BRANDS ♦ APPLIED ™

Artwork automation and workflow management – white paper.

5 AUG 2020 – a 5 min. read

One of the biggest bottlenecks in rebranding projects is the capacity of art departments and this is often compounded by time consuming, inefficient and error prone review, approval and revision processes. Brands Applied has helped clients and suppliers implement artwork automation and workflow management to accelerate and improve this critical work, which can also deliver ongoing operational and brand management benefits. **But what are these concepts specifically and why does it matter?**
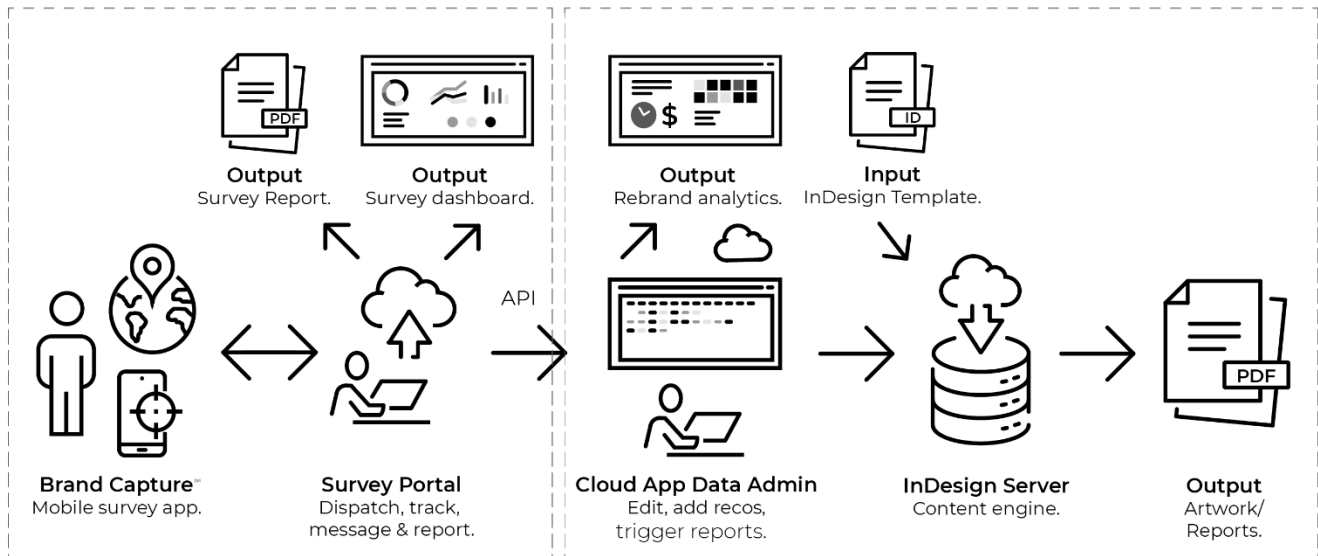
Artwork automation

Fundamentally this involves using technology to replace manual, repetitive, low value add but often detailed artwork (e.g., thousands of individual number plates). One of the most widely used examples is the web-based business card service Vistaprint.

Typically, standardized templates are developed that can accept dynamic, database driven content, to allow for customized yet consistent documents and production ready artwork. Skilled designers no longer need to manually type details or hand assemble repetitive documents and can focus on creative. In addition, information already at hand can flow directly into document fields (e.g., a facilities list populates address fields in site reports).

To further tackle resource constraints, artwork automation can empower non-designers to create brand compliant documents on demand, and not be reliant on art department capacity or costly design talent. The interface can run the gamut from off-the-shelf cloud-based collaboration services like Smartsheet, to simple to use "web to print" solutions that enable drag and drop creation, but typically require significant IT development.

A common use case is the development of site survey reports that illustrate existing facility branding (often signage focused). Below is an overview of a typical automation process for this use, which includes app based smartphone data gathering (more on the use of apps in our Brand Capture TM white paper). In this case, the survey portal and database have built-in, custom, one-click, report generation.

Artwork automation process with template formatted dynamic output.

Output Survey Report.	**Output** Survey dashboard.
Output Rebrand analytics.	**Input** InDesign Template.

API

Brand Capture™ Mobile survey app.

Survey Portal Dispatch, track, message & report.

Cloud App Data Admin Edit, add recos, trigger reports.

InDesign Server Content engine.

Output Artwork/ Reports.

