

Drupa 2008: Coopetition

While there were reportedly fewer North Americans at drupa than in previous years, the event itself was alive and well, and chocked full of optimism and innovation. In my opinion, the catchword of the event was "coopetition," uttered by the former president of Kodak Graphic Communications Group and new Presstek CEO, Jeff Jacobson.

With 1,800 exhibitors in 19 halls showing tens of thousands of applications and devices, no one can see or do it all. There seemed to be unprecedented partnership between rivals, all striving to help their customers integrate a diverse and fragmented set of solutions. While the "JDF drupa" of 2004 offered the promise of system-to-system integration, there was then little to see or experience in a real-world environment. Drupa 2008 offered end-to-end solutions you could sink your teeth into. Throughout the show there was emphasis on solutions designed to achieve a more integrated digital workflow.

A wealth of new ideas and possibilities were coming from small, independent sources. But don't discount the giants. Big manufacturers are becoming more vertical, bringing workflow solutions that optimize their devices, either through cooperative partnerships or through their own development. A few highlights:

Adobe released Acrobat 9.0, which now includes the ability to add flash content to PDF files and supports publishing with transparency, more efficient variable data production, and enhanced 3D capabilities.

Agfa's Apogee Suite includes a new integrated publication platform with integrated content management and real-time collaboration between content owners and print producers, moving the workflow further upstream from production.

EFI showed intelligent production solutions that can operate with or without their proprietary MIS solutions.

EskoArtwork's recent acquisition of Gradual Software and their Crossroads Initiative have spawned Enfocus Switch,

which automates tools from numerous third-party vendors.

FujiFilm's Taskero Universe is web-enabled and gives users the ability to communicate, control and confirm color across devices from numerous suppliers, including monitors, proofers, CTP devices, servers and presses.

HP has partnered with PressSense for an open workflow solution to automate, manage, customize and optimize business and production processes from job creation to fulfillment.

Kodak's Prinergy focused on zero touch automation, or the elimination of virtually all manual processes from customer orders through completed jobs, using Rules Based Automation technology.

MediaBeacon showed its digital asset management system using XMP metadata to allow collaborating systems from numerous manufacturers to exchange data as the files pass between them.

Presstek showed an array of partner workflow solutions, including Presstek PathWay, powered by PressSense; Presstek Latitude, powered by EskoArtwork; and imposition solutions from Dynagram as well as its Harlequin-based Momentum Pro.

Xerox has added PDF Print Engine support with the release of Adobe's PDF Print Engine V2, to support variable data and workflow automation.

As your company designs a strategy for how to effectively manage new technology and grow your set of solutions, you may want to follow these supplier's example and look to your competitors to see if some "coopetition" may be in order.



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