

CHAPTER 3

The Game Plan: Developing a Workflow

If you can't describe what you are doing as a process, you don't know what you're doing.

W. Edwards Deming

While you can certainly purchase Adobe Creative Suite and use just one of the applications within the collection, the real value of the Suite becomes visible when using each of the applications together in concert. One of the ways to describe the process of using multiple applications to get your work done is by defining a workflow. However, the word workflow can mean a variety of different things.

In this chapter, we'll discuss exactly what a workflow is, in the context of designing and producing artwork with Adobe Creative Suite applications, and we'll see how different types of design projects rely on the broad shoulders of Adobe Creative Suite.

What Is a Workflow?

A workflow is a process of how something gets done. It's a map that gets you from point A to point B. In other words, it's the roadmap for a project. In most cases, there are several ways to get to where you're going. Some ways might have more traffic, others nice scenery—but they all basically get you to your destination. In the business world, though, you want to get to your destination in the shortest amount of time, using the least amount of gas, and having a bit of fun at the same time—which makes your job rewarding, successful, and, most important, profitable.

In graphic design, a workflow comprises all the necessary steps that have to happen for a particular job to be completed. Obviously, whatever your final result is supposed to be will

determine what the workflow is. If you're designing a piece that will be output to the Web, it will have a different workflow, or process, than a project that will end up on a printing press.

Right off the bat, it's important to realize that every workflow is different—mostly, of course, because every project has different goals, but also because there is usually more than just one way to accomplish a task. Workflows are also affected by factors you might not necessarily think about. For example, if you're a designer who is putting together a newspaper, you might be incorporating some photographs into your layout that came from prints from your local photographer. Another paper might have overseas photographers who need to submit their images digitally.

More so, there are organizations or design firms that handle nearly all the aspects of a project, and there are designers who might work on only one portion of a project. Some firms offer services from concept all the way through design. Some people are just photographers. Even so, photographers who understand the entire workflow not only can provide better services to their clients, but also can be more efficient and can avoid having to redo work later in the process.

Traditionally, a designer was required to possess and learn several software tools, each of which worked differently. A tremendous amount of work was required to make sure that all these tools worked together in some useful way. And maintaining them was challenging (to say the least) because each of the tools had different upgrade cycles, causing constant workflow changes.

The Adobe Creative Suite is unique because it provides all the tools necessary for a design workflow. Because of the integration among the applications in the Suite, it's easy to move your project along each step of the process. And because these applications all work in the same way, you don't have to tear your hair out learning about all kinds of programs to get your work done. Most important, Adobe has aligned each of the products in the suite to release at the same time, making it easier to develop and maintain a workflow.

By the Way

The workflows you find here are guidelines to give you a better idea of how the applications work together and what the process might be for different kinds of projects. They work in a majority of cases; however, specialized tasks or functions might require a modified workflow. By all means, feel free to customize and expand on the workflows mentioned here to achieve the workflow required for your particular needs.

As you read through the rest of this chapter, you might feel the urge to skip particular areas because they don't pertain to the kinds of things you are doing today. For example, you might want to skip anything related to the Web because you work pri-

marily in print-related materials. My advice is to at least get a basic understanding of other workflows because you never know what might come your way. This way, if you end up getting an opportunity to do such work—even if you’re going to outsource it—you’ll have a complete understanding of the process and what needs to happen. If I had a nickel for every time I’ve heard someone say “I lost so much money because I told them I could do it, but I had no idea how much work was involved,” I’d have enough money for one of those fancy shmancy 30-inch flat-panel displays.

Understanding Print, the Web, and Beyond

In the 1980s, computer technology redefined print publishing. In the 1990s, the Internet and the World Wide Web took center stage as a powerful medium for communication. As we begin to settle into this new millennium, wireless technologies are pushing design and communication even further.

Another workflow that is becoming more common as bandwidth increases is creating content for video. Adobe Creative Suite 3 Production Premium contains the tools that can be used to create this content. The good news is that these tools, including Premiere Pro (video editing), After Effects (special effects and compositing), and Soundbooth (sound editing), are all applications that integrate with the apps you now have. Should the day come when you need to dive into the world of video, you’ll already have some of the tools—and the knowledge—to get you started.

