Offset Meets Digital: Seamless Hybrid Workflow Integration at Skånetryck

Skånetryck has a long and rich history. It was founded in 1897 in Malmö, in southern Sweden in the province Scania (Skåne), hence the company name. The company has evolved over the years to become a leading commercial printer, now located in Halmstad. Owned by Claes Johlin, Thorbjörn Kristiansson and managing director, Håkan Walhed, the company has only six employees but works closely with other nearby production firms.

Challenge:

When going digital one concern was whether they had to control different RIPs separately or if they could continue using the existing Agfa :Apogee workflow system.

The seamless integration of the EFI™ Fiery® server with Agfa's :Apogee workflow system is the key element to production efficiency and business growth at Skånetryck.

"It's sort of a graphic center here, with another commercial printer, a bookbinding company and a pure digital print center all in the same building. We cooperate very well, and there isn't much overlap in customers or types of jobs. We handle much of the prepress for our offset colleagues, and buy some capacity from the digital guys," says managing director, Hakan Walhed. "We buy a lot from the bookbinder next door–very handy."

One workflow–several RIPs

When going digital one concern was whether they had to control different RIPs separately or if they could continue using the existing Agfa :Apogee workflow system. While the EFI digital front end (DFE) has many of the functions :Apogee offers, it would take additional training, and possibly complicate the workflow if the same tasks needed to be done in different systems. Skånetryck was assured that the EFI Fiery digital front end could be seamlessly integrated with the :Apogee system.

"We've had several good experiences already of how relatively easy it is to integrate the Fiery DFE into the :Apogee workflow," says Michael Brännbäck, support technician at Agfa Nordic.

"The user can choose what operations should be done directly in the Fiery DFE or handled by :Apogee. Typically imposition and color management are done in :Apogee, as well as queue management. But the Fiery sends all the job- and machine-specific data, to :Apogee. This tight integration of conventional offset and digital production is of course very important," says Brännbäck.

Painless Installation

"The installation and integration went very smoothly," says Walhed. "A rough estimate is that we save up to two hours on busy days. Since both imposition and other file prep can be done at our desks, we don't need to walk up to the control station by the printer."

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Solution:

"Within hours from when the technician said he was ready we started real life production—this is how easy the Fiery system is to operate, and how well it integrated with our :Apogee workflow."

— Hakan Walhed
Managing Director
Skånetryck

well it integrated with our :Apogee workflow. Later on I did some fine-tuning of the ICC-profiles for our preferred paper types, but that was about all we needed to do. We must be quite a boring customer to EFI and Agfa, since we have nothing to complain about," jokes Walhed.

Both the integration and the color management have been successful. Skånetryck produces a lot of contract proofs for clients, which include ad agencies and other commercial printers, using its digital printer. This is how stable and color accurate the digital print is.

"We match the offset result with the digital system, better than I expected, I must admit," adds Walhed.

Next steps

The Fiery system can be extended with MIS and web-to-print solutions, and this is something Skånetryck is looking into. But since digital production is fairly new to the company the increased demand is the first thing to manage.

"We thought digital would be a nice little complement to our existing production, but it has become the fastest growing side of the business," explains Håkan.

"We need to expand this faster and sooner than expected, and perhaps include large-format in the mix," says Walhed. "We know EFI to be good at those types of solutions as well, so we are quite confident they are likely to be part of our expansion."

Results:

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