

# THE SEYBOLD

REPORT

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## Pantone/X-Rite Covers the Gamut

By Ron Roszkiewicz

For many years, Pantone has been the recognized world leader in color communications based on its Pantone Matching System. Over its 45-year history, Pantone has expanded beyond supporting the graphic arts industry into other color-critical industries, including textiles, plastics, architecture and interior design. Pantone ultimately evolved from a provider of analog fan books of color chips to a technology leader supplying digital equivalents of those same color chips to software developers. The recent announcement of X-Rite's acquisition of Pantone pre-empted by a few days Pantone's announcement of its new Goe System.

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## Kodak's Plan To Manage Color

By Laurel Brunner

Managing color is getting harder. Apart from color's inherent complexity, the industry is stampeding toward distribute-and-print production using digital printers to print color on demand in unpredictable environments. The range and color capability of the devices in color workflows has become increasingly harder to predict, making it even more difficult to achieve the goal of open color management. Also, many parts of color workflows still function in isolation. While in some cases, such as digital image capture with a mobile device or digital camera, there is no alternative, managing data processing on any networked digital device, including color data, should nevertheless be possible. This is where manufacturers such as Fujifilm, Heidelberg and Kodak sniff opportunity.

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## TransPromo Summit 2007

By C. Clint Bolte

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More and more, companies are trying to use transactional mailings — the bills customers get every month from their utility or telephone company, for instance — to promote other goods and services. The inaugural TransPromo Summit 2007 on high-volume transaction output drew 300 attendees to New York in August.

## Mature Technology for AdvanStar

By Ron Roszkiewicz

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When it began upgrading its workflow, AdvanStar's priorities were quality and accuracy, and one of its primary underlying issues was support for transparency. Accurate output was also important, considering AdvanStar's significant reliance on advertising, and advertisers demand accuracy.

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"Green Print" is the new JDF

# Mature Technology Is the New New Thing for AdvanStar

By Ron Roszkiewicz

When it began upgrading its workflow, AdvanStar's priorities were quality and accuracy, and one of its primary underlying issues was support for transparency. Accurate output was also important, considering AdvanStar's significant reliance on advertising, and advertisers demand accuracy.

**A**dvanstar Communications Inc. is a global new media communications company with operations covering events, publications (both print and electronic), directories and Web sites. In 2006, it contacted IO Integration to help convert to a workflow that was more streamlined and scalable for its production and content creation. The focus of the first stage of the conversion would be its Duluth, Minn., production headquarters, where nearly all of the company's prepress and production takes place. Other AdvanStar branches in New York, Cleveland and the U.K. feed into Duluth, creating content and advertising PDFs from advertisers nationwide.

AdvanStar is a QuarkXPress shop where most of the file movement, naming and RIPping was done manually — typical of many shops. AdvanStar received files via FTP and CD. Each file was preflighted and every PDF was opened. File storage meant hierarchical folders and a publication-oriented naming convention. Files were sent manually to a RamPage RIP and were pre-RIPped, with RIPped files placed into folders and stored in one big pool. The only metadata used was the file name, which contained the publication name and month, year and page number. For the six years prior to switching to the new workflow system, AdvanStar used a Xinet FullPress system just to write files to tape and archive them in a database.

## Shifting the Paradigm

A couple of years ago, AdvanStar began the process of upgrading its workflow. Its priorities were quality and accuracy, and one of its primary underlying issues was support for transparency, something XPress has only recently been able to do. Accurate output was also important, considering AdvanStar's significant reliance on advertising, and advertisers demand accuracy.

The company also wanted to reduce cycle time for proofs. AdvanStar produced more than 10,000 hard copy proofs per month. Since they were toner-based Kodak Matchprints, the cost of the medium was not the main issue; the time to rout and manage them was. In the magazine and directory business, reducing time increases flexibility for last-minute changes.

