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The Mission of *FIRST*

FIRST seeks to understand customers' graphic requirements for reproduction and translate those aesthetic requirements into specifications for each phase of the flexographic printing process including: customers, designers, prepress providers, raw material & equipment suppliers, and printers.

The intention of *FIRST* is to provide all participants in the flexographic reproduction process with a common set of guidelines, tutorials, and data that can be used as communication and production tools.

***FIRST* Objectives**

FIRST is a set of specifications, not standards. When followed, these specifications facilitate producing a predictable, consistent result. It is the responsibility of the customer to determine where, when, and how these specifications are implemented. This does not imply that a printer's capabilities cannot exceed *FIRST* specifications, or that the printer is limited to these specifications as a maximum quality level. The process and specifications supported in *FIRST* intend:

- To outline key flexographic procedures and guidelines to be used from the beginning of the process to the end, including the implementation, design, prepress, and print processes.
- To improve quality and consistency through improved communication and measurement procedures.
- To reduce cycle time and minimize rework through improved process control methodology.
- To control production costs through streamlined raw materials and process improvement methodology.
- To enable consumer product companies to obtain optimal flexographic print quality, which equals or exceeds offset lithography and gravure printing.
- To grow the overall flexographic printing industry through increased market share of an expanding market.

Historical Perspective of *FIRST*

Prior to *FIRST*, many consumer product companies were creating individual package reproduction specifications. The generation of too many individualized specifications can become overwhelming to an industry – resulting in manufacturing inefficiencies and confusion. In pursuit of a more universal approach, the FTA membership partnered with leading consumer product companies to create a universal set of flexographic specifications.

The resulting premier edition of *FIRST* (debuting in 1997) and subsequent editions consisted of specifications and tolerances representing the realistic capabilities of 70% of the industry. Data was derived from three years of industry input, three industry-wide surveys, and statistically controlled designed experiments. This edition of *FIRST* includes technical updates to maintain relevancy with the ever-evolving technology, as well as significant subject expansion designed to more fully encompass the entire flexographic process and various industry segments. With hundreds of industry experts, from around the world, contributing to the technical content over the past decade, *FIRST* has become the technical resource for the flexographic industry.

FIRST 5.1 CONTRIBUTORS

The Flexographic Technical Association would like to recognize the contributions and dedicated efforts of those involved in the development, editing, and evaluation of *FIRST* 5.1. These individuals exhibited tireless enthusiasm in spearheading the continuous advancement of the flexographic printing process.

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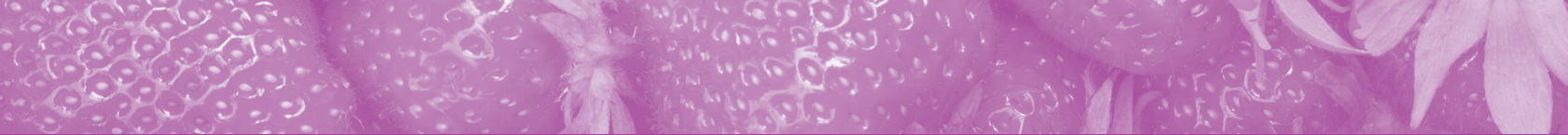
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