

# Packaging giant has virtual proof



**The local operation of a global consumer packaging giant is using Pent Net's Proof Manager system to streamline the approval of its soft proofs.**

Huhtamaki is a global packaging company that operates in 36 countries around the world, including Australia and New Zealand. At its production facility at Mulgrave in Victoria, it handles all the prepress for the various production plants around Australia, and it is here that the company has installed the Proof Manager system to manage customer approvals for the huge range of printed items produced by the company.

"Using Proof Manager has reduced the approval time considerably," says Brian Fiddes, process and project development manager at Huhtamaki. "We can put a job up and the system automatically sends an email to the customer letting them know it is ready for them to view. They can check it, approve it and we can have the whole job done in 15 minutes."

The heart of the Proof Manager system, developed by Sydney IT company, Pent Net, is a browser-based approval process that allows customers to log on to a secure site and view their files when they are ready for approval. The system can accept over 100 different file formats and automatically convert them into browser-friendly previews. No special software is required by the customer, just a normal web browser, and they can add notes to the files to indicate changes, as well as download PDF versions for outputting.

The Proof Manager suite of products also includes digital asset management

that enables customers to view their digital assets and re-order them online. At the operator's end, Proof Manager tracks the status of all files, logging when they were sent for approval, tracking changes and recording approvals. The system is secure and can be customised to suit specific requirements. While the customer can see exactly what their work will look like on screen, the original work file remains untouched.

"The traceability is fantastic," agrees Brian Fiddes. "It logs every change and every request so we can see exactly what happened at every stage in the job approval process."

After nearly two years in operation, most of Huhtamaki's customers now use Proof Manager on a regular basis and many no longer require any form of hard proof. Following approval, Huhtamaki's operators print out a hard copy for their printers but no longer send copies to customers unless they specifically request one.

One of the key areas of Huhtamaki's production is in food packaging with items such as yoghurt tubs, ice cream cartons, beverage cups, fast food containers and the like. In fact just about anything and everything that can hold food is made by Huhtamaki (they make the ubiquitous "newspaper" design chip cup, for instance).

Decoration of food containers calls for some unique printing equipment. Huhtamaki uses a "dry" offset process that is a cross between flexo and offset; the plates

are similar to flexo but they still print offset with the major difference being that all the colours are laid down onto the blanket one after another and then transferred to the container in one pass.

Most jobs use mainly spot colours, which is a bonus when using a soft proofing system because absolute colour fidelity becomes less of an issue; as long as customers know which PMS is being used and where, then the colours should always be right.

Most jobs require up to six colours but Huhtamaki also operates eight-colour machines, running at high speeds. Print runs can be over 500,000 or as low as 50,000, which is very short considering that a job change-over can take up to a shift if it involves switching between different container types.

In these circumstances, being able to speed up a part of the process in prepress obviously has great benefits, not least in the communication with customers.

"Proof Manager has certainly been well received by our customers because they can see we are doing something to make the process easier. It may not be the deciding factor in them using us but it's certainly been seen as a value-add," says Brian.

Although only relatively recently released to the printing and prepress industries, Pent Net's Proof Manager system is gaining significant market share with installed sites throughout Australia and New Zealand. ■