A New Approach to the Corporate Image

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This month’s cover is by Doug Whitehouse, corporate art director and manager of creative services for Genigraphics, a powerhouse in the computer-generated slide industry. Given free rein by IEEE CG&A to design a cover, he produced this untitled piece, which is a combination of vector and raster art.

Working at a Genigraphics SG1 artist console, Whitehouse began by building a simple vector background (the curling page). Then he used Genigraphics’ new Frame Grab module to scan in elements like the circuit board, the paint tubes, and the time-exposure photo of fluorescent lights. Finally, he pulled the whole image together using a new Genigraphics Paint module, adding the shadows and the blobs of paint at the top of the easel.

New tools

The result symbolizes the marriage of traditional and high-tech tools for the newest generation of graphics artist. To Whitehouse, merging old and new is the main challenge his department faces: How does a small art department keep pace with the communication needs of a company that is itself a pioneer in computer-graphics communication?

Genigraphics is best known for its nationwide network of 25 service bureaus employing about 150 artists who are hired to translate customer ideas into computer-generated graphics. Whitehouse, who has been with Genigraphics since 1982, is one of a new breed of art directors who are called on to use computer graphics in traditional corporate promotion tasks.

His department began as a kind of in-house service center, producing computer-generated slides and promotional material for Genigraphics.
Figure 3. The single greatest advantage of the computer over traditional art tools is in layout and design, Whitehouse said. This training brochure can be laid out many different ways, with comps output on a laser printer. Once the design and copy are approved, the final art is generated and output to a laser printer (for two-color) or to film (for four-color).

New jobs

The creative services department includes Whitehouse and artists Thomas Gilhooly and Rich Maile. The images on these pages hint at the range of tasks they handle: two- and four-color art for publication (Figure 1), corporate identification graphics for sales and marketing (Figure 2), copywriting and brochure production (Figure 3), and cover illustrations (Figure 4).

Genigraphics engineers soon realized that Whitehouse’s department was in a unique position to test and evaluate new products in a production environment. So another job was added to their charter: alpha and beta testing of new hardware and software. Staff members act as liaisons between marketing and engineering, providing feedback for system development and user interface for current and future products.

New choices

It’s the nature of computer graphics that makes this juggling act possible. The artist can work up many compositions in a variety of color schemes, speeding up the internal approval cycle. Once a design has been approved, the final art is rendered. The output depends on the application—to a laser printer or black-and-white film for mechanicals, or to any one of a number of film formats for four-color production.

It is this flexibility as a layout and design tool, Whitehouse said, that is the single biggest advantage to using a computer. “The computer does not mean to eradicate traditional art making methods,” he adds, “but seeks to augment them and provide a superior solution to design problems.”