Survey app and cloud portal alone   **Collaboration app added for data management and automation**

Workflow management

Specific to rebranding, workflow management is the establishment of documented processes to structure and control the activities required to effectively produce branded assets.

A well-designed workflow should make the process transparent and easily followed. It should facilitate requests, the management of resources, stakeholder reviews with quick and clear markups, accurate and timely revisions, version control, and 'track changes,' to ensure nothing is missed – with automated notifications to keep work moving.

This often takes the form of a helpdesk system, overseen by an admin, that facilitates balanced resource allocation and task assignment. It should support designers/SMEs, by giving them personalized and prioritized request reports, and allow them to update status (e.g., green, yellow, red, and percent complete). For example, if the assigned person changes the status of the request to "ready to review" or "red, delayed" the requestor is automatically notified by the system. This greatly reduces back and forth emails, instant messages, drop by visits and meetings, to discuss the status of requests and confirm who needs to take action.

Typical helpdesk workflow for creative/SME environment.
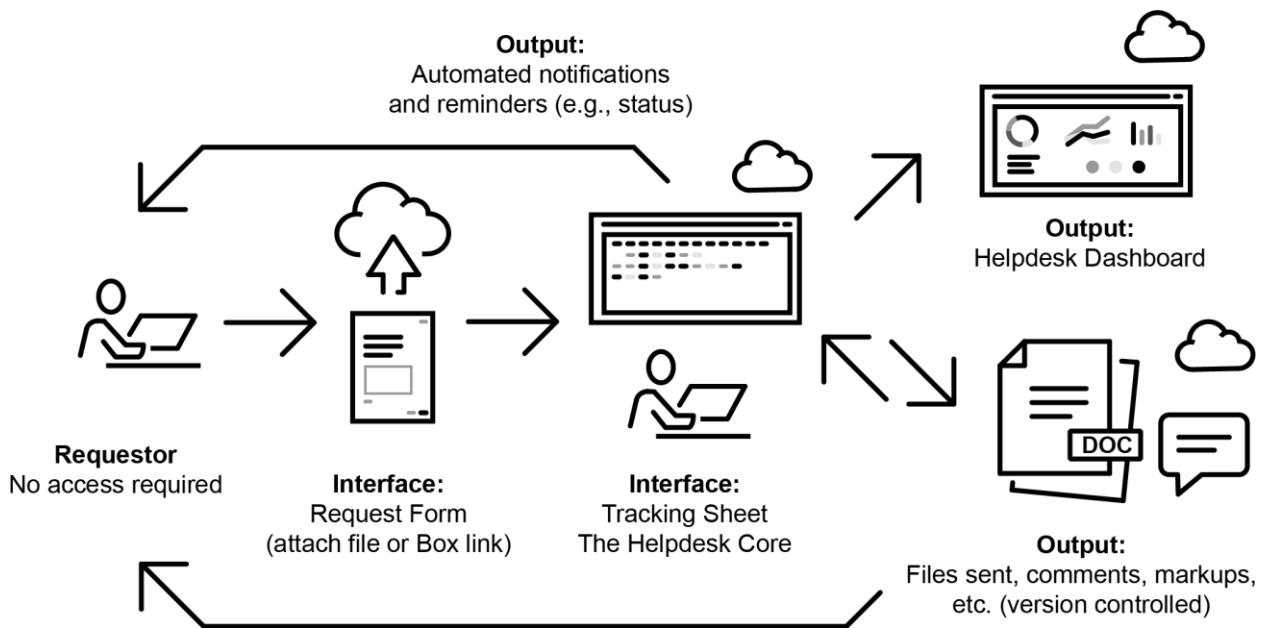
Best practice systems include performance metrics, built-in dashboard reporting, and the ability to analyse both workflow status and underlying data.

Most often, the best tool is an established cloud platform that makes it easy to structure workflow steps and track status (with little or no IT development), feels familiar to users (e.g., looks like Excel), has file transfer/storage with version control, automates notifications and reporting, can interface with external databases (via APIs), and provides additional features like Gantt charts for project management.

As most creative directors can attest, version control issues alone can create major inefficiencies, errors, and costly rework. This functionality is very expensive and time

consuming to custom develop. Brands Applied typically favors utilizing established best in class collaboration tools, rather than "reinventing the wheel."

We would be happy to discuss this topic further. Please call or email us: 647-823-7001 contact@brands-applied.com