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**Analog-to-Digital Conversion:
Printer, Facts that Will Put Money on Your Bottom Line**

By Michael Phillips, Director North American Sales

It appears that the question growing numbers of publishers and commercial printers are now asking themselves is not “if” or even “when” they should convert to computer-to-plate, but “why didn’t we do this sooner?” Adopting a new production system is a big investment, and it’s important to take the time to carefully evaluate the solution so you are making an educated decision.

There are a lot of vendors that make a lot of devices.

How do you know which one is right for you?

Look for a partner as much as a source of supply. Ideally, the manufacturer or person recommending equipment is looking out for your best interest, rather than merely trying to land a sale. Test both ROI models and Total Life Cost of Ownership models. Look diligently at reference lists, technology performance statistics, and guarantees, where appropriate.

Does the supplier have a solid track record?

Consider reputation, viability and commitment to you and the market at large. Since you are investing in the long-term health of your company, it’s critical that your vendor is financially

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sound and committed to the graphic arts industry for the long haul. Know the potential cost of long-term support.

What is the short-term cost versus long-term cost of ownership?

The advantages of CtP are well known: labor savings, reduced start-up waste and lower water and ink usage. The initial capital purchase price is only part of the total cost. The *true total cost of ownership* (versus the up-front equipment cost) includes staffing, consumables and replacement parts. Switching to CtP may allow you to reassign personnel, eliminate a shift or take on other work you otherwise would not have been able to accomplish.

How will you maintain the equipment?

Depending upon the CtP device's reliability, the replacement cost of items is a variable that needs to be taken into account. Service agreements vary widely between different vendors in terms of annual cost and extent of coverage. Your agreement may specify days and times when service is available. You should know where outside service technicians are located and what the normal response time is. On some devices, you can also choose to train your employees to perform equipment maintenance.

Can you afford CtP?

Plan before your imagesetter dies. ECRM, Glunz-Jensen, Agfa and others have already declared end of life on imagesetters and processors. NPES forecasts film to decline at a rate of 86% between 2010 and 2015. Do your research. Determine your immediate production needs and financial resources, as well as your future business environment. Analyze the *True Total Life Cost of Ownership* in addition to your ROI. Make sure your ROI model accurately reflects the True Total Cost of Ownership that will lead to cost savings and improved quality for the life of the device.

What to do next?

Southern Lithoplate stands ready to help you in the process of making this decision. In the end, you may not choose us, even though we sincerely hope you do. Allow us to help you think thru the process and one thing is guaranteed: You will make one of the best informed decisions ever. We will support that with the facts. Odds of that happening were astronomical, but it happened," recalls Murphy. "We were dead in the water."

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About Southern Lithoplate, Inc.

Southern Lithoplate Inc. (www.slp.com), headquartered in North Carolina, specialized in the manufacture, distribution, and service of analog and digital plates and associated products for targeted print markets. Southern Lithoplate enjoys a reputation for Quality, Value and Performance throughout the world. Southern Lithoplate provides customers with a full array of high quality, value priced products. Southern Lithoplate's service infra structure is designed to exceed the needs of their customer markets. Our state-of-the art manufacturing facilities are located in Jackson Tennessee, and near the world renowned Research Triangle Park in North Carolina, USA.

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