



Case Study

Automating a workflow to meet impossible deadlines

“Automating workflows allows our clients to adapt to higher volumes and complexity without missing a beat.”

- **Son Do**
CTO, Rods and Cones

4X
higher
productivity
with
automated
workflows

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Introduction

Many of Rods and Cones' clients are premedia or printing companies that provide 3D modeling, sophisticated image manipulation, production and prepress services to creative agencies, brand owners, and technology corporations. Their clients, often large manufacturers of hardware and/or software, require extremely high volumes of output within very short deadlines.

As is often the case when technology evolves, work can become increasingly complex, and the workload substantially heavier. To maximize productivity, Rods and Cones assembled a team, software, and new ideas for new workflows that meet the demands of their clients.

Why Rods and Cones?

Because a solution designed and implemented by Rods and Cones will be customized and detailed. Most of Rods and Cones' new relationships start with an in-depth assessment of needs and goals, specifically in terms of process control, color management, and productivity. Our technicians are experts at understanding workflows – on press and in premedia – and also provide consulting up front in the workflow, for brand managers, agencies, and production teams across the supply chain. Solutions are brand-agnostic, developed specifically to serve each individual project and its specific challenges and goals, and are implemented by our highly experienced teams of technician and industry experts.

We develop turnkey solutions and provide all the keys.

We are system architects and we develop and implement our own solutions. Our core team of color management and automation workflow experts, Javascript and Applescript developers, Filemaker Pro developers, and Digital Asset Management installers understand, scope, plan and implement solutions including one or all of these factions. Our twenty years in the industry allows us to recruit the best, and that gives us the assurance that our clients will always benefit from the most up-to-date, well built, performant and successful solutions.

An example

Many of our clients service retail clients. Periodically, they refresh all of their stores' imagery and POS based on product release cycles and seasons. This involves high-volume, short-time design and production sessions executed by teams from both the retailer and the service bureau. Over time, the files have grown increasingly complicated with more elaborate designs, the use of transparency, multiple image composites, increased size and resolution, etc. The non-creative final file assembly and prep work, including hi-res proofing file generation, has increased from minutes to over an hour of operator and workstation time per file, tying up valuable resources.

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Solutions

In a given site, we'll start by obtaining a clear understanding of the current workflow, then identifying the repetitive and time-consuming steps that could be automated and prioritized.

Often, given a situation of crippling repetitive steps, we will create a workflow with Enfocus Switch and PitStop Server, sometimes with multiple sub-workflows that will each accomplish a number of tasks without human intervention. This solution is particularly effective since Switch can be used to automate the Adobe CC suite. Although Switch can accomplish a great deal out of the box, these workflows require custom scripts. Once in place, the workflows continue to be refined, as more efficient processes are discovered, and as new bottlenecks surface as the workflows mature with use.

Switch can initiate scripts and record actions in software packages to tackle an even larger number of tasks. Switch's built-in 'Configurators' allow it to make calls on other software packages directly. And, Switch itself can be scripted with javascript, applescript, and visual basic. Switch is highly efficient and makes full use of multiple simultaneous processes to increase production. The possibilities are limitless.

Switch supports SQL for interacting with databases. It supports XML and JDF for receiving instructions from MIS systems. XMP data can be read, or written.

There are Configurators for page layout, image manipulation, PDF manipulation, imposition, digital asset management, proofing, ink optimization, digital publishing, color management, and variable data applications, as well as any command-line tools.

This makes it the perfect tool for our needs.

Impact and Future

The time saved by having Rods and Cones develop and implement this solution is staggering, sometimes quadrupling productivity. It requires a coordinated approach with the two companies, premedia and their client, if only because an automated workflow requires that everyone in the supply chain adopts and utilizes consistent best practices.

A properly designed workflow dramatically reduces the number of production hours, a financial savings of course, but also an opportunity to invest time and dollars in additional services. And, as their client's needs increase, our client is able to comfortably meet those demands.

These systems grow well. Often, our clients leverage the Switch platform to streamline other processes including the production of hi-res assets by Photoshop. Retouchers and imagers' valuable time will no longer be consumed with unnecessary tasks like generating variants from the main asset file. RGB and CMYK versions localized for world-wide distribution can be created on demand and swapped into the appropriate designs.

Switch and the newly designed workflows, envisioned and implemented by Rods and Cones, become the backbone for a company-wide job tracking application giving greater transparency to the entire company of the status of any project in realtime.

Optimize your productivity. Call Rods and Cones today to schedule a complimentary meeting.

