

Computer to Plate for More Efficient Prepress Processes

In the printing world there is a new process called CTP, which stands for computer to plate. It is one aspect of the prepress process and makes use of the prepress equipment called an imagesetter. The previous technology was known as CTF, or computer to film. In the computer to film process, the print job goes from the bits and bytes in the computer directly onto photographic film. The image then goes from the film to the photographic plate so that the results can be printed. The computer to plate process removes the central step and transfers the image created in the desktop publishing program directly onto the printing plate. obviously, when an entire operation is eliminated, efficiency goes up and costs go down.

But what is required to convert from CTF to CTP? It takes an upgraded infrastructure and a redesigned workflow. In designing this new work flow, the main focus needs to be on preventing bottlenecks in the process and keep the process moving smoothly. But the computer network is just as important. Remembering back to when you first bought your computer system, you may expect that purchasing a new system will break your bank. However, this may be false. Nowadays, the prices of new desktop computers have dropped significantly, making this purchase more in line with what you can afford. In addition, the greater speed of new computers will raise the efficiency of your shop noticeably. As time passes, the new computers will seem to pay for themselves as you are able to increase throughput. Looking back, you will see your old system for what it was: a large, heavy paperweight, weighing it down.

But lets return to the work flow issue. How can CTP technology streamline your work flow? Here are some areas:

First comes job acceptance and preflighting. This step involves checking the files that the customer has sent you to make sure that the fonts and graphics are structured according to the customers requirements.

The next area is image acquisition. Is any scanning or digital photography work required? This step might include color correction, file format conversion, and other image manipulation.

Next comes the step of prepress operations. This phase involves preparing the work so that it is compatible with your specific press type.

Electronic imposition is the heart of the prepress operation. It involves bringing together the actual page files and imposing them onto the printing flats and sending them to the raster image processor.

As you near the end of the process, you need to be able to create proofs. The proofing step is vitally important because it guarantees the accuracy of the final product.

The final step is a sort of a clean-up process that manages the files and the databases to ensure that everything is archived correctly.

This may seem like a complicated process, but you must remember that that big middle step has been eliminated. If you streamline your printing process and convert to CTP, you wont see merely a return on your investment (ROI). You will see your ability to remain in business (RIB).

About the Author

Chuck R. Stewart recently reviewed printing equipment and was impressed with the technology used today in [prepress equipment](#). He was also impressed with the technology used in [CTP](#) or computer to print.

Source: <http://www.car-articles.co.uk>