## Featured in This Article

**Advanstar Communications Inc.** is a leading worldwide media company providing integrated marketing solutions for the fashion, life sciences and power sports industries. Advanstar serves business professionals and consumers in these industries with its portfolio of 91 events, 66 publications and directories and 150 electronic publications and Web sites, as well as educational and direct marketing products and services. Market leading brands and a commitment to delivering innovative, quality products and services enables Advanstar to "Connect Our Customers With Theirs." Advanstar has approximately 1,000 employees and currently operates from multiple offices in North America and Europe. It is a privately held corporation owned by a consortium of investors led by Veronis Suhler Stevenson.

**IOIntegration** is an independent systems integrator specializing in high-end server-based automation, digital asset management and Web-based production tools to the graphic arts market. It is an authorized integrator for Xinet and Dalim software, a professional publishing value-added reseller for Apple Inc. and a platinum reseller for SGI.

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AdvanStar also wanted to automate the delivery and transformation of the files and the embedding of metadata, security and a streamlined workflow. The AdvanStar team, headed by Jeremy Carlson, prepress and digital production manager, prepared a business plan and ROI projections and set off to evaluate current systems and integrators. His core team included all of the prepress department and production managers. Pilot tests were carried out and feedback delivered. Carlson attended industry events and in particular the IPA conference, where he took in relevant demos. All in all, the

evaluation took about three months — a remarkably short period of time, which might testify to the maturity of the systems market if nothing else. Of course, the true measure will be whether the system meets the company’s expectations in both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the workflow transformation.

### Six Years is a Long, Long Time

When Carlson joined the prepress department at AdvanStar six years ago, he found a workflow that was manual and analog. In addition to the 10,000 hard copy proofs mentioned above, most of the photography used in the publications was film-based. Drum scanning images constituted around 85% of the total produced. Today 85% of the images used are digital captures. Back then, AdvanStar’s archiving system consisted of Xinet running on an SGI workstation. Customer service was manual and the Web wasn’t used as a portal to deliver or distribute images or proofs. There was no database-supported workflow system.

As a result of Carlson’s investigation, the company decided to engage IO Integration of Cupertino, Calif., which turned out to be a wise decision for a number or reasons. Chief among them was the deep experience IO had with Xinet products and its ability to customize them. IO Integration also supports Dalim products, which made the match even more fortuitous. The first chore tackled in Phase 1 was to switch from the outdated SGI station running Xinet to a box running Linux. The time sensitivity faced by publications is not well-served with near-line asset access from tapes. Besides increased capacity, AdvanStar wanted to move online, and IO switched to an online 10-terabyte storage area network (SAN).

AdvanStar also began to standardize on PDFX/1-a, an ISO standard specification based on Adobe PDF 1.3 that allows only device CMYK and spot colors (no color management information) to be embedded in the PDF file. This contrasts with PDF/X-3, which allows the use of device-independent color. PD/X1-a is also flexible and can be easily repurposed for online and other media. During the beginning of the transition to PDF/X1-a, AdvanStar provided distiller settings to customers but found with recent versions of InDesign and XPress that following a simple recipe and exporting the files directly out of those layout applications was easier.

AdvanStar also decided to upgrade its workflow from Xinet FullPress, which took full advantage of the FPO/OPI workflow that Xinet FullPress offered, to Venture. The case once made for the transmission efficiency of doing OPI on much slower networks is relevant today at AdvanStar. The advantage of moving an FPO file in two seconds compared with moving a high-resolution version of the same file in 20 seconds is cumulative and not trivial. This is particularly true in AdvanStar’s workflow, where 50-70 production workers handle 5,000 pages per month with 2,000 total ads (1,100 new, 900 pickup).

Another change was the introduction of soft-proofing. AdvanStar chose the Dalim Dialogue soft-proofing



system for two reasons. First, it integrated well with the Dalim Twist workflow system the company intended to use as the key file-management tool. Second, the system operated under one license without a monthly fee with much lower costs than competing brands. It met the requirements of being SWOP certified and did not use a proprietary file format. It runs on a standard Linux-supported PDF server.

