

ADOBE

Changes affect newspapers in big way



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My mailbox has never been as full as it's been lately. Publishers and editors from all over the place have been writing concerning two topics:

1. What do I think about Adobe's move to Cloud versions of their software and its effect on newspapers?
2. Congratulating me on correctly predicting the fate of The Times-Picayune last year and my reaction to the events of mid May 2013.

I'll tackle the Adobe questions here and offer thoughts on the May events in a separate column.

Does Adobe have its head too far up in the Cloud?

Unless you've been asleep since early May, you've heard about the changes at Adobe. Soon, users won't be able to buy boxed versions of Creative Suite products like InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator.

Beginning in the very near future, there will be only one way to purchase Adobe products. OK, you won't actually be purchasing the software. You will be leasing it.

It works like this: For previous owners of Adobe CS3 - CS6 products, the Creative Cloud can be leased for \$30 per month. This requires an annual commitment and the price will likely go up after the year. Others will pay \$50 per month, with a one-year commitment.

For this \$30-\$50, users receive access to the entire suite of Creative Cloud apps, including those used most in print and digital publishing:

In all, there are more than 20 apps available and subscribers have access to all of these applications as long as their accounts are active.

How much does it cost to upgrade to the Cloud?

I've been getting a lot of questions about the cost of moving to Creative Cloud (CC). Here's the lowdown:

- Current CS3 (or later) owners can upgrade to CC for \$30 per month for the first year. CS6 users can upgrade to CC for \$20 per month. After that, my guess is the introductory price will

move over to the standard rate, which is currently \$50 per month.

- New CC members not currently using Creative Suite can pay \$50 per month for access to these same applications. This requires an annual commitment.

- A subscription to a single app is available for \$20 per month. Although not many newspapers would have staff using just one of the apps, it's possible to subscribe to Adobe InDesign (or another of the CC apps) for \$20 per month. This requires an annual commitment. Adobe is offering a 50 percent discount through July 31, to current CS3 or later users, making the single app license \$10 monthly for the first year.

There are discounted rates for students and teachers. For \$75 per month, users can subscribe monthly, without an annual commitment.

In addition to the software, subscribers have access to 20 Gb of storage space. This can be useful, especially to keep backup versions of files offsite, but shouldn't be used to store current files in the editorial workflow.

Should I make a move now?

That's a tough one. While there has been a lot of grumbling about the Creative Cloud, especially in the print publishing world, Adobe has us in a corner.

The listed prices are referred to as 40 to 50 percent off. When the announcement was made about the new Creative Cloud options, I told callers to hold off a few days and see if Adobe made adjustments. Hearing the cries from users, Adobe announced the discounted rates (through July 31, 2013) for individual and suite licenses.

There are a number of factors to consider. If you're currently using one of the latest versions of Creative Suite and feel like you don't need to upgrade within the next year, then you're probably fine as you are.

If you're using an earlier version of Creative Suite products, the offer to upgrade at a discounted rate is available only through July 31. Adobe could extend this discount, but there is no guarantee that they will. Waiting could

end up costing a lot more than going ahead and subscribing with the discounted rates.

What am I going to do?

I've decided to go ahead and subscribe to Creative Cloud. Let's face it: In my line of work, I have to be up to date on all the latest software, so it's a no-brainer for me.

So what's the catch?

The catch is that none of us know what will happen after one year. If you move all of your workstations to Creative Cloud - and it doesn't make sense to mix and match design software - then you will be forced to pay whatever price is available after 12 months. If that is \$50, then publishers will be forking out \$600 per station each year. Yes, that's a lot, especially when you probably upgraded to Creative Suite for \$500 to \$800 and used it for two to three years.

Did Adobe make a huge blunder?

Probably not, but it's too early to tell. My background as a communications and customer service expert makes me wonder why Adobe didn't do a much better job of introducing CC to the masses. At the same time, I'm fairly certain the number crunchers at Adobe have crunched numbers till their fingers hurt and determined that the payout from this move will far surpass the losses of customers who refuse to upgrade or move to other options.

If I were at Quark, I would be working like crazy to introduce viable non-cloud options for the design world. Package QuarkXPress with a solid photo editing app and sell it at a reasonable price, without connecting it to cloud technology, and a lot of folks will consider moving back from Adobe to Quark.

Only time will tell.

What else should I know?

Your current computer operating system might not be compatible with CC products. Check closely before making the move, to be sure the software is compatible with your machines. If it's not, make the necessary upgrades to your operating system. Some users, though not most, will be required to purchase new computers to run CC.

Again, check out all the angles before making a move.

