

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. and Vertis Advertising Production Services

World's largest retailer streamlines advertising design and production with Adobe InDesign software, Adobe PDF, and PDF/X

PROFILE

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.

- Industry: Retail
- Headquarters: Bentonville, Arkansas
- www.walmartstores.com

Vertis Advertising Production Services

- Industry: Integrated marketing services and prepress
- Headquarters: Baltimore, Maryland
- www.vertisinc.com
- Challenge: Increase efficiency and accuracy in designing and producing advertising circulars, point-of-purchase items, catalogs, and other printed materials
- Solution: Switch to InDesign and move to a more integrated workflow based on Adobe PDF and PDF/X
- Benefits: Increased efficiency and improved accuracy

BENEFITS SUMMARY

- InDesign enabled Wal-Mart and Vertis to move easily to a PDF/X workflow, resulting in more reliable data interchange and fewer printing errors.
- InDesign offers user-friendly, timesaving features such as multiple undos, file recovery, superior type handling, and libraries.
- InDesign increases workflow efficiency by allowing designers to place native Photoshop and Illustrator files into layouts and easily output materials to Adobe PDF.
- PDF Export styles in InDesign enable designers to easily generate Adobe PDF files for review.
- The ability to launch and use Photoshop or Illustrator from within InDesign saves designers' time.
- Designers can preflight files within InDesign, reducing delays and errors during prepress.

As the world's largest retailer, Wal-Mart Stores relies on advertising circulars, point-of-purchase items, in-store brochures, and other printed materials to promote products, sales events, and special offers. To meet this need, Wal-Mart Creative Services produces large volumes of printed items—including more than 200 different 24-page advertising circulars each year. To streamline design and production of printed advertising and marketing materials, Wal-Mart switched to Adobe InDesign software and a more integrated workflow based on Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF).

"With features such as multiple undos, InDesign is more user-friendly than other page layout options," says Chad Graham, creative director for Wal-Mart Creative Services. "InDesign also gives us a more efficient workflow by allowing us to work with native Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator files and easily output materials to Adobe PDF. These factors alone enable us to produce pages faster and more accurately."

A smooth transition

The Wal-Mart designers were initially apprehensive about learning a new software program, but the transition to InDesign proved easier than expected. Because the program shares common commands, tools, palettes, and keyboard shortcuts with Photoshop and Illustrator, getting started was easy. And, after the designers discovered features in InDesign such as file recovery, they became increasingly enthusiastic; within two weeks, the entire advertising circular team had adopted the software.

Today, InDesign allows Wal-Mart designers to work with a high degree of flexibility and control, especially in working with type. "Advertising circulars and other materials usually have very tight copy space," says Wal-Mart Art Director Erik Blanton. "InDesign provides superior type features, such as hanging punctuation and optical kerning, that allow us to integrate type into our designs with exceptional control."

Increased workflow efficiency

Smooth integration with Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop helps Wal-Mart designers work more efficiently. For example, designers can place native Photoshop or Illustrator files in an InDesign layout without flattening them or creating EPS files. They can edit images or artwork placed within a layout by launching Photoshop or Illustrator right from within InDesign.

Designers are also taking advantage of libraries in InDesign to streamline their workflow. "Wal-Mart advertising circulars often incorporate numerous vendor logos," explains Wal-Mart Art Director Ryan Lauderdale. "By setting up a logo library in InDesign, we can simply drag and drop logos onto pages, saving time that would otherwise be spent searching through folders."

Proofing and preflighting made easy

The move to InDesign has also made proofing faster and easier, thanks to the software's support for Adobe PDF. The Creative Services team set up a PDF Export style in InDesign that



Using Adobe InDesign, Wal-Mart and Vertis established a smooth PDF/X workflow. InDesign proved easy to learn, and integration with Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator increased efficiency. Wal-Mart relies on type features within InDesign, such as hanging punctuation and optical kerning, that enable designers to integrate type into designs with exceptional control.

working with the narrower standard, Wal-Mart and Vertis can more reliably exchange and output files, thereby reducing printing errors.

“Our conversion to InDesign was seamless; we literally had no issues,” says Al Manson, production systems administrator for Vertis Advertising Production Services. “Plus, by supporting InDesign, we have the competitive advantage of serving clients like Wal-Mart, who prefer InDesign for page layout and production.”

Faster, more accurate production

Although Wal-Mart has not yet quantified its return on investment from moving to InDesign, Creative Services is confident that it is working faster and producing more accurate materials. “We have fewer designers working on our circulars than we did before, and we expect that efficiency to increase,” says Graham.

Best of all, Wal-Mart knows it can rely on Adobe as a technology provider. “Adobe has been very supportive, responding quickly and working closely with our technical support team to resolve any issues,” says Graham. “The positive experiences we’ve had with Adobe are part of the reason we converted to InDesign. We wouldn’t go back.”

TOOLBOX

Adobe Acrobat
Adobe Illustrator
Adobe InDesign
Adobe Photoshop

Xinet FullPress OPI
Apple® Power Macintosh® computers
Kodak proofers

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*Chad Graham
Creative director
Wal-Mart Creative Services*

enables automated generation of Adobe PDF files for proofing. The compact Adobe PDF files can be easily e-mailed to executives, buyers, and others involved in reviewing the materials.

Once pages are ready, designers preflight them within InDesign to ensure that links, fonts, artwork, and other elements are present; this process reduces delays and errors during pre-press. Designers then send the InDesign layouts via wide-area network (WAN) to Wal-Mart’s prepress service provider, Vertis Advertising Production Services.

Reliable exchange and output

Vertis, an Adobe Authorized Service Provider, handles digital photography, asset management, and print project management for Wal-Mart. To save time and storage space, Wal-Mart Creative Services builds the initial pages using smaller, low-resolution versions of images supplied by Vertis. Once the InDesign layouts are approved, Vertis builds the final pages, using a Xinet Full-Press open prepress interface (OPI) spooler to automatically replace the low-resolution images with their high-resolution counterparts. Vertis then generates Adobe PDF files and prints them for a final round of reviews.

After final sign-off at Wal-Mart, Vertis generates PDF/X files for sending to the six commercial printers that handle printing for Wal-Mart. PDF/X, an independent standard and subset of the PDF specification created by Adobe, eliminates many of the color, font, and trapping variables that can lead to printing problems. By



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