AdvanStar does most of its prepress work in-house, including generating imposed flats that are supplied as 1-bit TIFFs. The imposition application is PREPS, a de facto standard with many prepress shops and printers. Once the imposed files are released, there is no intervention between sending and plating.

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Imposed 1-bit TIFF proof used for output and press soft-proofing.

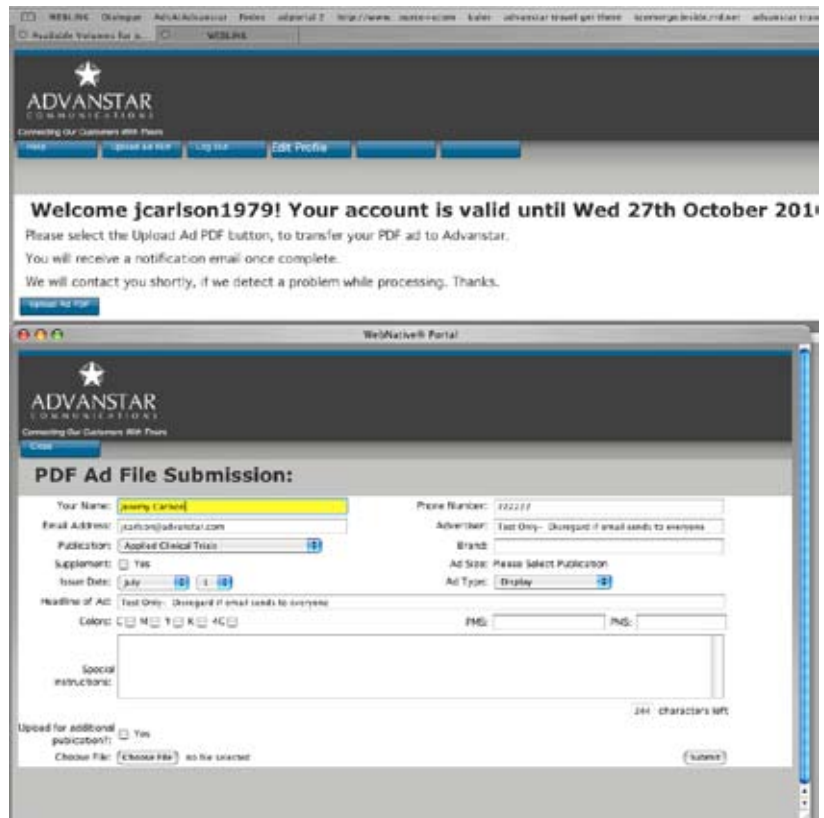
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The IO Integration Ad Portal provides a single sign-on mechanism for access to Xinet and Dalim systems.

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## Phase 1 Review

With Phase 1 completed, AdvanStar estimates that its ROI projections were met in about a year. All 66 publications and directories were moved to the new workflow and online. The prepress culture was shaken up a bit due to the change from the familiar workflow to the new tools and processes, but no jobs were lost in the process. The company learned that training is critical and should not be left to the end, when the pressure of production squeezes out any discretionary time to do it. Especially in the case of virtual proofing, one-to-one demos and hands-on training are critical to efficient and full use of the system and to overcoming any resistance to it.

Prepress/production bore primary responsibility for managing the workflow change. IT supported the infrastructure changes and licensing and manages the editorial workflow.

