

Prinergy and the Epson 5000/7000/9000

FAQ for Sales and TSS

Document Number
7#-####A-A-??01

July 12, 2000

CreoScitex Inc.
3700 Gilmore Way
Burnaby, BC
Canada V5G 4M1

(604) 451-2700

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Revision History

Revision	Date	Author	Comments
1.0	July 11, 2000	DJ Dunkerley	First draft

CreoScitex

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Epson 9000 is one of the most popular wide-format inkjet printers that has been sold to the pre-press market in the last year. Combined with Epson 5000 and the newly released 7000, the install base of this inkjet family number in the thousands. Therefore, when selling a Prinergy system to customers, questions about connectivity to this device will occur quite frequently.

2. DIRECTLY CONNECTING TO THE EPSONS

2.1 Does it Work?

With the release of patch #88 for Prinergy 1.1, we can now drive the 5000/7000/9000 models directly, that is to say, without a third-party RIP. All the customer has to do is purchase a NIC card from Epson so that the output device can be plugged directly into the network. At this time of writing (July 11, 2000), we do not support a direct connection to the very new models 7500/9500.

We currently drive all Epson model with six colors at 720 dpi x 720 dpi. There are no future plans to drive it at 1440 dpi x 720 dpi.

2.2 When Do I Want to Sell This to the Customer?

If the customer is interested in only using the Epson as a forms or content proofer, then the direct connection is adequate for their needs. However, if the customer is thinking of using any of the Epson models for contract proofing, even low-grade contract proofing, then forget it. This is one of those times where it might be best to "volunteer" negative information to the customer and tell them that CreoScitex does not support the Epson 5000/7000/9000 as a contract proofer via the direct connection.

Note, however, that the direct connection to the EPSON is of course the fastest way to print to the output device. So if the customer has a need to make the proof as fast as mechanically possible, then this option is worth a second look. However, the customer must understand there is a trade-off in speed versus quality.

2.3 What's Going to Happen In The Future?

There are no future plans to upgrade the quality of the direct connection to any of Epson models. There are no plans as of yet to support direct connectivity to the 7500/9500 models. With the merger, all extra development effort will be focused on better integration with Scitex/Iris output devices and Prinergy.

To summarize: No bandwidth.

3. USING A THIRD-PARTY RIP TO DRIVE THE EPSONS

3.1 When Do I Want to Sell This to the Customer?

You should "sell" this to the customer if they are interested in getting the best possible quality out of their print device - that is to say, they are trying to use an Epson device as a contract proofer.

3.2 Why is the Fiery on the Red List?

It just doesn't work with Prinergy systems. If you send it an EPS continuous tone file, you get four-color blacks (which look terrible). If you send it vector Postscript 3, you don't see the traps and you get the occasional Postscript error. It's also slow. With the Epson 9000, it's impossibly slow. In short, it's a complete nightmare and we have a long list of unhappy customers who can confirm this opinion.

3.3 Why is the BestRIP on the Green List?

In the Prinergy lab, there is an Epson 7000 hooked up to a BestRIP 4.1. The quality of output is excellent. Throughput is very good, there's only about a five-minute delay at most between Prinergy sending a TIFF to the BestRIP and the Epson starting to print the output.

The BestRIP runs on a Windows NT box, and the bottlenecks are the CPU and the disk access. This is good news. Unlike the Fiery, which is a hardware RIP, performance of the BestRIP can always be improved by minimal hardware upgrades.

4. PRE-PRESS CONSULTANTS

4.1 Who Are These Guys?

Assuming that the customer is going with the BestRIP-Epson connectivity option, you should then point them towards the company Pre-Press Consultants (www.prepresshelp.com) This company sells a wide variety proofing packages for the Epson printers, starting from providing color calibration services ($3000 US) right up to supplying the Windows NT server, the RIP, and the Epson 9000 ($17,995 US)

The US contact is Jerry Huffman: Toll-free 877.604.6966, ext. 257
jghuffman@prepresshelp.com

The South American contact is Rick Paiz: Toll-free 877.604.6966, ext. 204
rick@prepresshelp.com

The Canadian contact is Glen Maxheleau: PN: 1-514-949-3735

glen@prepresshelp.com

Pre-Press Consultants has been given the name of every CreoScitex RSD and local sales office so more information should be easily available.

