



SUCCESS STORY

Applied Graphics Technologies

AGT turns to Adobe® Acrobat® and Adobe PDF to speed review and localization of packaging and collateral materials for Microsoft

Applied Graphics Technologies (AGT)

- AGT is the United States' largest provider of outsourced digital imaging management and prepress services.
- Headquarters: New York City
- Location: 61 branch offices in North America, Europe, and Australia
- Founded: 1905

www.agt.com

Industry

Packaging and Collateral Production

Solution

Collaborative Review, Commenting and Approval

Products Used

- Adobe Acrobat
- Adobe InDesign®

Company Profile

Applied Graphics Technologies (AGT) offers a comprehensive portfolio of integrated visual-brand communication prepress services to clients with diverse media and marketing needs, including Microsoft Corporation, Home Depot, and General Motors.

Since the mid-1980s, the Microsoft® Solutions Studio at AGT Seattle has provided prepress services to the Microsoft Home Products Division, producer of mice, keyboards, home networking equipment, Encarta, and other products. The Home Products Division develops more than 1,000 different packaging and collateral materials annually, including product packages, inserts, CD labels, and manual covers that must be localized for more than 30 markets worldwide.

Challenges Faced

Reduce review time and expenses

One of AGT's major tasks is delivering proofs for review and approval worldwide to ensure that colors, text, and other elements are correct before printing. For new products, employees from both AGT and Microsoft, including language specialists, graphic designers, and cultural legal experts, review and approve all packaging and marketing collateral.

Previously, AGT delivered film-based proofs to reviewers. Producing multiple sets of film was expensive and made it difficult to guarantee that materials would arrive on time. Also, because Microsoft and AGT employees travel frequently, delays occurred when reviewers were away from the office.

Accelerate localization efforts

It could take up to 50 days to translate and review the text in packaging and marketing pieces. Materials had to be routed to the localization vendor, Microsoft international language services, the product group, and AGT. Localization was also challenging because translators could not see the text and graphics in the context of the layout which meant they might not accurately convey the meaning of the original text.

Streamline printing

Microsoft works with printers in Asia to produce hardware packaging created in North America. AGT previously delivered film to these print vendors for final output, a slow and costly process that could include delays, customs issues, and the potential for film to become damaged in transit.



"With approximately 150 people involved in the process, using Adobe software for creation, review, localization, and printing saves money by improving the speed and accuracy of our work."

Brett Luartes
Packaging operations
manager,
Microsoft Corporation,
Home Products Division

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To address these challenges, AGT and Microsoft developed an electronic review process using Adobe Acrobat and InDesign software, and Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF). AGT uses InDesign to design packaging and marketing materials, and converts the materials to Adobe PDF files for review. The files are e-mailed to the reviewers, who use the tools in Acrobat to record their comments. Once drafts are approved, AGT creates localization templates in InDesign and converts them to Adobe PDF. The templates, which contain the text, colors, and graphics in context, are routed to the translators and reviewers.

Finalized North American layouts and the localized templates for hardware packaging are converted to high-resolution Adobe PDF files to produce digital contract proofs. After sign-off, the Adobe PDF files are transferred online to printers in China, eliminating the creation and transport of film from the process.

"Adobe PDF is a reliable, stable format that compresses files for rapid transmission worldwide," says Tom Rehder, director of AGT Seattle's Microsoft Solutions Studio. "We can review Adobe PDF files using Acrobat electronic commenting tools or generate high-resolution versions for final output, streamlining the process from beginning to end."

Business Benefits

- Faster time-to-market
- Reliable reviews
- Lower operating costs

By moving to an electronic workflow using Adobe software, Microsoft and AGT have improved time-to-market for Microsoft consumer products. Proofs sent as Adobe PDF files via Microsoft's online workflow tool are delivered in seconds, even to countries with limited bandwidth. Rapid delivery of files and ease of incorporating electronic comments reduce review and approval cycles by weeks. Translating and reviewing packaging text which used to take up to 50 days can now be completed in half the time.

Visually rich documents in Adobe PDF arrive exactly as intended and can be reviewed electronically. Reviewers worldwide can access materials from wherever they are, versus having a film proof sit on their desks while they travel.

By sending proofs and final files electronically, AGT eliminates the cost of outputting multiple sets of film or the need to recreate and resend materials lost or damaged in the mail. In addition, AGT enjoys significant administrative efficiencies because employees can process materials faster.

"With approximately 150 people involved in the process, using Adobe software for creation, review, localization, and printing saves money by improving the speed and accuracy of our work," says Brett Luartes, packaging operations manager for Microsoft's Home Product Division.

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