Hallmark Cards, Inc. Switches to PDF for High-Volume Greeting Card Workflow

Powerful Automation Tools Extract Rich Metadata, Create Print-Ready PDFs

Greeting card pioneer Hallmark Cards, Inc. knows a thing or two about bringing people closer. For nearly 100 years, this private, $4.4 billion institution has helped people to connect with one another and to give voice to their feelings. Hallmark also knows that details are important. As one of the foremost brands in greeting cards, Hallmark produces and distributes a large quantity of new and redesigned greeting cards and related products each year. Making this endeavor possible is a busy production team that handles nearly 2,500 files every day. Recently, the company recognized that, although the team's workflow is efficient, legacy standards had to be updated.

For nearly a decade, Hallmark used a PostScript® DCS file format, which accommodates the use of more than four colors, plus a Pantone color, in the primary printing process. While the PostScript format worked, and would continue to, Hallmark recognized that PDF would better serve the company in the long run.

Changing from one file format to another—while maintaining the company's existing production workflow—is no small task. Although there are many companies that deliver solutions for PostScript files, Steve Hubbard, senior creative technology specialist of Hallmark, soon learned that there are few companies that can develop high-volume automation tools for PDF. Then Hubbard found Apago, an innovative software company changing how people use and profit from electronic documents.

Apago's team developed a set of tools to meet Hallmark's requirements. Hallmark implemented a combination of retail products—including PDF Enhancer, PDFspy, and PDF Constructor—and customized technologies from Apago's extensive technical library. "Apago's team listened to us, helped guide us, and used their very intimate knowledge of PDF and printing to

Problem:

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Solution:

Apago's team developed a set of tools to meet Hallmark's requirements. Hallmark implemented a combination of retail products—including PDF Enhancer, PDFspy, and PDF Constructor—and customized technologies from Apago's vast technical library. Hallmark uses these tools to validate and convert greeting card designs into print-ready PDF files.

"Apago's team listened to us, helped guide us, and used their very intimate knowledge of PDF and printing to develop solutions that were suited for us."

– Steve Hubbard, senior creative technology specialist of Hallmark Cards, Inc.

About Hallmark Cards Inc.

Hallmark has been helping people communicate, celebrate, and connect for nearly 100 years. Hallmark greeting cards and other products can be found in more than 43,000 places in the U.S. alone. Hallmark publishes products in more than 30 languages and distributes them in 100 countries across the globe from its Kansas City offices. In 2007, privately held Hallmark reported consolidated net revenues of $4.4 billion. Charitable giving of $16 million a year focuses on the well-being of children and families, vibrant arts and cultural experiences, and basic services for people in need in the communities where Hallmark operates.

About Apago

Founded in 1991, Apago Inc. is an innovative software technology company that is changing how people use and profit from electronic documents. Consumers and businesses of all sizes use Apago's workflow tools to transform, optimize, and automate electronic documents for print-on-demand, publishing, rich media, and archiving.

develop solutions that were suited for us," comments Hubbard. "They provided us with a way to maintain our existing workflow while seamlessly moving it into a PDF world."

Automation is the Key to Efficiency

Hubbard's department aids the design staff, validating and converting greeting cards into print-ready files. When dealing with as many as 2,500 files daily, automation is central to efficiency. "Our workflow is man-power intensive. We use Apago's technology to automate repetitive tasks and to produce print-ready PDFs," comments Hubbard. "The system's modular architecture and scalability also gives us the flexibility we require."

Apago's tools seamlessly perform t, several critical production tasks. The technology facilitates variable-data text substitutions, color corrections using 5+ channel device-link profiles, and XMP metadata tagging of information such as barcode and the files' key elements.

"Apago's rich understanding of PDF and printing proved invaluable as we embarked on this endeavor. The end result is that Apago has become a critical component of our PDF workflow," concludes Hubbard.

For more information, visit Apago at www.apago.com or call 770-619-1884.