4.2 Why Should I "Sell" These Guys to the Customer?

In the past, an amazing number of disgruntled Prinergy sites had either an Epson 5000 or 9000 (the 7000 is relatively new machine). This was no coincidence, as the Epson 5000/7000/9000 is an amazingly ***cheap*** inkjet that ***promises*** amazingly good quality. Of course, when customer expectations have fallen short, the recipient of their wrath has been CreoScitex service people onsite, during the Prinergy installation.

In short, our people hate doing the hook-ups to these devices. When dealing with cheap inkjets such as the Epson, it is crucial to have an grasp on such details as what stock works best, what stock should be avoided, the importance of ICC profiling both the press and the proofing device…

Our people neither have the time nor the training to hand-hold the customer with regard to the use and eccentricities of the Epson machines. Need I add that we don't even sell the silly things? Thus, we have the need for a third-party distributor who can focus exclusively on maximizing quality from an Epson device.

Before "recommending" Pre-Press Consultants as a "favored" vendor, they were asked to present a list of references. They provided a list of 24 site customer sites, most of which were Delta customer outputing DeltaLists to a BestRIP.

Of the 24 references, 13 could not be reached. Of the 11 interviews:

1. Two sites had no comment (Just installed).
2. Seven sites gave positive reviews "Excellent," "On the Ball" Overall, very good, very knowledgeable."
3. Two sites gave negative reviews: "understaffed, small company trying to grow." However, it should be noted that one sites had not bought the RIP hardware from Pre-Press Consultants, and had seemed to have recurring hardware problems, and another site had a problem with either the BestRIP or the Delta, they didn't know yet.

To summarize, Pre-Press Consultants seem to have a good track record and should have an even better record of customer satisfaction as they move into servicing the CreoScitex Prinergy sites (It is considerably easier to configure Prinergy than the Delta). On the negative side, since they are a reasonably small company, it is quite possible that they may suffer from growing pains as they attempt to service the ever-larger Prinergy install base.

4.3 How Do We Do the Hand-0ff?

It is important that the customer realizes that Pre-Press Consultants is not a sister company of CreoScitex, that is to say, we do not receive any money when Pre-Press Consultants closes a sale. Our only interest is maximizing customer satisfaction (and off-loading the hassling of connecting a Epson to a Prinergy system on to someone else's shoulder. But you don't have to tell the customer that.) The procedure should work as follows:

1. The Epson 5000/7000/9000 output device along with the BestRIP connectivity can be written into the contract. Note that we still charge for a low-res proofing JTP and the usual $1000 connectivity fee. Make sure that "Pre-Press Consultants" is also written somewhere in the contract and/or workflow diagram.

2. There should be a one day overlap, **if possible**, with the service engineer from Pre-Press Consultants and the CreoScitex application engineer for Prinergy. However, note it might be best for that the visits **do not** overlap, especially with smaller shops, as the Pre-Press service engineer needs two days of training for the customer with regard to the BestRIP and profiling and stock advisement. Basically, we don't want to get into situation where the CreoScitex engineer and the Pre-Press engineer are competing for the customer's attention (with regard to training).

3. Note that the BestRIP simply takes a 720 dpi TIFF CT from Prinergy. With regard to the Prinergy PPED, these are not difficult settings, so if the engineer visits from each respective company don't overlap, it's no big deal.

4. If customer expectations are not met by the Pre-Press Consultants, note that this is not an acceptable excuse to refuse sign-off on the Prinergy system. These guys have a pretty good track record, so a disappointing experience should be a rare event. But remember the Epson are ***cheap*** proofers. And there can be many reasons why the customer is having a disappointing experience (insisting on using cheap stock, insisting on using sub-standard hardware). In short, don't go down the rathole.