

Color Proofing

Leo Burnett Shows Its True Colors

How a color-accurate workflow system enabled a worldwide agency to save time and money ... and improve color quality.

By Warren Chiara

Thumb through the Nov. 8 issue of *People* magazine, and you may come across an ad for Max Factor. What you might not know is the ad was proofed accurately online using a color proofing technology that has designs on gaining a foothold in the publishing world.

Max Factor's Chicago-based agency Leo Burnett and *People* publisher Time Inc. were early beta testers of Matchprint Virtual, a proofing technology developed by Imation, which Kodak Polychrome Graphics (KPG) acquired in 2001.

When Minnesota-based Imation was in development with Matchprint Virtual, the company had approached the Leo Burnett agency to gauge its interest in running tests for the product. The agency agreed and, when the product was ready, began beta testing its capabilities.

Time Inc., the nation's largest magazine publisher, also played a key role in developing the technology, says Rob Pipe, KPG's worldwide business director for monitor and monitor proofing business.

"Having been a user of our ... solution [from inception], Time has been instrumental in its development, in regard to ... features that they felt needed to be in the system," says Pipe.

Though primarily a proofing tool, Leo Burnett realized that the product would offer many additional advantages.

"[Matchprint Virtual] is really promoted in the market as a prepress tool for final proofing," says Jim Mikol, senior vice president and director of print production with Leo Burnett. "Although we do use it that way, we [also] found that there are many other uses for it that go farther upstream in the creative process."

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—Jim Mikol, Leo Burnett

One use, Mikol says, is to enable the creative department to understand at inception what the ad is going to look like on newspaper or magazine paper stocks.

"Not only do we get a better rendition of what the image is going to look like on the appropriate paper, right off the bat from a creative standpoint, we're also able to cut time and dollars out of the retouching pro-

cess," Mikol says. "We're not pulling multiple paper proofs and having them marked up, and going back and deleting those [proofs]."

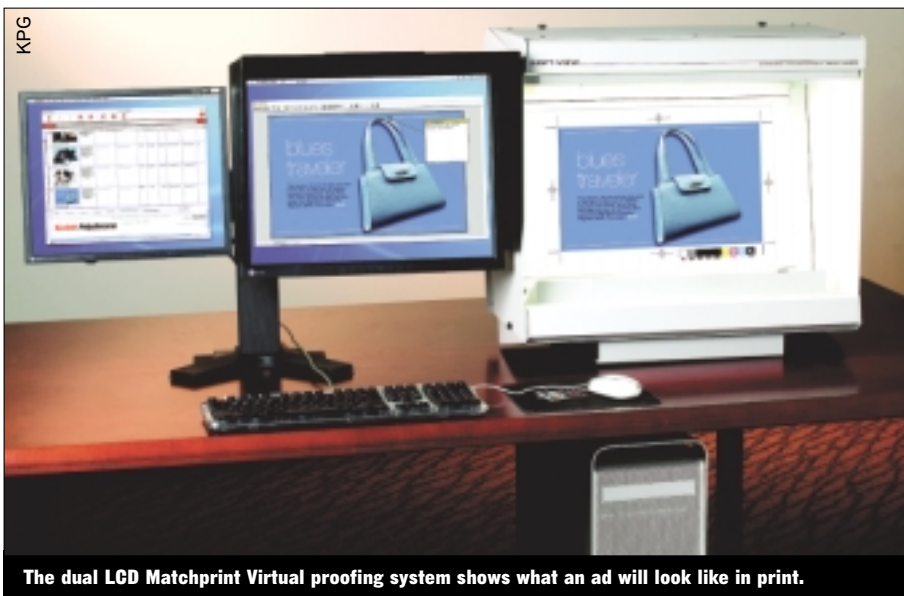
HOW IT WORKS

Matchprint Virtual, part of KPG's monitor proofing portfolio, is built on the infrastructure of RealTimeProof—a technology that allows users to view high-resolution files over the Internet efficiently through an application service provider (ASP)—a local server product called Express, and a third product, titled Partner, that integrates into a digital asset management solution, says Pipe. RealTimeProof acts as a collaboration tool between the agency and the client, providing the means to create an online proofing workflow, while Matchprint Virtual creates the color-accurate workflow that enables the creation of contract-quality monitor proofs, explains Pipe. Essentially, it allows the creative and production department to see accurate color earlier in the workflow.

