

Metrix Gives **MPG Books Group** a Competitive Edge in Book Manufacturing

MPG BOOKS GROUP, THE LARGEST INDEPENDENT ACADEMIC BOOK MANUFACTURER IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, IS COMMITTED TO INVESTMENTS IN TECHNOLOGIES THAT ALLOW THE COMPANY TO MAINTAIN THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF PRODUCT AND SERVICE. SO IT IS NO SURPRISE THAT THEY WERE AN EARLY ADOPTER OF THE AWARD-WINNING METRIX PLANNING AND IMPOSITION SOFTWARE.

Colin Gammon, Technical R&D Manager, reports that since installing Metrix in 2007, MPG Books has seen a significant reduction in the time devoted to planning, prepress, and press make-ready. These savings, combined with the benefits of faster job turnaround and reduced spoilage, allow MPG Books to be more competitive in the highly demanding field of book printing.

“We were able to cut our labor time in half as a result of introducing Metrix as our planning and imposition software.”

COLIN GAMMON
TECHNICAL R&D MANAGER
MPG BOOKS GROUP LIMITED



The Vision

MPG Books was keen to eliminate the costly bottleneck that resulted from using a manual process for planning, and Preps software for imposition layout.

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Eighteen months ago, MPG Books was manufacturing 400 titles each month. As customer demand grew for shorter runs of an increasing number of titles, the company needed to raise its throughput to 600 books per month. To accommodate this increase, Colin Gammon knew that his planning and prepress departments would have to change the way they worked. When he saw a demonstration of Metrix – **the industry’s only project planning software that automates both planning and imposition in a single step** – the potential for immediate savings was clear. MPG Books could eliminate the bottleneck in planning, save time by performing planning and imposition with the same software and operator, and instantly calculate the most efficient ganged-run printing layout. Not only would using Metrix save time in planning and prepress, it would also help MPG Books to maximize press sheet utilization, greatly reducing spoilage and speeding job turnaround.

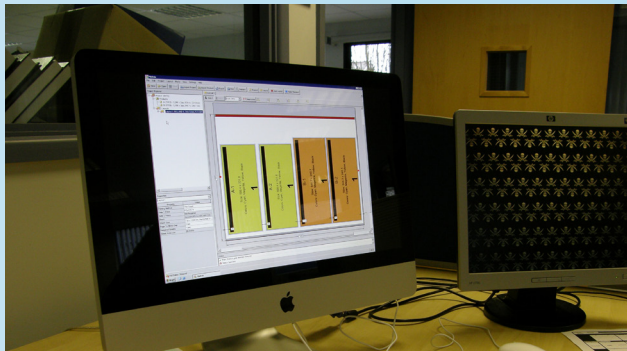
“We knew we needed to do more gang printing work, but Preps wasn’t a good solution for that,” says Colin Gammon. “As well, we wanted to use a general operator to perform planning and imposition, which was not possible with Preps.”

Colin Gammon reports that prior to working with Metrix, a Production Scheduler would manually draw boxes for a project plan, and a specially-skilled Prepress Operator would spend hours creating impositions with Preps – both in completely independent efforts. He concedes, “Looking back, it was an insane way of going about things.” Then, MPG Books Group brought Metrix on board, which according to Gammon, “**saved the company a huge amount of time.**”

The Implementation

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Before Metrix, planning and imposition required 75 minutes. After several days of working with Metrix, a general operator could perform both planning and imposition in 30 minutes.



The Impact

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Metrix gives MPG Books a competitive advantage by reducing labor hours and errors, and increasing productivity and overall throughput.



The implementation of Metrix was a smooth process. Alan Dixon, of Surrey-based Workflowz Ltd, conducted a two-day, on-site training session. **Within days, three operators were creating highly accurate and reliable project plans and sending fully-imposed PDF files to the Apogee prepress workflow system.** The speed and ease with which Metrix could generate press-sheet optimized gang-printing plans surprised and delighted everyone. In addition to cutting the time required for planning and imposition by one-half, Colin Gammon appreciated the staffing impact.

With Metrix, one Color Production Specialist completed both planning and imposition simultaneously, which eliminated the need for a dedicated, specially-trained Preps operator. This staffing change freed up Prepress Operators to be more productive in their field of expertise. Gammon also recalls that **Metrix established a new and much-needed link between the planning and manufacturing teams and processes.** No longer removed from the manufacturing process, the planning group became more informed and involved, which resulted in better performance and results.

The manufacturing of a typical book may take ten days, from start to finish, but on occasion, MPG Books needs to reduce that project turnaround to five days. Colin Gammon says that such a compressed schedule would be challenging and costly without Metrix.

“Metrix has helped us to remain highly competitive by cutting our labor costs in half. The AutoLayout feature allows us put more work on a single sheet, which reduces spoilage and speeds job turnaround,” notes Gammon.

Not only are the time- and labor-savings significant, but Metrix also allows MPG Books to eliminate errors due to incorrect imposition. In addition, the consistency of Metrix-generated project plans reduces press make-ready time, helping MPG Books keep their presses operating at maximum capacity.

Colin Gammon and MPG Books were early adopters of Metrix, and looking back they are certain that it was a wise investment. Looking ahead, they feel confident that working with Metrix and LithoTechnics will continue to be a good match for the company’s culture of innovation.

“LithoTechnics is a forward-looking company with a very responsive team. And Metrix is a good looking piece of software that is not standing still,” concludes Gammon. “In the future, we know there will be problems to solve and opportunities to leverage. **And we will look to Metrix to help us do just that.”**





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