

For Immediate Release

The Henry Ford of Pre-press Printing

PENNSAUKEN, NJ, AUGUST 26, 2000--For everyone at ColorQuick, 2000 will be remembered as the year the application service provider (ASP) did for pre-press printing what Henry Ford did for automobile manufacturing. By using flow technology, Ford put the power of the internal combustion engine at the service of the mass market and reduced production time from 728 minutes to 93 minutes. ColorQuick delivers the immense computing capability of the Internet to commercial printers so they can make their products easy for their customers to purchase.

"In August of 1999," says Mark Weiss, president and founder of ColorQuick, "we proved the technology by passing a print job automatically through our entire pre-press production process. Instead of taking two or three days to give a customer an estimate and a proof, a printer can now do it using ColorQuick's patent-pending workflow in a half-hour.

A Seybold HotPick

Weiss will unveil the business-to-business (B2B) service to the printing and publishing market at a Seybold San Francisco 2000 seminar on August 28. Seybold's editors were so impressed with ColorQuick—which automates pricing, order entry and pre-press functions—that they selected it as one of only 25 HotPicks out of all the products and services exhibited at the exposition this year. (www.seyboldreport.com/Specials/HotPicksSSF2000/intro.html)

When they visit ColorQuick's exhibitor booth 2538 by September 1, conference attendees can produce their own customized print-ready files to experiment with back in their shops. There, they can learn firsthand how, with no new equipment costs, they can save time and money while simultaneously improving service to their customers and producing high-quality output.

For the first time, a commercial print client can, with a few mouse clicks, define a printed product—whether it is a simple flyer or a more complex document — generate an instant quote, and actually initiate pre-press production. In about a half an hour a trapped digital proof of their work will be sent for approval. Prior to ColorQuick the estimate to proof cycle would usually take two to three days "The idea is to streamline the process for the printer's customer," says Weiss.

How ColorQuick Works

Following the same business strategy that Henry Ford used nearly a hundred years ago to lower the cost of production in order to expand the market, ColorQuick uses the Internet to make a print product easy to purchase. Weiss says that ColorQuick recognized a problem and developed a better tool for the printer and the customer.

Even though many computer systems and database tables must be perfectly coordinated in order to perform ColorQuick's services in an uninterrupted chain, the process appears quick and simple to the customer. And, by acting as an ASP, ColorQuick spreads the capital and overhead costs over a large client base, which reduces unit prices.

Commercial printing, a \$130-billion industry, is an area where automation can mean huge savings. ColorQuick's completely digital workflow technology eliminates direct labor from

estimating and pre-press functions. This has a significant positive impact on workflow, alteration and approval cycles, and organization structure and costs.

There is one big difference between Ford and ColorQuick, however: A customer's choice is not limited to black, or even black and white. Soon to expand from process color work to spot color services, ColorQuick supplies a complete spectrum of options. "What sets ColorQuick apart from the competition is our ability to accept original documents and provide instant quoting and preflighting to ensure that the print process goes smoothly," explains Jeremy Herr, one of the system's developers.

Many other online print services perform template-based work. Templates are predefined documents designed for repeated use that can incorporate a limited number of variables. Online templates require a complicated, labor-intensive process in which a template must be created, programmed and captured before it is functional. The process yields data on pricing and product that facilitates production standardization.

Using templates can be very limiting. "Most people don't create marketing materials that way," points out Herr. "They use QuarkXPress or Photoshop and create documents on their own systems, which they transfer to a printer, who must prepare it for commercial printing so that it reproduces properly.

Other online services accept job specs, only to leave the customer in limbo until a human estimator can respond. "This results in minimal reduction in labor costs, because although the information is online the process is not automated." Herr adds.

ColorQuick's simple interface allows a print purchaser to quickly specify a product, get a price and upload a PDF or Postscript file. A few minutes later, the client receives a preflight report. Within a half-hour, a soft proof of the trapped print production file arrives. This service will work with any software that can produce PostScript or PDF output.

The Nightmare Goes Away

Not only does ColorQuick get a proof to a customer more speedily, it changes where control and responsibility lie and how the work is processed.