## Virtual Proofing

Virtual proofing takes place from end to end. As mentioned earlier, up to 90% of the hard copy proofs originally produced have been eliminated. All proofs are the result of soft proofing using a Dalim Dialogue enterprise solution. Dialogue has some appealing qualities for a far-flung company of 1,000 employees. The system allows for real-time annotation and review of high-resolution image data and reduces the overall review and approval cycle. Dialogue relieved some of the cost and maintenance of installing another server at AdvanStar by providing an offsite server that allows any number of clients to connect for any one particular online session. The system is easy to use, providing even casual meeting participants with a browser-based user interface experience. In cases where the user wishes to make a hard copy proof, Dalim allows them to do so without incurring any additional cost. Except for proofs at the press, AdvanStar is steadfast in its commitment to an all-digital premedia workflow.

Metadata is used throughout the system for project file management and as triggers for routing the files around in the workflow. All of the major components in the workflow path, including Xinet Venture, Dalim Twist and Dialogue, utilize XML-based production metadata.

AdvanStar produces a 1-bit TIFF proof file that is brought up on identically calibrated monitors at prepress and at the press for approval. During implementation of soft proofing, one of AdvanStar's major printers also installed a soft-proofing system and it helped to fine-tune the workflow and resolve expectations as a shared experience. A couple of presses are still not converted to soft proofing and at a side-by-side comparison at the press site, AdvanStar brought its workstation to final acceptance.

## Metadata

To date, most of the metadata used is the result of publication parameters, workflow triggers and details and information about the customer. A broader metadata



conversation for building custom schema for editorial content is now taking place as Phase 2 is being planned.

## Custom Development

The custom development provided by IO Integration because the out-of-the-box Xinet DAM system lacked a few pieces that were important to blending Xinet with Dalim and to the overall efficiency of the system and successful user experience. The two main applications IO Integration developed for AdvanStar are the AD Portal and the Authentication Module.

**Ad Portal.** The IO Integration Ad Portal essentially provides a single sign-on mechanism for access to Xinet and Dalim systems. Users can upload files and have metadata added to them identifying their origin and eventual use. This job information is written back to the Xinet system while it is being routed to the Twist system for preflighting and normalization. FullPress provides the hot folder support, WebNative the one-to-one file view and Portal the main entry point.

Ad Portal runs in the Xinet Portal as a plug-in, and providing it with a single sign-on makes the overall process more fluid. When files are uploaded, metadata about the publication date, article, size and contact information is added. Other metadata that is added includes variable data, ad sizes appropriate to the target publication and expiration dates.

Dalim Dialogue soft-proofing system display.

Twist, the main workflow tool, works directly with the soft-proofing application, Dalim Dialogue. It also manages the folder structure for the uploaded files, any file renaming that is necessary and file normalization.

**Authentication.** One of the problems with gluing together a best of breed, secure, blended system is that each component might have its own internal logic and workflow. The Xinet system provides a limited administrative graphic user interface, but the system simply requires too much user intervention and as a result, too much time is spent managing user permissions. IO used this as an opportunity to add value to the system by incorporating new rules and filters, such as multiple permission levels or permission expiration time frames, and providing easy ways for the user to change and manage them.

The IO Integration plug-in to Xinet provides a single sign-on for the entire workflow and allows for permissions to expire according to a set time period, such as a week, month, year, etc. When a user requests access, an e-mail is sent to the appropriate parties who in turn can authorize or reject the request from within the e-mail. Any additional changes can be made through a browser GUI.