**By the
Way**

As we look at the workflows specific to these different media, I’m going to focus primarily on the aspects that involve working with the Creative Suite directly. Obviously, many different things need to happen to communicate your (or your client’s) message. For example, concepts are discussed, copy is written, sketches are drawn, and meetings with the client are endured (oh, the agony)—all before you even start working on the project. This book, however, focuses mainly on the technical aspects of doing your job, not necessarily the conceptual ones. I’m going to assume here that the initial concept is done and that you have copy written.

Designing for Print

Say what you want about the future of print, but find me another medium that can provide a designer with the prospect of using an exquisite paper with embossing, foil stamping, custom die-cutting, varnishing, or various other effects that pulls a

reader in and delivers a message all its own. I've seen art directors who sometimes spend days picking out just the right paper for an annual report. Use of custom inks such as metallics, pastels, or even magnetic inks (such as what's used for account numbers on bank checks) takes print a step further.

That being said, when you are designing for print, you have to be mindful of such things as image resolution, custom spot colors, transparency flattening, bleed and trim areas, folds, fonts, and color separations. Some jobs also require knowledge of government or postal regulations. Following are three workflows that are common in the area of print design.

Corporate Identity

Corporate identity projects include the creation of a logo and other materials used to identify a company or an organization. Examples are business cards, letterheads, envelopes, notes, and the like. Most corporate identity projects also focus on the branding and positioning of the company. Common applications used in this workflow are Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign (see Figure 3.1, shown on page 52).

Brochure

A brochure is used as an informational and marketing tool for businesses and organizations. The simplest type of brochure is printed on a letter-size page and folded into three panels (commonly referred to as a trifold or a "slim jim"). Common applications used in this workflow are Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign. Microsoft Word (or any other word processor) is also commonly used (see Figure 3.2, shown on page 54).

Advertising Campaign

An advertising campaign is an organized effort to publicize a company or an organization. Integrated campaigns often feature a series of ads that share a similar concept and might include print advertising, direct mail, or other methods of distribution. Common applications used in this workflow are Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign. Acrobat also can be used for campaign reviews (see Figure 3.3, shown on page 56).

Designing for the Web

Two approaches to web design exist: create something the same way you would for print, but adapt it to work on the Web; or create a true interactive experience from the ground up. In the early days of the Web, most sites you went to were of the former kind—page after page of large static images, garish colors, and illegible text. Granted, two main reasons for that were a lack of powerful web authoring tools and a general lack of understanding of the technical capabilities of the medium.

I should note that today's dynamic design environment has also caused a reverse of this effect. Many designers specialize in web design but have almost no knowledge of what it takes to create a quality printed piece. Those who have tried going to press with a 72dpi RGB image know what I'm talking about.

**By the
Way**

A good web designer thinks about what size monitor he expects users to have, how best to build a page that can be updated quickly and easily, how to add interactive elements to draw a reader's attention, how to provide useful navigation and links to help readers find what they're looking for, and, most important, how to communicate all of it with a design concept that delivers the right message. Some jobs also require knowledge or interfacing with back-end systems and databases. Following are three workflows that are common in the area of web design.

Web Banner

A web banner is an advertisement that appears on a website. Ever since the Internet became a place that people frequent, companies and organizations have found the Web to be an effective medium to advertise their products and services. Most web banners have to conform to specific sizes and formats. Common applications used in the creation of web banners are Photoshop, Illustrator, and Flash (see Figure 3.4, shown on page 58).

Website

What started out as a "fad" in many people's eyes has become a way of life today. Websites are used to sell products, provide information, display family pictures, and present just about anything else you might want to share with other people around the globe. Common applications used in the creation of websites are Photoshop, Illustrator, Flash, and Dreamweaver (see Figure 3.5, shown on page 60).

Designing for Both Print and the Web

Most people say that print and the Web don't mix. They might be right, but it doesn't mean that print and the Web can't coexist together peacefully. By carefully planning a workflow, you can save significant time developing content that will be published both in print form and electronically on the Web.

