

Clockwork Creative: studio control and automation

Clockwork Creative provides software for studio production planning and automated artwork creation, as well as training on leading graphic design applications.

Software developer and training centre Clockwork Creative Technology Limited has been in business for more than a dozen years, providing expert solutions around the areas of job tracking, artwork creation and asset management for agencies and corporate marketing departments.

With that heritage behind it, the company's core software products – Job Manager for studio control and WILMA (which stands for Words and Images Linked Make Artwork) for automated artwork generation – are well established with many users within its core markets, many of whom re-brand the systems for their own use.

Job Manager helps to control all aspects of studio planning and production processes. Clockwork Creative has around 40 clients using the product, mostly in the agency environment. One agency client has grown from 8 staff to 120 while using Job Manager, according to Andy Kear of Clockwork. "It is able to help manage that sort of growth. Clients like the fact that Job Manager comes in five different 'flavours', depending on the size of the client and the way they want to work."

Job Manager is supplied 95% complete, and the remaining 5% of the product can be customised to each client's needs with things such as branding, and linking to back end databases. The product has integrated modules for quotations, jobs, briefs, time tracking, purchases, contacts and suppliers to make up-to-the-second job information instantly available. Version 9 of Job Manager was recently launched, incorporating built in 3D charting, instead of outputting to Microsoft Excel. Clockwork Creative will be showing the

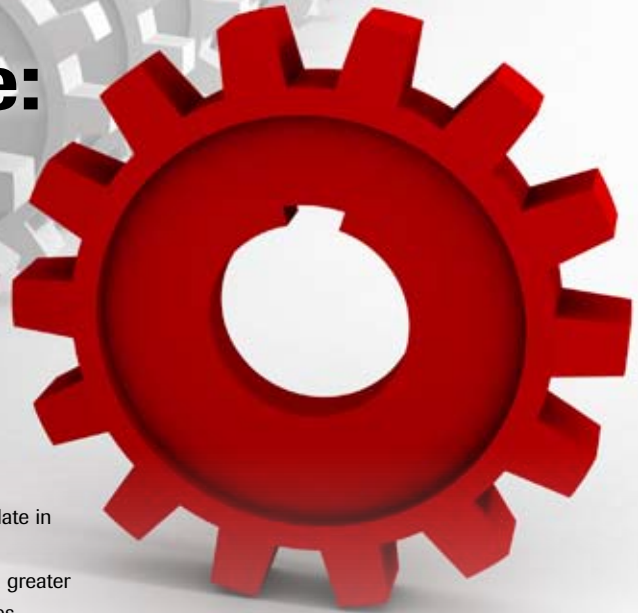
new system at the MacLive Expo late in October 2007.

Such a product can provide a greater degree of the "Logic" that agencies increasingly need to provide to their clients when submitting fees for work created, since the Job Manager logs actions and time spent by each Mac user from the moment they enter their unique password. Internally of course, there are also benefits from having access to hard numbers regarding jobs completed, client briefs and operating costs.

Then there is WILMA, which is used extensively by many leading retailers and display graphics producers. It is an automatic artwork generator that Clockwork Creative says is predominately used for Point Of Sale generation but is customisable for use with any automatic artwork projects. It uses Applescript to communicate with either Adobe InDesign or Quark applications, and receives data to fill up pre-configured templates on the fly. These templates can be set up with increasing levels of sophisticated rules so that things can be re-sized or colours changed for example, depending on the content received.

"We are trying to demystify this whole area of database publishing, because it's what everyone will soon be doing," says Kear. He adds that the templates can provide a very high degree of typographic control, incorporating every function within InDesign or QuarkXPress, such as kerning pairs, tracking and leading, for "premium" automated artworking. Version 9 of WILMA has also just been launched, making it a more powerful system and one that supports both InDesign CS3 and QuarkXPress 7.

Standing alone, these two products are extremely useful, as many clients



have discovered, but when combined and allowed to converse with each other, Job Manager and WILMA can raise the game still further. Job Manager can pass information into WILMA such as operator name, job number, brief number, colours, publication name and size for adverts – the sort of page information that was often added by hand in the document bleed of the artwork. When the artwork has been created by WILMA, it in turn feeds a small thumbnail image of the completed job back to Job Manager, for account teams to see.

Both products also talk to the server, so that when a job is opened in Job Manager it automatically creates the folder path centrally, keeping the server tidy and making it easier for users to find files.

Allied to the software is Clockwork Creative's status as an authorized training centre, with courses on Apple technologies such as OS X and OS X Server, plus Adobe Illustrator, InDesign, Photoshop, Acrobat, Dreamweaver and Flash, and QuarkXPress. It also runs courses on general topics such as font management, colour theory and Applescript automation. With this level of expertise, Mac operators can therefore be assured that the company's software products have been designed with their needs in mind, says Kear.



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