

Minnesota Department of Human Services

State agency improves access for non-English speakers using Adobe InDesign and Acrobat software and Adobe PDF

PROFILE

- Assists half a million Minnesota citizens whose personal or family resources are not adequate to meet their basic needs
- Headquarters: St. Paul, Minnesota
- www.dhs.state.mn.us

BENEFITS SUMMARY

- Since adopting a publishing workflow based on InDesign and Acrobat, the agency has translated dozens of documents into multiple languages in a nine-month period.
- InDesign and Acrobat are helping the agency improve access to services for non-English speaking clients.
- Productivity has increased threefold since the agency adopted the InDesign and Acrobat workflow.
- Acrobat software and Adobe PDF streamline the proofing process and reduce errors.
- All of the agency's contract printers were ready to accept InDesign files and have had no issues in printing them.
- The design staff was functional in InDesign within a week.
- InDesign enables the staff to enhance the look and quality of materials.
- Designers can easily incorporate sophisticated effects into documents such as gradients, drop shadows, and transparent type.

As part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibiting discrimination in federally assisted programs, state agencies receiving federal funds are encouraged to provide meaningful access to services for non-English speaking clients. To comply with the act, many state agencies are faced with translating thousands of documents such as brochures and forms into foreign languages. Efficiently producing and translating documents has proven challenging, but the Minnesota Department of Human Services has devised a model solution. A new workflow based on Adobe InDesign and Acrobat software has enabled the agency to translate dozens of documents since November 2001, some into as many as ten different languages—all without hiring additional staff.

"Since adopting InDesign, our productivity has increased threefold," says Danette Wachs, graphic arts supervisor for the Minnesota Department of Human Services. "There's no doubt that InDesign is improving our ability to provide meaningful access to clients."

Streamlining document translation

Before adopting InDesign, the agency relied on translators for document layout as well as translation. Document appearance suffered, because translators are language experts, not designers. Agency staff sometimes had to redesign documents, resulting in increased costs. The translators usually converted translated text into image files and pasted them into Adobe PageMaker® or QuarkXPress layouts, making text revisions impossible—an

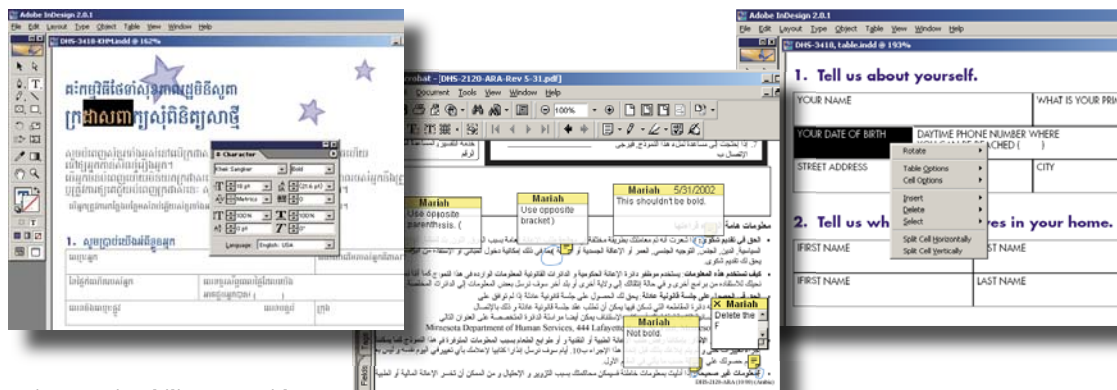
unacceptable alternative given constant changes to state and federal legislation. Because of this cumbersome process, many documents simply were not translated.

With the new InDesign workflow, the translators deliver text in Microsoft® Word. Agency designers then import the text into existing InDesign layouts and apply formatting. A major part of what makes the new workflow possible is the software's support for Unicode fonts. "Thanks to its support for Unicode, InDesign is the only page design and production software that lets you import text from Word documents containing non-Roman characters like Cyrillic without the letters becoming scrambled," explains Keith Gilbert, president of Gilbert Consulting. Gilbert set up the InDesign workflow and trained the agency's staff.

Reliable reviews and printing

Once translated text is in the InDesign layout, the agency uses Adobe Acrobat software and Adobe Portable Document Format (PDF) to streamline the proofing process. Designers generate Adobe PDF versions of the documents straight from InDesign using a preset Adobe PDF Export style and send them to translators who use the electronic commenting tools in Acrobat for markup. The ability to highlight or even draw on top of layouts reduces ambiguity and errors in proofing.

After sending documents in Adobe PDF to the agency's communication officers for final sign-off, the Adobe PDF files are automatically



To improve its ability to provide access to services for non-English speaking clients, the Minnesota Department of Human Services has established a publishing workflow based on Adobe InDesign and Acrobat software. Translators deliver text in Microsoft Word to designers who import the text into InDesign layouts and apply formatting. Adobe Acrobat and Adobe PDF are then used to streamline the proofing process. Final Adobe PDF files are posted to the Web in a variety of languages from Arabic to Russian, Khmer, and Somali.

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Danette Wachs
Graphic arts supervisor
Minnesota Department
of Human Services

posted to the Web. The compact Adobe PDF files print reliably and can be downloaded from the Web quickly, and the electronic versions retain the exact formatting of the original documents. Already, there are more than 550 documents in Adobe PDF on the agency’s Web site at <http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us>, many of which are available in a variety of languages from Arabic to Russian, Khmer, and Somali.

To print documents, native InDesign files are preflighted right within the program and sent to one of the agency’s ten contract printers. All of them were ready to accept InDesign files within two months, and none have had any printing issues.

High-quality documents faster

While the agency’s major focus since adopting InDesign in November 2001 has been translating existing documents imported from previous page layout applications, designers are also relying on InDesign to enhance the look and quality of new materials. It took only about a week for the designers to be functional in InDesign and begin using its features. “The training went much faster than I thought, due to the intuitiveness of InDesign,” says Gilbert. “Designers quickly abandoned the page layout software they had been using.”

Using InDesign has increased the designers’ productivity. The integration between Adobe Illustrator, Photoshop, and InDesign speeds layout creation because designers can work with native files instead of constantly

converting files to another format for placement into layouts.

The software has also enhanced the designers’ creativity. The agency often produces large-format display posters; with the adoption of InDesign, the posters now feature gradients, drop shadows, and transparent type—sophisticated effects impossible to create using other programs.

The table functionality in InDesign is proving especially useful. When documents are translated into different languages and the text flowed into tables, InDesign automatically expands the size of the table cells to accommodate different-length text and adjusts the surrounding layout. “InDesign offers functionality that is head and shoulders above other page layout software,” says Wachs. “It’s an excellent program that makes our lives easier.”

For the Minnesota Department of Human Services, adopting a publishing workflow based on InDesign and Acrobat has given the agency the ability to produce high-quality documents and translate them in much higher volumes. The ultimate beneficiaries are the agency’s clients, who now have increased and growing access to vital documents in their native languages.

TOOLBOX

Adobe Acrobat
Adobe Illustrator
Adobe InDesign
Adobe Photoshop

PCs with Intel® Pentium® processors
Microsoft Windows® 2000



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