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Customization and QLA Key to Consultant's Preference for QuarkXPress

Peter M. Fine, of FinePeter Consulting Inc., (www.finepeter.com) compels clients such as Morgan Stanley and Roche Laboratories to invest in and continue upgrades of QuarkXPress®. "It's the de facto standard in publishing," says Fine, who also cites extensibility and ease of administration through QLA as primary factors in his preference for QuarkXPress.

With its continual innovations and improvements, promoting QuarkXPress isn't hard for Fine. End users prefer it, workgroups can customize it, and corporations save money on it through reduced training, installation, and administration needs. As proof, QuarkXPress 6.5 earned a prestigious Macworld editor's choice award for most improved publishing program. "QuarkXPress is on track, even more aggressive than before in making improvements and now offering even greater value," says Fine. "The product has definitely gotten better. One should take pride in their product."

A New York-based computer consultant, Fine knows what he's talking about. His impressive resume includes Apple Consultants Network & Regional Champion NY/NJ/CT; President of the New York City Digital Assistant Users' Group; and Director of Vendor Relations for the Metropolitan NY Macintosh Alliance.

QuarkXPress Users Drive the Decision

"The end user is the one who has all the power in the company — as long as the product delivers," says Fine of his clients' continued devotion to QuarkXPress. If a design group clamors to upgrade their copies of QuarkXPress, he can comfortably provide that, knowing that their productivity will only increase.

One client, for example, was particularly interested in the sophisticated tables features in QuarkXPress 5 and later. The tables features expand on Quark's tradition of providing powerful, precise, and flexible features for page layout, typography, graphics, and color. Many of Fine's clients are excited about the advent of PSD Import as well, a free XTensions® software included with QuarkXPress 6.5 that streamlines workflows by adding support for native Photoshop® files and access to embedded layers, channels, and paths. Designers also continue to cite QuarkXPress mainstays such as text and layout handling as key.

"QuarkXPress has been the dominate desktop publishing application with my clients for over a decade," says Fine, who has been responsible for continuous upgrades to more than 300 copies of QuarkXPress since the debut of version 3.1 in the early 1990s. "Users have been using it for more than 10 years and feel very comfortable with it," Fine adds. The continuity QuarkXPress offers from version to version decreases or negates any costs involved in training or retraining. New features are smoothly integrated, improving the product without creating confusion.
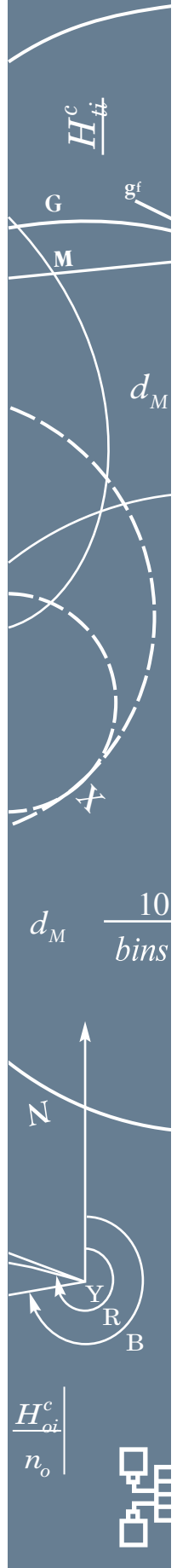
XTensions Equal Solutions

The ability to customize QuarkXPress through XTensions software also earns kudos from Fine. "It's very important to be able to customize the application — and it's still pretty unique," says Fine. "Allowing third-party developers to come up with an esoteric solution that users can place in their workflows is an important aspect of QuarkXPress."

With nearly 300 XTensions available, customization opportunities abound. Many of Fine's clients purchase XTensions software based on recommendations from their printers. One of Fine's publishing clients relies on the power of the Vision's Edge IndeXTension.

QLA Slashes Costs

For a consultant who charges by the hour, slashing 10 or 15 hours from an installation or upgrade process with Quark® License Administrator (QLA) could be seen as a negative. Not so for Fine. "I would rather see clients spend money on the right solutions — hardware or software — than on administrative costs," says Fine.

QLA is a server-based software that manages the installation and license handling of multiple copies of QuarkXPress. With individual copies of QuarkXPress, Fine had to go from computer to computer, spending 15 or 20 minutes performing each installation or upgrade, all the while keeping track of individual serial numbers for each product. With QLA, Fine can simply pre-configure one system to automatically roll out new software. "The manageability using QLA server can be very helpful," says Fine. "From an IT standpoint, anything I can do to organize and consolidate upgrading is very important."

Although QLA does require a low-end server, Fine says, "Ultimately, whatever you spend on a QLA server box comes back to you easily in the tracking. It will be much cheaper than me doing all the installations." Fine also appreciates the emergency keys, which take over in case of a server outage, and the flexibility QLA adds to license administration. Although most of his clients purchase the number of licenses they ultimately use, QLA offers the freedom of part-time QuarkXPress usage. "You can manage licenses for 20 but put the software on 40 machines," Fine explains. He can also easily add licenses as the company grows.

Fine is impressed with the new features for generating temporary and remote licenses in QLA 3.3. "The fact that you can e-mail a license is huge. I like having it there. I've used it mostly for remote offices or laptop users. I like the ability to be able to check out a license — and they're all set up."

"The idea makes sense," Fine concludes of QLA.

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