An Interview With Don Walker

General Manager of the Print Workflow Products Group
Adobe Systems Incorporated

As General Manager of the Print Workflow Products Group at Adobe Systems Incorporated, Don Walker has overall responsibility for driving Adobe's print business. A member of Adobe's senior management team, principal responsibilities include managing and building Adobe's OEM business relationships with key publishing and print infrastructure partners, around products such as Adobe PDF Transit and PostScript. PostScript, PDF, and JDF, are among the foundation technologies that underpin Adobe's continued success in publishing and creative markets.

A twelve-year Adobe veteran, Don Walker has also worked in senior roles in the company's Process Management, Engineering and OEM groups. Before Adobe, Walker was Director of Printer Engineering at Qume Corporation in Milpitas, California. Don Walker holds a BSEE (Computer Science) from University of Cincinnati and an MBA (International Marketing) from Santa Clara University California.

Don was interviewed by Harry Waldman, an author and printing industry consultant, whose column Waldman On The 21ST Century appears every other month in Printing Impressions Magazine.

Don, Pamela Pfiffner's book, *Inside the Publishing Revolution: The Adobe Story* is fascinating reading with a great perspective on the extent of Adobe's contribution. Would you add some of your thoughts on Adobe's history with the printing industry?

Yes, Harry, Adobe's development of PostScript was a major force in changing the industry and still remains an important part of print workflows. As you're aware, PostScript was the beginning of desktop publishing and ushered in a new digital age for print. Fortunately, typography was also very important to Chuck Geschke and John Warnock, the founding fathers of Adobe. They set high standards by insuring the artistic fidelity of fonts as they were digitized. In addition to fonts and PostScript, Adobe has continued to make important contributions to print throughout the company's 20-year history. Adobe Acrobat and PDF Transit, Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator and Adobe InDesign are just some of the products used by printers and content creators, insuring the future of print.

Where does Adobe PostScript go from here?

Shorter runs, and digital presses with instant makeready have put enormous pressure on the RIP. These demands will only escalate as printers must find ways of keeping up with print-on-demand. By understanding industry trends and by listening to print providers and our OEM partners, we knew we had to make a concentrated effort to improve performance and quality. The result is Adobe PostScript version 3016 which enables far greater throughput and provides extensible JDF capabilities coupled with the ability to directly consume PDF files as well as PostScript. With Adobe PostScript 3016, our partners will be able to help print providers efficiently meet today's demands. As for tomorrow, we are working hard to ensure that Adobe PostScript will continue to help print providers meet new challenges.

What factor is the Internet going to play in Print and specifically Web job submission?

With ever increasing pressure on turnaround and costs, why waste valuable time and money on manual delivery systems? The Internet is instant and connects the customer's desktop directly to the print provider. Also, since the job arrives digitally into a folder on the printer's server, it's ready to start its path through the shop. If the file is a PDF, properly made to the shop's specifications, then the journey will be faster and far more cost efficient. As JDF compliancy becomes integrated into the print provider's production process, automation from the customer's desktop to delivery means far greater efficiencies.

How does PDF Transit fit into Web job submission leading to an automated workflow?

Native file formats are too big, have too many pieces, and more importantly are not reliable enough to fully enable both effective Internet job submission and an automated workflow. Adobe PDF is a great file format for overcoming these shortcomings. However, as I said previously, the PDF must be made to the shop's workflow specifications. Often, this is too difficult for the print provider's customers. Adobe PDF Transit solves the problem by ensuring the customer makes a PDF one way only, the printer's way. The customer doesn't need to worry about the file submission options that work best for the printer or even have a copy of Acrobat. They simply click to create an encrypted Adobe PDF, custom made to the print provider's specifications, that only the print provider can decrypt. Now add JDF compliancy, and the printer has all the ingredients to build a fast, cost effective automated workflow.

Don, you have mentioned JDF several times please give us some details on how you and Adobe see

JDF as part of the future of print?

Recent surveys have shown that printers see PDF workflows as a key component that drives them towards the goal of automating their entire process. Obviously, we at Adobe feel they are looking in the right direction, and that gives us the responsibility to make sure their objectives are realized. Solely automating job production isn't enough. The process of imparting and gathering information, and controlling the process itself must also be automated. JDF and XMP, which ride with the job file, accomplish just that. Adobe is committed to a total automated workflow solution and JDF is an integral component in reaching this goal.

I know that Adobe played a key role in the development of JDF, could you tell us about it?

Well Harry, I know you're aware of Adobe's thinking and direction about job ticketing since the late-1990's, as our development of the Portable Job Ticket Format (PJTF), was a forerunner of JDF. PJTF was heading in the right direction as it described parameters of important prepress functions and exercised some control over press activities. However, we knew we had to go further if we wanted to achieve industry objectives of total shop information, automation, and process control. So we pooled our resources with Agfa, Heidelberg and MAN Roland. We all realized that a formidable team of key industry players, such as this, could develop JDF as an industry standard that ensured it becomes an everyday industry reality.

Tell us why Adobe together with the other three partners decided to make JDF available to all and tell us Adobe's future role?

One of Adobe's firm beliefs is that if you help develop open standards for the industry, it will be good for all and all will prosper and grow. Adobe has done this repeatedly in the past—the PDF and PostScript specifications have long been open to all. Obviously we've invested heavily in developing PDF and PostScript and feel very proud that Adobe has set the benchmark against which all others are measured. In the same manner Adobe, together with Agfa, Heidelberg and MAN Roland, believe that JDF must be nonproprietary for it to benefit the industry as a whole. Placing JDF in the care of an international organization like The International Cooperation for the Integration of Processes in Prepress, Press and Postpress (CIP4) allows complete access for the industry. As for Adobe's future role, we will continue to support and contribute to the development of JDF.

Don, I want to thank you for your time. Could you sum-up by giving us an insight on your vision for the future of Adobe's Print Workflow Products Group?

If you think about it, Adobe has always played a fascinating role in our industry. My business unit, the Print Workflow Products Group, supplies workflow solutions for the print side of the industry and our Creative Professional Division supplies content creation products for print industry customers. Without the creative pro there is no printing industry, and without printing creative pros have lost the main medium to show off their work. Adobe has been, and continues to be a key player in developing innovative solutions for everyone. By playing this critical dual role, Adobe is in a unique position to significantly foster industry growth. Adobe's ongoing commitment to innovative solutions and product pipeline benefit all. And our drawing boards are full of ideas to accomplish this goal. As for me, I can't express how excited I am to be part of Adobe, the Print Workflow Products Group, and the whole printing industry as we work with you to help our industry meet the new challenges of the 21st century.