Case Study: Creative Memories
Replacing Outside Suppliers with an In-House OnSite

Situation

Creative Memories (CM), St. Cloud, Minnesota, is a leader in the national craze of scrapbooking and in the sales of scrapbook media. CM's art department publishes multiple monthly magazines and catalogs for its sale staff with an extensive online presence as well and needs a high volume of images. Rapid growth had created bottlenecks in the workflow process and re-shoots were the norm, costing CM time and money.

Critical Issues

* All photographs of the company's products needed to be color correct to minimize customer returns.

* Poor color management of digital photography resulted in high costs at the prepress stage.

* As an employee-owned company, additional employees meant smaller bonuses for all employees resulting in a staff freeze.

* Workflow and productivity of the staff had to improve to meet growing demand.

* CM is rurally located, and at least ninety minutes from any capable studio, thus art directors were a day out each time they art-directed a photo shoot.

Capability

OMS OnSite was selected because of the high quality/low cost solution developed for CM's unique situation and their strong background in developing color management systems.

We Provided

Within 45 days of being given the go-ahead, OMS OnSite opened a fully equipped digital studio with two photographers less than 5 miles away from CM's headquarters. This solution reduced travel time but it did not change the fact that art directors had to substantially redirect their time to accommodate interaction with the photo process. Three months later, we eliminated this problem by moving the studio inside CM.

We supplied digital cameras, film cameras, lighting, and computer workstations. We developed customized software to track hours and bill individual users. The two photographers were supplemented with an expert Photoshop® operator.

We instituted a proofing system that duplicated the Kodak® approval press proof used by their printing vendor. We reworked our conversion tables to match their press, calibrated key monitors, and implemented a CMYK equivalent table to assure color fidelity.

We developed procedures to reduce re-shoots. First we provided CM with a proof of each image captured. We created a process of identifying and replacing problematic colors with accurate CMYK equivalents. We helped create a job tracking and PO system that minimized unauthorized photo resource usage.

Result

* Now designers and marketing managers can interact with the studio in a more spontaneous manner. This creates a high level of communication throughout the process, which, in turn, reduces re-shoots.

* Art directors no longer leave the building for days at a time, which allows them to better manage their other responsibilities.

* Our front-end proofing allows a common accurate reference that can be approved or rejected at the beginning of the process rather then the end.

* Our color fidelity process dramatically reduces prepress cost and keeps them on schedule. Adding these color management systems and processes, as well as the in-house proximity revolutionizes CM's workflow.

* Billing at an hourly rate gives a large incentive to the CM staff to better organize their own process and job management. With clear comparisons between the time taken between different photo shoots, ordered by different designers, CM management is better able to improve design staff productivity.

* Today, CM is doing twice the work with the same number of creative staff.

P.S. since its inception, the OnSite capability at CM has grown to include designers, illustrators and videographers.

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