

Getting it right out of the box

DALiM TWiST
helps North American Color produce print-ready
PDF files for its packaging clients

North American Color (NAC) is a Michigan-based graphic communications company offering a range of production services for design, premedia, packaging, print and New Media. Founded in 1981, NAC services include, photography, digital print, and a suite of client web services that are branded 'NACTools'—applications including services for project management, e-procurement, digital asset management, online file management and content approval, all seamlessly accessed from a web browser-based interface. Included within NACTools is their '4Print' application, based on DALiM DiALOGUE. This monitor-based proofing system allows users to add retouching notes directly to the softproof. Multiple users can join in the mark-up session to collaborate on the mark-up and approval process. If desired, remote, on-site, fully calibrated hard copy contract proofs can be sent to Epson printers. All these NACTools are linked to a DALiM TWiST automated production workflow engine.

The company had been working on many packaging projects—mostly folding cartons (such as cereal boxes) and flexible packaging—created using Adobe Illustrator with the help of specialized plugins. Unfortunately, the PDF files they created were extremely complex and sophisticated. So much so that many of the files, if sent to their RIP, would fail to output. The normalized PDF file from Illustrator created a file that did not flatten out the many filter effects.

"We often need to create extremely vector-heavy files, with lots of gradients, blurs, drop shadows, numerous spot colors and such, which were slowing our output RIP to a crawl – or even choking it completely," explains Pete Groff, Packaging Supervisor at NAC. "We needed to find a way to speed up RIP processing, while keeping output faithful to the original artwork. We could have purchased a new RIP to handle the problem, but that seemed foolish, given that we were generally pleased with the RIP we had and felt there was no need to buy another one."

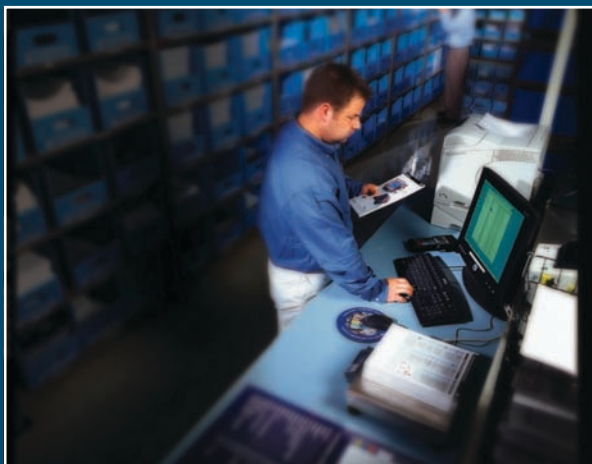
That's where DALiM TWiST came to the rescue.

Calling on the expertise of Dalim Software reseller IO Integration (IOI), NAC worked with IOI's experienced technical personnel to build an output workflow that optimized the complex PDF file that came out of the packaging application in a way that allows the RIP to output files quickly, cleanly and consistently. Now, the DALiM TWiST workflow delivers a print-ready PDF file for the RIP. From there, the RIP is able to create a one-bit TIFF file, screened and ready to go.

"Thanks to the output flexibility of DALiM TWiST, we are able to optimize the PDF files that we send to our plate-setter RIP," remarks Larry Leto, NAC president. "With the help of Dalim Software, just by solving this output file issue, our packaging work increased significantly last year." ■



Company : **North American Color Inc.**
 Location : **Kalamazoo, Michigan**
 Type of company : **Creative, premedia, DAM, packaging, print**
 Dalim Software products : **DALiM TWiST, DALiM DiALOGUE**



Over the past few years, North American Color (NAC) has developed NACTools for prepress and print workflows to help customers create and manage print media communication projects. The web portal benefits from its single, consistent interface across all applications, with just one login to access services.

All NACTools services are seamlessly integrated and they offer a great deal of customization and flexibility in relation to what functions, and assets/files individual users can have access to. Clients can enable and coordinate their publishing, creative or production team members and suppliers.

The NACTools suite of online applications include:

- NAC File Manager: offering web-enabled file transfer management, preflight checking and on-line file sharing.
- NACDAM web-based Digital Asset Management: managing all digital content directly from a desktop
- NAC 4Print: allowing browser-based revision and approval activities of images, layouts and color proofs, using DALiM DiALOGUE as the background engine/application for both the monitor-based viewing experience and the approval process.
- NAC Project Information System and J-Tracker: offering functions for e-procurement of prepress and print services, project management, job tracking and detailed project reporting. Tracker interacts with other applications and automatically completes production tasks such as upload, converting, and dropping files into user folders. Users can track the progress of on-demand print jobs.

Other modules include Flatplan, allowing customers to develop multi-page documents with native InDesign or Quark Xpress files; and packaging tools to help review and approve content before it is placed in packaging designs.

Beyond the hard work that NAC put into this system, the secret behind most of these services is DALiM TWiST. All NACTools applications benefit from a common DALiM TWiST workflow automation 'engine' that allows NAC to set up automatic production activities such as file editing and file conversions.

Driven by DALiM TWiST, the system takes advantage of file editing and automated communications/delivery—sometimes via hotfolders. PDF files created by DALiM TWiST are posted for approval and, often, sent via DALiM DiALOGUE or to remote proofer for client review and approval. Final PDF files for print are most often processed by DALiM TWiST.