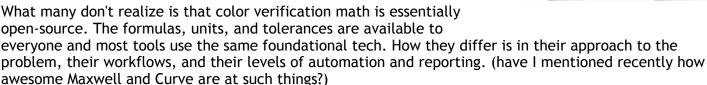# Avoid compliance hell with PRX/PQX

by Steve Upton

Color verification and compliance tools are gaining in popularity and print buyers are realizing their value. What's not to like? Buyers can put their newly-learned color and G7 ideas to work, ensuring their print procurement is consistent and pleasing to the eye.

Some buyers are taking their vendor's advice and requiring printers to use specific software tools or cloud services. This creates an untenable situation where printers have to buy, learn and use multiple tools in order to gain the customers' work they need. A vendor representative recently confided "We have printers who are required by customers to buy and use 4 or 5 different color compliance products in order to print their work. It's insane and unnecessary."

Don't torture your print providers by requiring proprietary tools' measurements for compliance testing.

What many don't realize is that color verification math is essentially open-source. The formulas, units, and tolerances are available to everyone and most tools use the same foundational tech. How they differ is in their approach to the problem, their workflows, and their levels of automation and reporting. (have I mentioned recently how awesome Maxwell and Curve are at such things?)

This means that the foundations exist for the many verification tools to share data easily. Thankfully, Idealliance and ISO have created standard file formats that allow this very exchange to occur: PRX and PQX. PRX (Print Requirement eXchange) and PQX (Print Quality eXchange) are standard XML file formats created by Idealliance to allow for the clear exchange of print requirements and the resulting print quality measurements.

PRX/PQX allows printers and buyers to choose the best tool for their needs

Brands and print buyers encode their requirements into print requirements files (PRX) and make these files available to job bidders and print providers. PRX files can handle color aim measurements, spot color values, preferred color metrics and tolerances. They also handle defect allowances and bar code verification requirements. Print providers, in turn, import the PRX files into their verification tools so they can confirm their output adheres to the buyer's needs. It allows for buyers to use software best for their perspective and for printers to do the same. One size does *not* fit all and it *doesn't have to*.

The measurements, barcode verifications and defect tracking are then exported into print quality files (PQX) and shared back to the buyers and brands. These files are imported into the buyers' tools and the circle is complete.

Like ICC profiles opened up the proprietary conversion systems of the 1980s and 90s, PQX/PRX open up color verification systems. The last 25 years of innovation and quality improvement have proven that the open exchange of color conversion and proofing tables makes workflows much more flexible and allows stakeholders at each point of the workflow to choose the tools that are best for them. Photo, design and prepress software support ICC profiles for the creation end of the workflow. Proofing, workflow and RIP software support the output end. ICC profiles tie it all together.

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PRX/PQX allows stakeholders at each point of the print supply chain to be supported with the tools best for their needs and their customers' needs. Conformance checking is not supposed to be handcuffs on printers, but that's how it's evolving when print buyers specify proprietary systems which must be used to report color compliance measurements and results.

Dianne Kennedy, Editor of ISO 20616 (the PRX/PQX standard) from PQX Consulting said "The ISO standard, ISO 20616, that codifies the standardized exchange of print compliance data has been published, however adoption of PRX/PQX is far from assured. As with the adoption of G7, pressure from print buyers holds the key to widespread implementation and adoption."

Brands and print buyers: Choose software that works from your perspective and require it to support PRX/PQX exchange. Avoid requiring print providers to use specific tools that are often not appropriate for their situation and make their lives more difficult. The extra expense is passed back to you anyway, one way or another.

Printers: Choose software that works best for your needs - process control, quality assurance, and compliance verification and require it to support PRX/PQX exchange files. When buyers require proprietary systems be used, alert them to industry tools like PRX/PQX and urge their use in specifying their requirements. Send them a copy of this article if you think it will help. Direct them to Idealliance, an organization that is explicitly tasked with removing workflow barriers across the entire supply chain.

Visit [our booth N1071 @ Printing United](#) in October to get more information about how PQX/PRX makes the printer's and the print buyers' lives easier. We've announced this week our Maxwell 2022 upgrade which soon supports the import and export of both PQX and PRX files, easing the exchange of compliance information and the pressure on printers to use multiple products to get customer work.

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A [PDF of this article](#) is available at chromix.com for you to share with stakeholders at any point in the supply chain. Spread the word and this contentious situation will be smoothed out over time

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