

Houston Chronicle taps Harland Simon, Agfa

BY CHUCK MOOZAKIS EDITOR IN CHIEF

The **Houston Chronicle** tapped Harland Simon to install Prima Esprit and Prima ColorWare to provide color imposition capabilities across its six Goss International Metro presses.

The deployment, to be completed later this month, is the latest in a years-long project aimed at upgrading the 1976-vintage machines.

"We expect a big benefit," said Mike Daniel, The Chronicle's director of printing. "We won't have to negotiate back and forth with the ad department regarding the location of color and we'll know the best position in which to place color."

Daniel said 65 percent of the paper's ads can run in color during the week with 100 percent of ads capable of running in 4-color on Sundays.

The software automatically calculates the best way to print a particular form, defined by the press' capabilities and press operators' preferred printing methods.

The software will be integrated with The Chronicle's existing Agfa computer-to-plate and Prolmage workflow foundation, Daniel said.

"The imposition software already has the press' configuration built in, so there will be less manual intervention," he said. "Operators can't make mistakes, and that fits in well with our process improvement and internal press performance operation standards."

Ink savings

In addition to the Harland Simon deployment, Daniel said The Chronicle

is also ready to add Agfa's Opti-Ink ink optimization software. He said he expects the software will reduce by more than 10 percent The Chronicle's consumption of color ink.

The Chronicle began upgrading its presses years ago in a multipronged project that included replacing controls, installing digital page packs and reducing web with to 46 inches.

At the time the paper began the upgrade, its main goal was to improve print and color capacity of The Chronicle. But now the retrofit is seen as a necessary ingredient supporting the paper's commercial printing activities. In addition to the flagship paper, The Chronicle now prints its sister daily, the Beaumont (Texas) Enterprise as well as USA Today and other area periodicals.

Last year, The Chronicle completed a major chunk of the upgrade, including the Goss-managed web reduction and the installation of Goss' DigiRail digital inkers across the press' 181 printing couples. It also added Rockwell Automation's soft proofing and ink presetting modules to its existing PrintLogix press control software.

Finally, it installed four Goss digital RTPs on the presses used to produce USA Today. Daniel said he hopes to upgrade some of the press' other RTPs, but a decision to do that will have to wait until the investment can be justified. A proposal to purchase a fleet of automated guided vehicles to shuttle newsprint to the Goss presses remains under consideration as well. ▲

Philly.com aims to profit from ad inventory

BY TARA MCMEEKIN EDITOR

When **Philly.com** first set out to pump up its revenues, the site had one other important goal in mind: maximizing ad profits.

To that end, Philly.com, which encompasses the Philadelphia Inquirer and the Philadelphia Daily News, last year tapped AdMeld, a company aimed at helping publishers increase online ad network profits, reduce operating costs and protect their brands from unwanted ads.

"We were prompted by a need to eke out the highest yield from our network in a fashion that was easy and intuitive to use," said Joe Friend III, ad operations manager for Philly.com.

Prior to partnering with AdMeld, Philly.com's ability to get the most value from its unsold ad inventory was held hostage by a complex systems of redirects within its ad server.

"Creating, monitoring and adding network providers almost required a degree in astrophysics to plot out the ad call redirects to system defaults, not to mention the time it took our already-at-capacity team to perform campaign and relational management, and billing and reconciliation," Friend said.

Top of the heap

The bulk of Philly.com's paid advertising is sold by a dedicated team of in-house online reps. Any unsold inventory is passed on to AdMeld. Friend said once he began turning unsold inventory over to AdMeld, the results were immediate, with a 30 percent jump in revenue.

"We've also seen a fill rate that

so far, has not failed to accommodate whatever amount of inventory we throw at it," he added.

The partnership also opened previously untapped revenue streams for Philly.com.

"By and large, the advertisers that run in newspapers are part of national campaigns," said Michael Barrett, CEO of AdMeld.

"We are bringing national advertisers to local sites."

By providing fill, AdMeld has also helped the publisher deal with spiky traffic patterns.

"News sites are blessed and cursed by their traffic patterns," Barrett said. "When it's a big news day, site inventory is likely to triple, but that is hard to predict for newspapers and if you can't foresee and presell then you are left with a lot of inventory and you can't match it up by yourself, so AdMeld helps level out those spikes — and it doesn't matter to the platform what happens to the spike because we have the sellers and buyers set up."

Bidding for space

The partnership operates as a bid network where Philly.com is part of a newspaper consortium. From the advertiser's perspective, the ad buy is double blind and the advertiser doesn't know what network it may get when it places a bid for ad space.

"They don't know if they're going to get Philly.com," Friend said. "But we are one of the larger Web sites in Pennsylvania at the national level."

The publisher has a corresponding

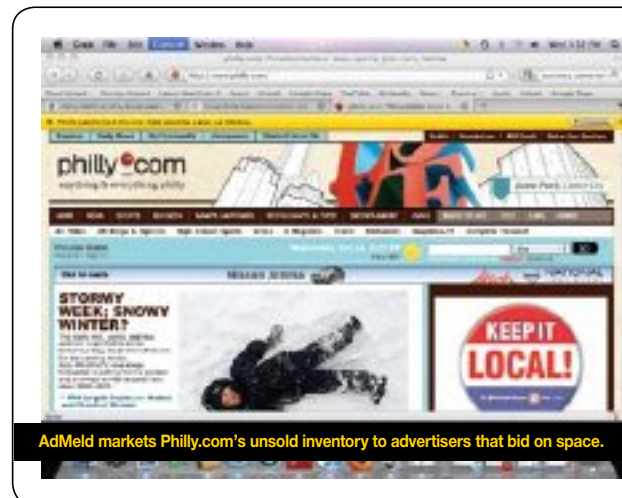
portal that tracks ad inventory and other considerations, based on a query and parameters set by Friend and his staff.

Although the partnership between AdMeld and Philly.com has thus far been lucrative, Friend said the value AdMeld provides newspapers could be diminished if publishers find a way to successfully provide this type of service themselves.

"The value that an (outside) provider gets is not the same as a rep," he said. "That will be a tough spot. Pubs will either shut themselves off to those,

or decide to do it natively and there is bound to be a paradigm shift."

As for Philly.com, Friend said he has no intention of eliminating any in-house sales staff in favor of the out-sourced alternative. ▲



AdMeld markets Philly.com's unsold inventory to advertisers that bid on space.

briefs

Flint Group said its K+E, Arrowstar and Starbase sheffield series of inks and its Arroweb heatset formulation earned bio-renewable content certification from the National Association of Printing Ink Manufacturers.
www.flintgrp.com

The Erie (Pa.) Times-News was named Pennsylvania Newspaper Association Foundation's 2009 Newspaper of the Year. This is the second time in the past six years the publisher has received the award, which recognizes outstanding newspaper work, with emphasis on overall excellence.
www.goerie.com