Obviously, the goal is to create content once and then share that content between the Web and print elements you are producing. In this way, you avoid having to create and manage two sets of identical content (one for print, one for the Web). More important, if changes need to be made (show me one job in which they don't), you have to change only one set of assets instead of two. Save time, make more money, go home early. Nice, eh? Following are two workflows that are common in the area of cross-media (or mixed-media) design.

Print/Online Newsletter

Companies often create newsletters to distribute news to all the employees of the organization. With the advent of the "I need it now" mentality in today's fast-paced world, companies offer online versions of these publications as well. Cross-media (web and print) workflows are quickly becoming the norm in today's business environment. Common applications used in a cross-media workflow are Photoshop, Illustrator, InDesign, Flash, and Dreamweaver (see Figure 3.6, shown on page 62).

Interactive PDF

In a relatively short period, PDF has become a standard in the industry for distributing published information. Lately, capabilities have been built into the PDF format to support interactive content. Businesses and organizations can now deliver rich media content—including hyperlinks, interactivity, and movies—in a single file that nearly everyone can view. Common applications used to create interactive PDF files are Photoshop, Illustrator, Flash, InDesign, and Acrobat (see Figure 3.7, shown on page 64).

Moving to a PDF Workflow

Undoubtedly, you've seen both Acrobat and PDF appear quite often on the workflows listed here. In fact, one of the biggest benefits of using the Adobe Creative Suite is that you can take full advantage of PDF—mainly because support for PDF is built into the Creative Suite at almost every level. From creating PDF files and placing them into your layouts, to opening PDF files, setting up PDF review cycles, and

using PDF as a final delivery format, the Creative Suite ensures that it all works and fits seamlessly into your workflow.

Think about it. In the past, client reviews consisted of expensive color comps, unclear faxes, low-resolution JPEG images, and forgotten phone conversations. Today email-based PDF reviews make for an experience that's welcome to clients because they can review materials faster than ever before, as well as to designers, who can save money and track issues and make changes more efficiently than ever.

This isn't to say that moving to a complete PDF workflow is easy. There are still issues that have to be dealt with, including color-management issues (making sure that what you see on *your* screen is the same as what the client sees on *his* screen), software compatibilities (making sure that clients are using the right version of Acrobat), and more.

Switching to PDF overnight probably won't happen, but one thing is sure: After you establish a workflow and get comfortable with using the Adobe Creative Suite, you'll be able to help yourself and your clients by taking advantage of PDF where you can. Before you know it, you'll have more PDF files in your inbox than emails that promise instant huge stock investment profits (okay, maybe not...).

Summary

So many tasks can be done in any of several programs. People are always asking when Photoshop and Illustrator will combine to become one program, or when Illustrator will support multiple pages (making for less of a need for InDesign). Now that the Creative Suite is out there, it should be obvious that each tool is necessary for certain tasks. No one tool can do it all—nor should it. An arsenal of integrated tools such as the Creative Suite offers far more power and options than any single application ever could.

In the next chapter, we'll talk about integration and how all the suite applications work together as one complete graphics solution.

FIGURE 3.1

An example of a corporate identity workflow.

Workflow: Corporate Identity



Adobe Illustrator

The logo was created in Adobe Illustrator and saved as a native file (.ai), making it simple to adapt the logo for just about any use.