"Ordinarily," says Weiss, "a customer must call the printer to make changes on a proof because it's faster and less expensive than starting over. The old way opens the door for mistakes that are expensive to correct, because the printer must have someone on staff to pick up the phone, communicate the changes to production, pick up the files, change them and send out new proofs. The process can take days, and it produces a scheduling nightmare for the printer, who must switch people from job to job.

"But when you automate the process with ColorQuick," he continues, "it's faster and cheaper for the customer to make author alterations by redoing the document. That way it costs only a few dollars per page and takes a half-hour to get a whole new proof. And you get better quality and a smoother and more efficient process. "

The ColorQuick Team

Just as Henry Ford learned about machines as a boy working for his father, Mark Weiss's first apprenticeship was under his father's tutelage. Both young men then struck out on their own. Weiss, who has an MBA in finance and marketing, went into the transportation industry. He spent two years in marketing and lease pricing with a division of McDonnell Douglas Finance Corporation. When he returned to printing, Weiss moved from publishing mall magazines to heading one of the first PostScript service bureaus in Philadelphia. Over the next ten years, Weiss became president of a pre-press graphics and commercial printing company and began building an infrastructure to support the integration of an automated workflow into the Internet.

As the completely automated workflow took shape, Weiss made the decision to create a new organization, ColorQuick, to focus on perfecting this new technology, unencumbered by existing methods and organizational norms. Thus ColorQuick was formed at the beginning of 2000.

The development team includes Jeremy Herr who began working with Weiss fourteen years ago, writing a multi-user costing system, which is still in use today. After acquiring a B.S. in economics, Herr left the printing industry and worked at Andersen Consulting for a couple of years where he developed custom software and web applications for Fortune 500 companies before joining ColorQuick.

Mark Kondrad and Dennis Tilli were brought into the ColorQuick organization directly from the commercial printing company. Kondrad, with over 25 years of pre-press production experience, and a working knowledge of C, C++, Visual Basic, PostScript, HTML and AppleScript, had been developing workflow automation tools for the past six years. Tilli, the firm's system administrator, migrated the company's servers from Novell to Windows NT and Unix-based systems. He helped establish network and file saving standards, as well as set-up many back office functions.

Dennis Tilli's son, Seth Tilli, is following in his father's footsteps. An award-winning web designer by the age of sixteen, Seth designed ColorQuick's corporate web site. Marketing Administrator Andrea Lipenta joined the firm after spending two years as a teacher in elementary education. Since much of ColorQuick's marketing mission is educational, Andrea's experience and organizational skills will allow the firm to clearly communicate new workflows in a user-friendly manner.

The Future: Continuous Improvement

ColorQuick has no direct competitors now, but Weiss has no intention of making the same mistake as Henry Ford. Ford ignored one of his own maxims, "Everything can always be done better than it is being done," and refused to make changes in the Tin Lizzie until Chevy stole its customers.

After having two business plans critiqued by investors and consultants, ColorQuick's management team is improving its business model and developing new software and features to accommodate anticipated demand. Weiss won't be surprised if ColorQuick exceeds Ford's initial 100 percent-per-year growth rate.

ColorQuick narrowly defines its niche, which has been shown to be a profitable strategy. "We don't put ink on paper," says Weiss. "We exist as a company working in the marketplace. We help our customers by better managing the information flow. Documents are really just data containers. Our job is to modify a data container so that it holds useful data for printing.

Focusing on the Core Business

ColorQuick intends to focus on its core business. "We think we are onto a good way of looking at documents. We have a lot of expertise in terms of managing this data. We understand the product and the technology. Our challenge is distribution and marketing," says Weiss.

Rather than get into developing document management systems, Herr says, "We do the steps up front that make documents compatible with print."

Weiss notes that ColorQuick technology is well suited for this application and that the firm understands both the technology and the business end of commercial printing, including "printers, print clients, how documents come and go, and the entire workflow process."

"As a result," he says, "we have put together an automated process that eliminates labor costs, and generates tremendous time and cost savings without sacrificing quality. As we look at the technology we have developed, we see lots of offshoots that are exciting for us and for our investors."

ColorQuick is seeking second-round financing to continue product development and expand marketing and distribution.

For more information:

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