiency and productivity. "Taken together, all of the proofing processes have increased our productivity," Melchione says. "Internally, it's been terrific! Our EFI proofing saves a tremendous amount of time and money for packaging when it comes to the preflight process, imposition and the production of overlays or digital color keys.

Before, we were making halftone film and producing analog proofs or a conventional color key – all very expensive processes. So, of course, we've seen some real savings in materials and time. And by eliminating film, the solutions have reduced the number of steps in our workflow which means less equipment to run those steps."

Savings have come from reductions in consumable and equipment budgets. "To make a digital color key now, we buy optically clear transparency film and ink," Kapusta says. "The cost is considerably less than buying film and chemicals to develop the film and the very expensive processors to develop that film and go from there to an analog color key." At the same time, Melchione adds, "The EFI proofing solutions are helping us lay the foundation for future savings." He predicts that over time Schawk Stamford will invest less money in the purchase of premium proofing equipment.

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Speed to market

Although Schawk Stamford originally installed its proofing systems to accommodate its new computer-to-plate workflow, they've enjoyed other important benefits. "What we discovered, more than anything else, was greater speed to market," Melchione says. "In a market where getting a product on the shelf one day sooner could mean savings to a client, that's very important to us." EFI proofing solutions have helped Schawk Stamford cut job turnaround time from five days to two.

"What's also important – it's electronic. It gives us consistency and predictability," Melchione says. Repeatability is critical to the packaging industry, where companies routinely create new promotions that alter individual panels on packaging. And, Kapusta adds, their proofing process is now streamlined. "We can work with the product without operator intervention. We can drag-and-drop files to our printers and get the same print out of every printer."

The ability to RIP a file once and output to many devices, ensuring consistency across devices, is a benefit to any print operation, Melchione says. Schawk Stamford further ensures consistency by placing elements of the EFI software, including the color library, on its server. "Every one of our five RIPs accesses that server for that color palette," Kapusta says. "Everything works off one palette and every machine has to do the same thing. Years ago, everyone had their own little palette. One technician did not know how the other mixed a particular color. That was a big problem – a lot of variation. Now there's no variation."

Both Schawk Stamford managers praise the excellent support they received as they gradually integrated solutions into their workflow. And they're impressed by improvements that have made the software's interface easier to use. But, most of all, they're impressed with its performance. Kapusta sums it up: "It's an awesome product."



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