

Another Software Product Joins the "Essential" List

by Kevin Slimp, September 2006

There are a few software applications that are essential for people who design and print pages for a living. Adobe Acrobat and Photoshop would fit into this category. So would page layout programs such as QuarkXPress or InDesign. With its latest upgrade, I've added another title to my list of essentials.

Enfocus PitStop has been around for some time. I can't remember the first time I tested a version of this Acrobat plug-in, but I remember it was several years back. Now up to version 7.0, PitStop has come a long way since it was first introduced to layout and printing professionals.

If you've been reading my column very long, you might remember that plug-ins are applications that work within other applications. For example, last month I reviewed a Photoshop plug-in that makes it easier to enlarge photos while retaining some quality. PitStop is a plug-in for Adobe Acrobat. Once installed, it allows the Acrobat user to do many things more quickly, such as change colors and fonts. Of greater benefit, however, is that PitStop adds functionality to Acrobat Professional that doesn't exist without it.

Take CID fonts, for example. Newspapers often send their problem PDF files to me. Approximately half the time, the source of the files' problems lies in fonts that have been converted to CID format after a document has been exported to PDF. Some applications and printers have problems with files that contain CID fonts.

One way that many newspapers have fixed for this problem is by opening the PDF document in Photoshop, at a very high resolution, then saving it as an EPS file. Yes, this usually works. But it's time consuming and, unless the user knows what they're doing, problems could result from converting the file from a vector format (PDF) to a pixel-based format. Upon finding CID fonts in a PDF file, PitStop users can use the Enfocus Inspector to convert the fonts to outlines, eliminating any problems related to having CID fonts in the document.

Newspaper professionals will also appreciate the ability to convert colors using PitStop Professional. In our business, we're all too familiar with colors that are saved in the wrong mode. RGB and Lab colors have been the cause of many late night problem-solving sessions.

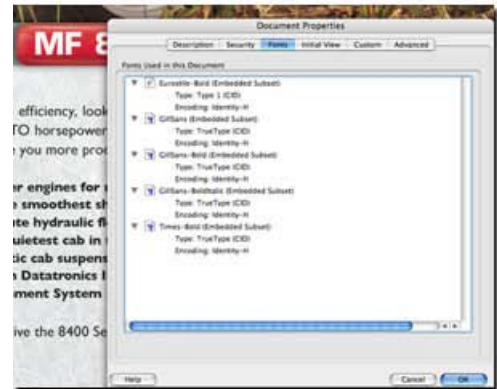
In addition, even more complicated issues can result from a well-meaning designer building color profiles into a PDF file. Profiles created for one work environment can be problematic for another environment, meaning a PDF file might not print correctly. With the click of a button, however, PitStop users can apply changes to color profiles using the Enfocus Image Matching Panel.

As mentioned earlier, I've used PitStop many times in the past. What's impressed me most about PitStop Professional 7 is its improved interface. By making the interface cleaner and more attractive, Enfocus has made PitStop much more intuitive. Users will be able to fix many problems without having to look through a manual first.

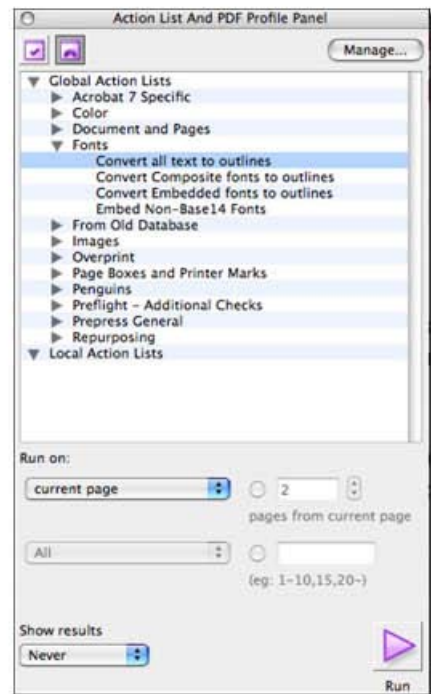
Additional features of PitStop Professional 7 include:

- Remove OPI information. This is possible without PitStop, but is much quicker with it.
- Add, modify, or remove spot colors.
- Renumber pages.
- Use the Place PDF feature to position and scale ads on an existing page.

Users will appreciate the View and File control panel, which allows them to change color-management and other settings with the press of a button. Grayscale dot gain, for example, can be changed from 20 to 30 percent using a drop down menu. And, as it always has, PitStop Professional does an admirable job of preflighting PDF files.



If you could read this window, you'd be able to see that CID fonts are included in this PDF file.



PitStop Professional allows the user to convert text to outlines, which is pretty

Available on both Mac and PC platforms, PitStop Professional 7.0's requirements include Adobe Acrobat 6 or 7, OS 10.3 or 10.4 (Mac), Windows 2000 or XP (PC) and 1024 x 768 screen resolution (1280 x 1024 recommended). MSRP is \$599 (US) / \$699 (CA) / \$999 (AU). Upgrades are available from \$199 (US) / \$299 (CA) / \$275 (AU). For more information, visit www.enfocus.com.