



Customer Case Study

Future Publishing IT team spearheads font asset management initiative

Future Publishing, based in Bath, Somerset, UK publishes over 150 special-interest consumer magazines through operations in four countries. Founded in 1985, Future has sold over 500 million magazines in its 20-year history. Today, it has strong portfolios in the computing, games, music, sports, motoring, crafts and leisure sectors.

With a turnover nearing £200 million a year, Future is the UK second largest special-interest magazine publisher and employs more 1,400 people internationally.

As Future continues to grow through acquisition and new launches, most recently acquiring 38 titles from Highbury House Communications plc, the issue of managing its information technology (IT) has become increasingly complex and important. As a result, Future has implemented Fontwise, a unique font licence management service from Monotype to help control its font assets.

The Challenge

Historically, Future has always been at the forefront of the publishing industry in terms of IT development – as one of the first to move to desk top publishing and electronic page make-up. The publishing house has specific workflow systems and was one of the first major publishers to embrace Adobe PDF technology five years ago. However, the combination of Macintosh technical support issues and a company-wide migration to OSX and In-Design forced the need for a thorough review of its IT systems; including its font assets.

The Team Leader

Jon Moore, IT Manager, was tasked with overseeing the technical upgrade and making sure that the company continued to operate within copyright law. Working closely with the publishing and art directors, Jon sought to provide Future's creative employees with the tools they needed, while keeping a close eye on budget considerations.

Jon found that the font licensing situation in the company was one of the most difficult software assets to control for two reasons. He explains: "Firstly, fonts don't show up easily, you may expect a computer desktop to feature five or six programs, but with fonts, you can expect upwards of 5000 on one system – each of these with an individual license."

Another major task for Future was educating the creative teams about the values of fonts. “Most of the designers didn’t understand that the fonts they were using could potentially be more expensive than their computer hardware,” Jon said. However, Jon realised that care had to be taken when implementing the font asset management policy, as he explains, “getting rid of fonts is like getting rid of colours for designers!”

The Solution

Future’s IT department was already using a software asset management tool and a remote technical support tool to manage the IT infrastructure. However, the combination of the tools wasn’t giving an accurate view of font information. After a further evaluation of software auditing tools, Jon’s team discovered Fontwise, from Monotype Imaging. “To get a complete and accurate view of our fonts, we needed a font specific tool – the existing auditing tool just wasn’t as font savvy as Fontwise,” said Jon.

Fontwise comprises a unique utility to search and list every font on each client across the network as well as service to reconcile existing fonts with existing licenses in the form of a database. The Fontwise database provides immediate access to over 100,000 fonts from over 200 foundries from around the world. Fonts can be viewed and tried with an online font sampler – so when deadlines are tight, there is an instant solution.

Once Future decided to use Fontwise, the project team worked to implement a structured process to help better manage the purchasing, sharing and removal of font assets. This process included:

1. Centralised purchasing with sign-off from both group art editors and publishing directors
2. Timelines for purchasing fonts
3. Controls on copying fonts across machines
4. Rules on sharing fonts between magazines and departments
5. Blacklisting problematic fonts
6. Guidelines on trialing new fonts
7. Blocking any font sharing with outside companies

The Audit

Future implemented the Fontwise utility on over 350 Macs, which enabled a complete list of all fonts installed throughout the business to be generated. Along with this list, Future gave Monotype six heaping boxes filled with stacks of paper licenses to help consolidate the font license information. Oliver Brown, the Help Desk Engineer central to the project said, “When we first ran Fontwise there were a few really big surprises – we were actually using 8 different versions of a font, some people were just using bold from one version and italics from another.”

The next step in the audit process was to make sure that the Pre-press department also had the necessary fonts and licensing requirements to avoid any disruptions when the magazines went to print. To help ease the process of distributing fonts across various departments in the company, Future chose to use Extensis Suitcase Server – a centralised place to store and manage fonts. This had the added benefit of locking the font folders and making copying fonts between machines a fruitless exercise.

Font Licensing Analysis

Before the project team could effectively clean up the business' font assets and make sure Future was operating legally, they had to work with the creative teams to explain the audit findings. To effectively do this they built an individual font set for each publication, used the information Fontwise provided and also built a software application that scans PDFs to find out whether a font was in use on current publications and how much it was being used.

In this way the creative teams were able to determine which fonts were key to each magazine and which were peripheral or just not used anymore. Determining how fonts were being used was central to discovering Future's licensing position as fonts are licensed according to use. Now Future could make informed decisions about the most cost effective way of using the fonts that they had licences for and could also clearly see which fonts required licences.

The 5,865 fonts found were then analysed against licence records. Monotype then created an online database highlighting the font usage by magazine title. This listed each title's selected fonts and number of licences available. At any point in time, the number of licences in use can be seen and in some cases users on one magazine can also search across the group for spare licences on other magazines to use instead of purchasing new licences.

This database is kept up to date so that font licence management going forward is simplified and Future's licensing history is transparent.

The Benefits

As a result of implementing Fontwise and devising their font asset management policy the creative teams are able to work with minimal change to their daily routines, but the process of managing fonts is now centralised, streamlined and most importantly, legal.

The technical support team is reaping the benefits of Future getting control of its font assets, "As a result of the font clear-up we've seen a significant reduction in Macintosh support calls," said Oliver.

Since the cost benefit analysis savings of £25,000 have been realised.

Jon Moore concludes, "Before Fontwise and our formal font asset management policy was in place, the process was very hard to manage. With thousands of different fonts and a purchasing history spread over many years, the management of font licensing had the potential to be a real nightmare. By implementing Fontwise we no longer have this worry". Jon added "It requires a number of tools to organise fonts effectively, but it is now manageable and easier to maintain on an ongoing basis"

Most importantly as we continue to grow, I'm confident that we can maintain font legality with ease."

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