Scalable workflow automation and job management

BackStage

BackStage offers to go further than the classic automation tools: it adds extra smart and powerful time savers, smart error reduction tools and a unique set of job management tools. Produce faster and cheaper.
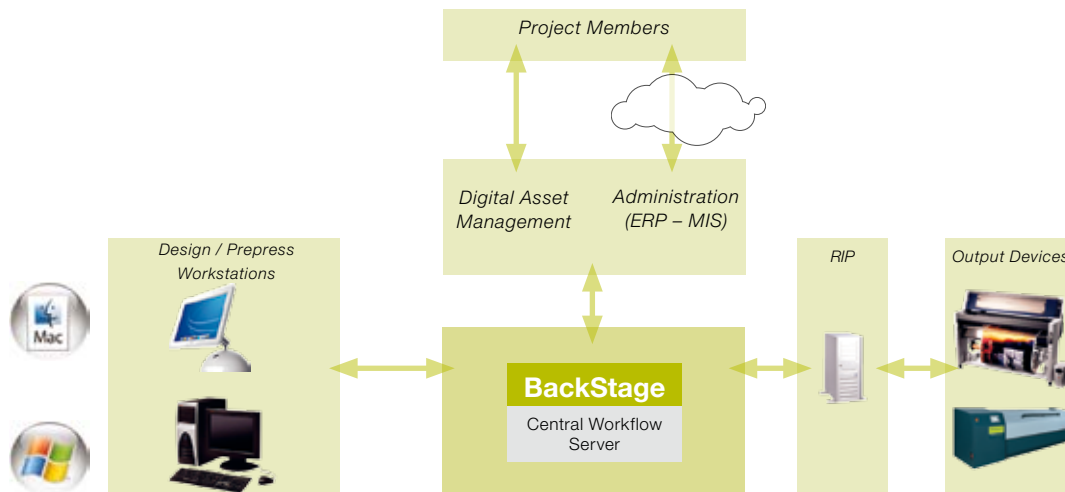
BackStage is a modular workflow server whose primary mission is to make prepress more professional. BackStage helps to **prevent errors and to process jobs faster.** By eliminating double entries, BackStage doesn't waste operator time re-entering data. Administrative tasks are all handled by a central workflow system so operators can concentrate on their graphics expertise.

With BackStage you can **automate the entire workflow** throughout your organization and facilities. Linking this central graphic toolbox to your administrative systems will immediately provide your customers with superior service. Jobs are delivered faster, e-mail-messages announce to approve PDFs or even 3D files. BackStage makes work easy with one-click **communication**, life-long job memory and design reports. BackStage's toolbox lets you handle larger accounts, accepting **more jobs without increasing your costs**.

BackStage is **modular**, offering tailored solutions and growth possibilities. Often BackStage starts in an entry level version as a background assistant to Adobe® Illustrator® (see: 'DeskPack'). Adding a few modules can turn it into a central prepress server for all your work and automation can be added later to streamline your page workflow or to manage remote exposing. A further link to your administrative systems can be a project for next year and so on. All with one same server platform, **growing at your pace** and according to your needs.

BackStage integrates seamlessly with any existing infrastructure, accepting a wide range of desktop publishing formats, RIPs or file servers. BackStage **supports all industry standards** such as PDF, XML, XMP, SQL queries and JDF communication.

From an entry-level version of BackStage to more elaborate setups, a BackStage investment always delivers a fast and **unmatched return on investment!**

Project Members

Digital Asset Management

Administration (ERP – MIS)

Design / Prepress Workstations

RIP

Output Devices

BackStage
Central Workflow Server

ESKO artwork

BackStage Pilot job control

BackStage Pilot is BackStage's client application tool with an easy and **intuitive interface** for any graphics operator. Depending on strictly controlled user access rights, you can **control all jobs from any Mac or Windows**. BackStage remembers each user's favorite Pilot view. Launch and monitor tasks, create and view jobs and their properties, open any files in your favorite applications. One of BackStage's key benefits is its smart job management through automated file naming and job-folder creation. No more time-loss due to searching for files or folders.
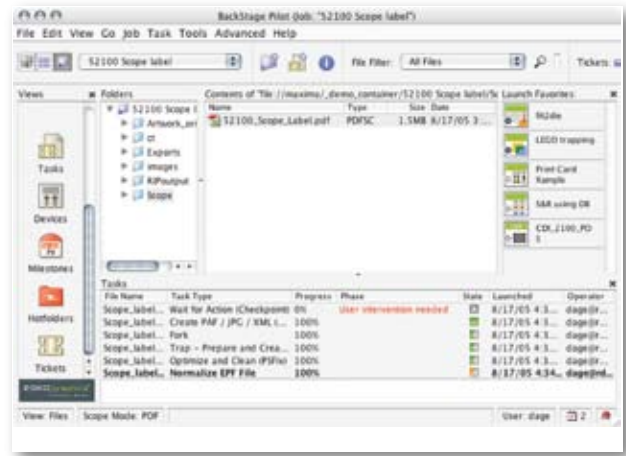
Offload editing stations and centralize prepress expertise

The BackStage server can normalize, preflight, optimize, trap, and perform export or print tasks, without the need for onboard interactive editors. All DTP-operators can **offload many routine tasks that block editing stations**. BackStage integrates seamlessly with PackEdge, Plato and FlexRip/FlexProof. The link with Adobe® Illustrator® becomes evident in the DeskPack line. And there is the ever evolving integration with ArtPro, Neo, Nexus and Odystar.