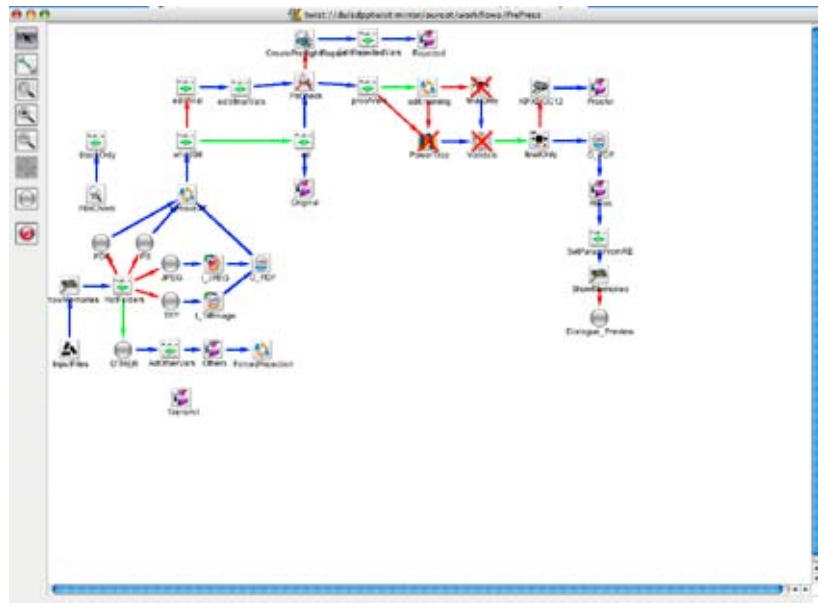
Web Native Venture allows for pages to be custom branded. Based on user authentication, IO Integration provides numerous ways to filter what the user sees and can access. Even users awaiting permissions can see what's there, though they cannot read or download it.

IO Integration provides an application programming interface (API) for setting up a single sign-on user in other applications, too. The product, written in C, PHP and JavaScript, runs on Macintosh, Windows, Linux, SGI and Sun and is available for other systems besides Xinet. A history table of all authentication and file movement activity, including denials and time spent in the system, is stored in the database. Reports, including a comprehensive production report about the entire system, are generated daily.

## Phase 2

Most of AdvanStar's content creation and editorial occurs remotely, in offices in the U.K., Cleveland and New York. The next step in streamlining the process will be to widen the access to digital assets to these offices and maintain the OPI workflow. While no final decisions have been made, Carlson did admit he's considered switching from QuarkXPress to InDesign for the AdvanStar's layout tool of choice and publishing system.

Digital files will not only be fed into the asset management system from the company's in-house graphic design offices, but also from ad agencies. For advertisers, AdvanStar has standardized on PDF/X1-a. PDFs are submitted through the Xinet Web Native Portal database, where they are assigned a job ticket and presented with a set of sizes appropriate for the publication they are interested in, as well as other information about publication date, colors and so on. The trigger for releasing this information is through the sign-on into the browser-based portal, which begins their entry into the AdvanStar project management system.



After submission, the files are routed to the Xinet digital asset management (DAM) system, where the files can either be preflighted or normalized. Preflighting, of course, might involve returning the files with errors to the database for rework. Normalization transforms the files to the PDF standards expected in the next prepress step. Management of XML files exported from InDesign and XPress is currently done by an outside source.

AdvanStar is considering upgrading to Dalim's JDF-compliant Mistral project-management and job-tracking system, which would pull together the status of its publications and processes in an easy-to-monitor view. As far as interoperability is concerned, AdvanStar is also looking to tie its ad-ordering database to Twist.

## Conclusions

At this point, Phase 1 of the integration at AdvanStar seems to be a success. ROI expectations were met, the system is being used every day and the company is making plans for the next phase.

Phase 2 will probably be a different herd of cats. In Phase 1, the integration was between two vendors, Xinet and Dalim, with IO Integration wrapping and gluing things together. The Xinet system was familiar and upgraded. Phase 2 will present thornier issues as the workflow extends outside the firewall and digital asset silos are consolidated into one repository. Decisions about how the content is managed, what the metadata strategy will be for the intellectual property, what mechanisms will be used to syndicate and control assets globally, what scheme to use for digital rights management and how to seamlessly interoperate with other systems, including rights management, will be part of Phase 2.

The production workflow is more straightforward than the editorial workflow and with new revenue opportunities emerging all the time for repurposed content, the form used to store content is becoming more and more important. It will be interesting to follow up at the end of Phase 2 and see what happened. **TSR**

Dalim Twist graphical display of the AdvanStar production workflow.