"The ability to easily adopt [the technology] and plug in to different tools means we see customers using the system for concept layout, design concept review and approval," he says.

"I think what we're trying to do from a production-department standpoint is manage what that image is going to look like on a press, or as close to it as we can. And so we're constantly striving to get to that point," says Mikol. "We're far closer to that [with] Matchprint Virtual. It allows us to really zero in on what needs to be done. It doesn't do us any good to retouch and produce something so that it's really appealing, if that's not what it's going to look like in the magazine."

Though pleased with the results, there was some concern heading into the test phase of the product as to how accurate the system would ultimately be. That is why Leo Burnett spent three years beta testing



The dual LCD Matchprint Virtual proofing system shows what an ad will look like in print.



Two designers check the color accuracy of an ad using the Matchprint Virtual system.

the product. The agency ran several tests with newspaper stock and the agency's digital proofing systems.

A MAJOR SELLING POINT

Mikol says once the agency tested the monitor proofing system against the proofing devices of several publications, the Matchprint Virtual product was the most consistent. The added bonus was the amount of time and shipping costs the company would save. As a global company with offices in 38 countries, giving two offices a world apart the capability to view the same color proof at the same time is a major selling point. Shipping proofs back and forth to Leo Burnett's offices in Frankfurt and Brussels can take up to four days and another four days to ship them back to Chicago once the corrections are made.

"So there's eight or nine days out of the process just on the first go-around," says Mikol. "[Now], we can do things in real-time." The Frankfurt and Chicago offices can look at proofs—on cathode ray tube (CRT) monitors or the liquid crystal display (LCD) models Burnett recently beta tested—at the same time. "The cost and time perspectives are huge," Mikol says. "Not only are we able to correct things in a fashion that makes it quicker and easier, we're able to stretch our lead time with the printer."

Mikol says he's seeing savings in excess of 50 percent, which can run much higher, depending on the volume of the job.

The agency uses KPG's CRT system to view the proofs and has just finished beta testing Eizo LCD monitors, which were dis-

played along with monitors made by Apple at the KPG booth at Graph Expo in October. LCD monitors are more than twice as bright as CRT monitors, and because they are not as sensitive to ambient light, they don't need to be installed in a dark or dimly lit room.

"Moving to standard LCD monitors makes the operation and the installation of the system easier because it can be used in a room-light environment," says Pipe. "It also means users can work on standard equipment. A lot of customers already have Apple monitor displays, so the adoption of the technology is much simpler [for the client]."

Pipe says the system is compatible with four monitors—an older version of the Apple 20-inch monitor, Apple's new 20-inch monitor, the new Apple 23-inch and the Eizo ColorEdge monitor.

WIDE-SCALE IMPLEMENTATION

Mikol's next challenge is convincing other creative departments within Leo Burnett that Matchprint Virtual is a viable product. "It's a learning situation. I can't say that we've introduced [Matchprint Virtual] to all the creatives in Burnett yet. We're taking it slowly, and we're working on it project by project."

The larger issue going forward is getting other publications that Leo Burnett works with to begin using the KPG product. If other publications don't begin using Matchprint Virtual, it means running two workflows, something Mikol can't afford to do.

"The only publisher that has really embraced this is Time," he says. "If we have insertions in 20 or 30 different publications, that means any of the Time [publications] are fine, but we would have to run conventional methods for the others. There will be a time where we have to look at this and say, 'OK—if we haven't had the rest of the publications adopt, then what do we do?' That's something that we're fighting right now."

For its part, KPG has been promoting Matchprint Virtual with the help of Time Inc. and its printer Quad/Graphics, setting up workshops with New York agencies to witness what the product can do. The company also is currently in the middle of a 15- to 20-city road show with Apple (exhibiting its 23-inch LCD monitor) that hits Toronto, San Diego, San Francisco and Los Angeles, among others. □