

What do Technology Users Think About JDF?

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Introduction

About two months before drupa 2004 – aka the JDF-drupa-VIGC, the Flemish Innovation Center for Graphic Communication, held a survey among its members and other contacts. The goal was to get a better insight how knowledgeable people are about JDF. Although JDF as a brand is already well known, the level of knowledge is very limited.

Survey

The VIGC JDF Survey was done online, the announcement was done via e-mail. The complete VIGC database got the invitation to participate (mainly companies in Belgium and the Netherlands). This means a very broad group of people were invited to participate: not only printing and prepress companies, but also vendors, distributors and customers of printing companies (print buyers).

To be sure that our findings wouldn't give a wrong impression, we explicitly asked people to participate, even if they hadn't heard about JDF yet. If we wouldn't have done this, chances are that only those people that are familiar with JDF would respond and that the results of our findings would be skewed.

Also we described that everyone involved in the graphic arts industry could participate, including vendors and print buyers. In total we got 142 usable responses. The spread of activities of the respondents is close to reality.

Familiarity with JDF and Other Standards

The first question was of course whether people have heard about JDF yet. In general we can say that the 'brand recognition' of JDF is quite good: 78% of the respondents had already heard about JDF, 22% hadn't.

Remarkable maybe is the score of the advertising agencies (100%, although only 5 respondents) and publishers (92%, 11 of the 12 respondents). Throughout the whole survey we noticed that JDF is much more alive within printing companies than within prepress companies. From the printers 78% knew about JDF (48 out of 61), from prepress companies this was less: 73% (11 out of 15).

Next to the familiarity with JDF we also asked about the knowledge of other standards and organisations. But we did build in a control question, i.e. a standard that we made up ourselves: IPPT (Integration of Print Production Technologies). In total 4 people recognized this 'standard', although it doesn't exist... Maybe they were

confused, because IPP is a standard, i.e. the Internet Printing Protocol. But it shows that all the standards and organisations may be confusing for people.

In general the scores of JDF and CIP4, the organisation behind JDF, are more or less similar. JMF, the Job Messaging Format, a subset of JDF, is lesser known (53%). This is probably due to the fact that JMF only came into attention quite recently. PPF, the predecessor of JDF is recognized by about half of the respondents (54%). Interesting, from a production point of view, is the familiarity of PDF/X (87%). Other standards and organisations weren't that well known.

With prepress people, CIP4 (85%) is better known than JDF as such (73%). XMP, the eXtensible Metadata Platform, promoted by Adobe as a platform to exchange metadata in the creative and prepress phase, isn't really known by prepress people (31%). Although they are the main focus group of XMP.

The distributors of technology (sales channels) have given us some food for thought. If we look at the awareness of JDF, they have a higher score than average (89%), but JMF is lesser known than average (38%). This is remarkable because these people will have to sell JDF and JDF compatible technology in the future... Education is a necessity for them.

Not only JDF has a high score with the publishers (92%), also PDF/X has (also 92%). In contrast to the prepress people, XMP is relatively known (46%).

Level of Knowledge About JDF

Not only the fact that somebody has heard about JDF is interesting, also the level of knowledge is.

We've looked at three aspects:

- General background JDF standard
- Technical specifications JDF-standard
- JDF-aware products

In general the level of knowledge isn't that good. On a scale from 1 (bad) to 5 (very good) we get following scores: 2,61; 1,93; 2,21. The fact that the technical specifications (because they are intended for a really specific group of people) and JDF-aware products (availability of these – please note that the survey was executed 2 months before drupa 2004) have a low score, isn't really surprising. The fact that the general background is only 'average', is remarkable. Especially if we look at the (future) importance of JDF for our respondents...

For the different activities, in general the scores are more or less the same. Exceptions are on the one hand the technology developers, with higher scores (resp. 3,56; 2,83 and 3,06). And on the other hand the distributors of technology, with lower scores (resp. 2,3; 1,6 and 2,1). As we have already indicated in the previous question, this is a bit disturbing. Either they are really not knowledgeable about JDF and they really need some training, or they are a kind of modest in evaluating their knowledge.

Most Important Merit of JDF

Why should somebody invest in JDF-aware products? This is of course the most important question. We have 4 possibilities in our survey (only one choice possible):

- Data exchange between administration and production;
- Data exchange throughout the complete production chain;
- Data exchange between systems from different vendors;
- Automatic setup of machines via JDF (e.g. ink key settings).

Almost halve the respondents voted for the data exchange throughout the complete production chain (51%), the second choice was data exchange between administration and production (30%). Data exchange between systems from different vendors (13%) and automatic setup of machines via JDF (5%) had really low scores.

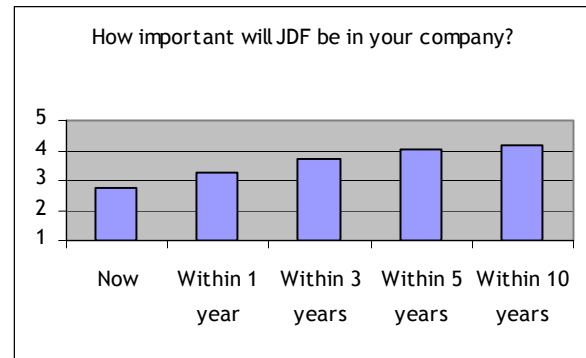
Looking at the different activities, we do see some interesting differences. For prepress companies and distributors of technology we see a much higher score for data exchange between administration and production (resp. 75% and 56%).

Evolution Importance JDF

JDF as such and the implementation of JDF are only at the beginning. The importance will certainly rise in the future,

especially in a few years. We can clearly see this in the results.

Interesting in this question is that we – once again – see a clear difference between prepress companies and printers. Prepress companies estimate the importance a little lower than average, printers a bit higher than average.



Conclusion

JDF as a brand is well known. But the knowledge of JDF is rather limited. Nevertheless, hopes in the industry are very high for JDF. Now it's up to the vendors to live up to these high expectations...

Biography

Eddy Hagen (born 9 October 1965) has a degree in Photography and one in Communication Management. He has been active in the graphic arts industry for more than 16 years. First he worked for the Belgian Federation for the Graphic Arts Industry. Afterwards he worked as a prepress manager for a small editor and publicity agency. He has been involved with VIGC, the Flemish Innovation Center for Graphic Communications, from its start in 1998. He is responsible for training and trend watching.