Launching prepress tasks in background on a centralized server not only makes editing workstations more productive, you can now also centralize prepress expertise for all operators to use. Customized tickets for these background tasks (central or customer- or job-specific) enable users to quickly pick the right behavior; without searching or without need to determine all the tasks options. You gain time and you reduce errors straight away using BackStage.

Enforcing job parameters

A BackStage job represents a production order: so, minimally, it is a job folder with data in structured subfolders. But BackStage also knows the job's **metadata**: its link to order ID, due date, customer info, CSR contacts and many more job attributes that help filtering and finding jobs. Besides these 'admin' attributes, a BackStage job can also contain the mandatory graphical specifications like barcode and ink attributes or proofing and RIP options.

BackStage ensures that mandatory graphical specs are used. Whether those specs are copied manually from a job bag or fed automatically from any MIS (via JDF): you can rest assured the latest specs are used and that no one has to enter these values again manually. No risks for any mistyping of barcode specs, or any out-of-date distortion values on your plate!
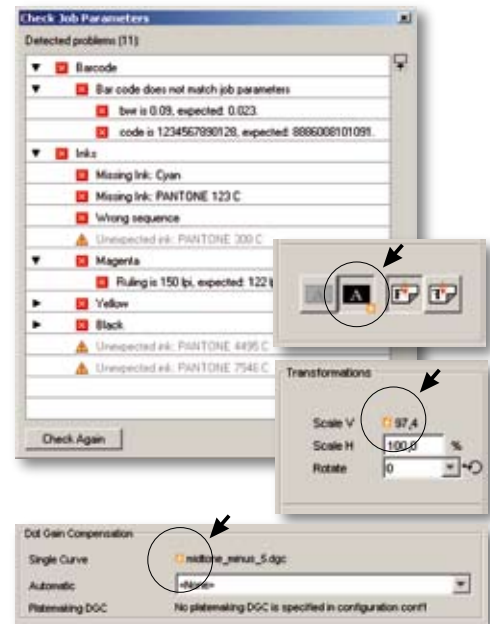
Enforced job parameters

Job status and milestones

Typical milestones of prepress jobs are: 'all data arrived', 'approved', 'plates ready' etc. BackStage is aware of these milestones, both to make sure they are respected and to report **job status information**. Milestones can even be used to find and filter jobs, e.g. 'show me all jobs of customer X that need plates today'. **Reminding operators** on upcoming milestones is easily done. And of course these milestones can also be notified to external systems for more high-level job tracking, or for a filtered web-enabled version of it.

Milestones of a job

Automation through smart background tasks

Workflow automation tickets

Workflow tickets are **chains of tasks** that run on one or many files. They are easy to build and organize – from simple two-step tickets to very elaborate chains. They can handle all tasks, from normalization and cleaning, over any kind of batch job processing, all the way to proof or plate. They can run sequentially or develop 'forks' to launch conditional subtasks.

An operator's To Do List

Inserted **Checkpoints** alert operators to approve intermediate stages before agreeing to continue, forward or abort the workflow. Other possibilities are automated naming and placing files within a job folder (SmartNames) or use the **Smart Notifications** to generate e-mail messages or XML reports. Any task can be launched by operators, hot folders, and even via JDF commands from other systems.

Detailed production memory

Many actions in prepress are similar or identical to previous ones: proof a variant of a job in exactly the same way, re-export a file but now with another compression, urgently re-run a plate in exactly the same way, re-do a complete job including its step & repeat behavior etc. BackStage offers very fast and smooth solutions in all these cases, even when the original actions date from years ago. BackStage Pilot offers many **relaunch tools** while the **TaskHistory** is an automated archive of launched tasks, a tool where you **easily find back all details on all tasks BackStage ever ran**. A simple double click re-launches the task on same or other jobs. This history of prepress actions is of course also very useful as a source of information: it can be **exported to XML** enabling output statistics and comparisons.

BackStage not only remembers its own background actions, even **interactive editing** sessions can be tracked! The unique and automated 'Track Edit session' technology reports on timings and details of editing actions. These reports can again automatically be stored in many places and formats.

More smart automation

BackStage can easily query other databases for information and use these data in various intelligent ways.

ReportMaker automatically creates 'print cards' and keeps operators from spending too much time on these extra texts and objects. One click and a few seconds later the file report can be ready. And it contains all information on the design, including metadata like ink coverage and barcode specs, and it can even contain information that was retrieved from your admin databases. Why bother a graphic operator with these report cards?

Why should an operator enter **step & repeat values** in an editor or even in a BackStage ticket, if these numbers come from some database? That is when **BackStage can 'go and get' the right parameters** – again queries to that database - to **avoid that operators have to enter them again!**

In this background stepping, extra control is offered by adding checks on 'layout rules' to help you trust the background communication between computers. Several layout modes (tabular, template or CAD based) modes all offer high levels of automation. And again: not only you gain time, but more importantly you eliminate errors and out-of-date settings!

DesignWizard is a very powerful module that **automates the creation of variants** of a design. Imagine hundreds of designs created in just a few minutes.

DesignWizard is based on EskoArtwork's SmartMarks technology and queries to databases or works via XML data input. Line extensions of boxes, labels, wraps or bags: just give BackStage the smart template design and tell it where the specs are for the variants. Seeing is believing!

Remote approval and exposing

BackStage delivers **files for proofs, films or plates to any site in the world**. They can be attached in an e-mail notification, or sent via ftp with an e-mail alert. BackStage has the tools to deliver data automatically with the required level of security and editing capabilities. By using OutRight, 'Factory Settings' are applied to help create the correct PDF, PostScript or EPS/DCS file for a remote workflow. The output files can be compressed before being sent to any remote site.

Integrate your systems

BackStage is an obvious partner to integrate with other systems. Using standard techniques always helps, that is why BackStage covers many of these special integrations via JDF/JMF, the standard Job Definition Format (www.cip4.org).

JDF/JMF can be used for many different use cases.
• Integrate prepress and MIS: job creation and specification, status feedback, task launching
• Integrate BackStage with (web enabled) approval systems
• Integrate BackStage with devices: CTP, finishing equipment
• Integrate BackStage with other graphical applications (layout, RIP)

EskoArtwork has leading positions in the CIP4 committees developing the JDF standard, and is hands-on involved in the many co-operability tests between vendors of Graphics- or MIS-ERP systems and even finishing equipment. JDF is just a language, a growing standard; the real goal is to optimize your business. Check out our JDF consultancy offers.

View, Check and Compare in the BackStage Viewer

The BackStage Viewer is an amazing view and QA tool. You can start it from a BackStage Pilot (on Mac and Windows). It not only views most standard prepress and image formats but even RIP data. Check out the unlimited zoom-in and detailed measuring tools. Use the elaborate compare tool to detect any unwanted differences. **Designers, CSRs, production operators or dedicated QA staff can now use one same client-server based tool to view.** They can **compare** the design file with your production version or compare different versions of production files. They can even compare the ripped plate layout with a one-up PDF! Forget the limitations of many other viewers you have tried.
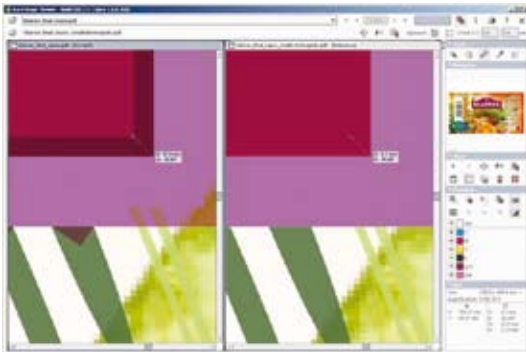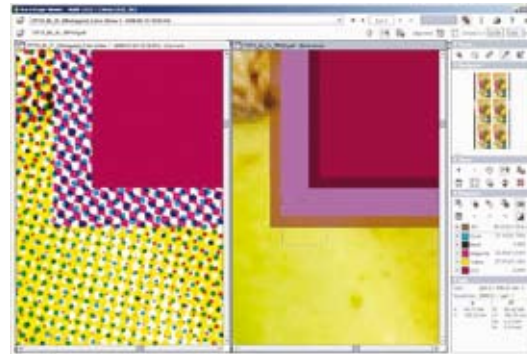

Unlimited zoom-in and detailed measure tools

Analyze separations (in several view modes)

See differences (here in 'highlight' mode)

Comparing ripped plate with one-up PDF

Scalability and security of your workflow server

As the core graphic engine of a prepress operation, a BackStage Master server has the power to balance its load and delegate tasks to a BackStage Assistant, **reducing time for tasks waiting in queue**. Fail-overs are no problem when a BackStage Stand-In is assigned that can assume the Master function in case of an impending failure (a Stand-In is like a 'Super-Assistant'). For many workflows, this kind of contingency plan **designating a new server in case of a server disaster scenario is a required high-level insurance.**

www.esko.com

ESKO artwork