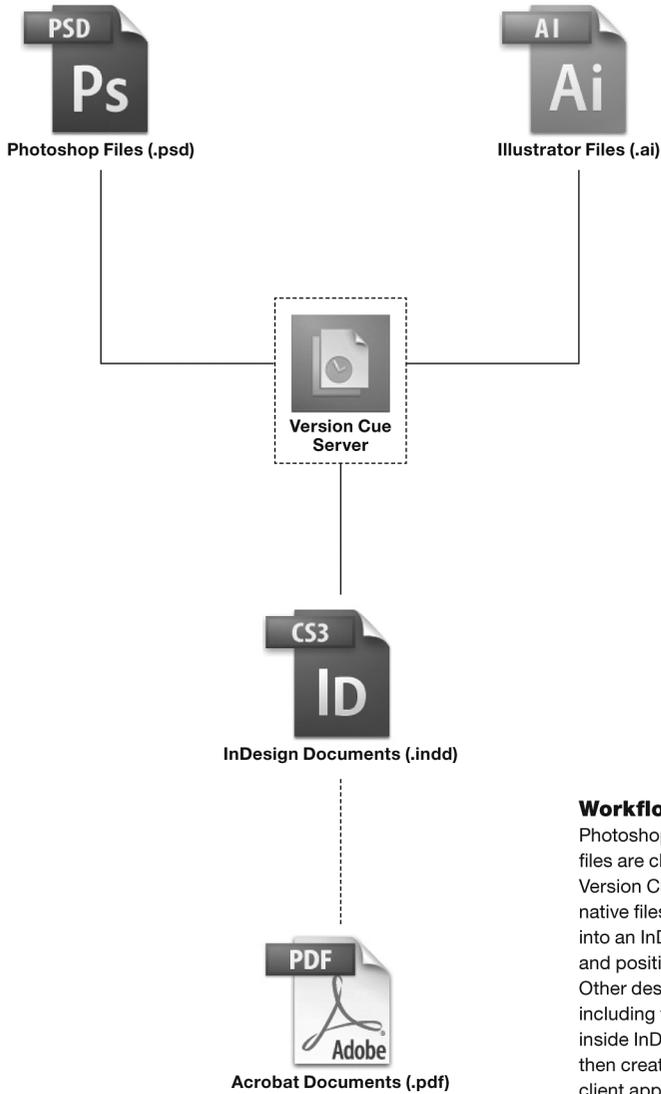
Adobe Photoshop

The photograph was chosen and edited in Adobe Photoshop and saved as a native file (.psd), giving the designer creative freedom with the photo.



Adobe InDesign

The letterhead, envelope and business cards were assembled in 3 separate documents inside InDesign. The photo (.psd) and the logo (.ai) were placed into the layouts, and additional text and elements were then added to complete the design.



Workflow

Photoshop and Illustrator files are checked into the Version Cue database. The native files are then placed into an InDesign document and positioned on the page. Other design elements, including text, are added inside InDesign. A PDF is then created and sent for client approval or to the printer for final output.



FIGURE 3.2
An example of a brochure workflow.

Workflow: Brochure



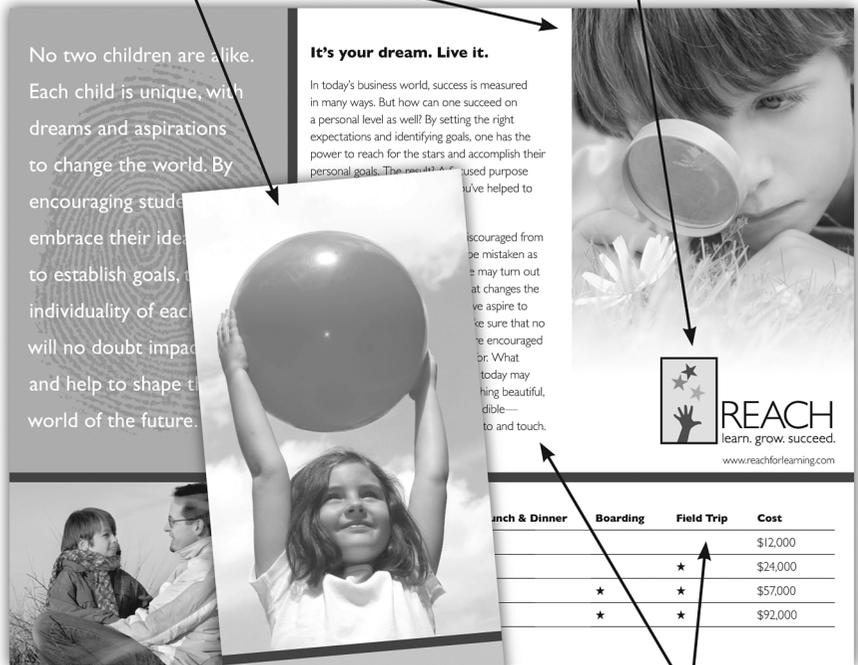
Adobe Photoshop

Several photographs were chosen and edited in Adobe Photoshop and saved as a native file (.psd), giving the designer creative freedom with the photos.



Adobe Illustrator

The logo for REACH was created in Adobe Illustrator and saved as a native file (.ai), making it simple to adapt the logo for just about any use.



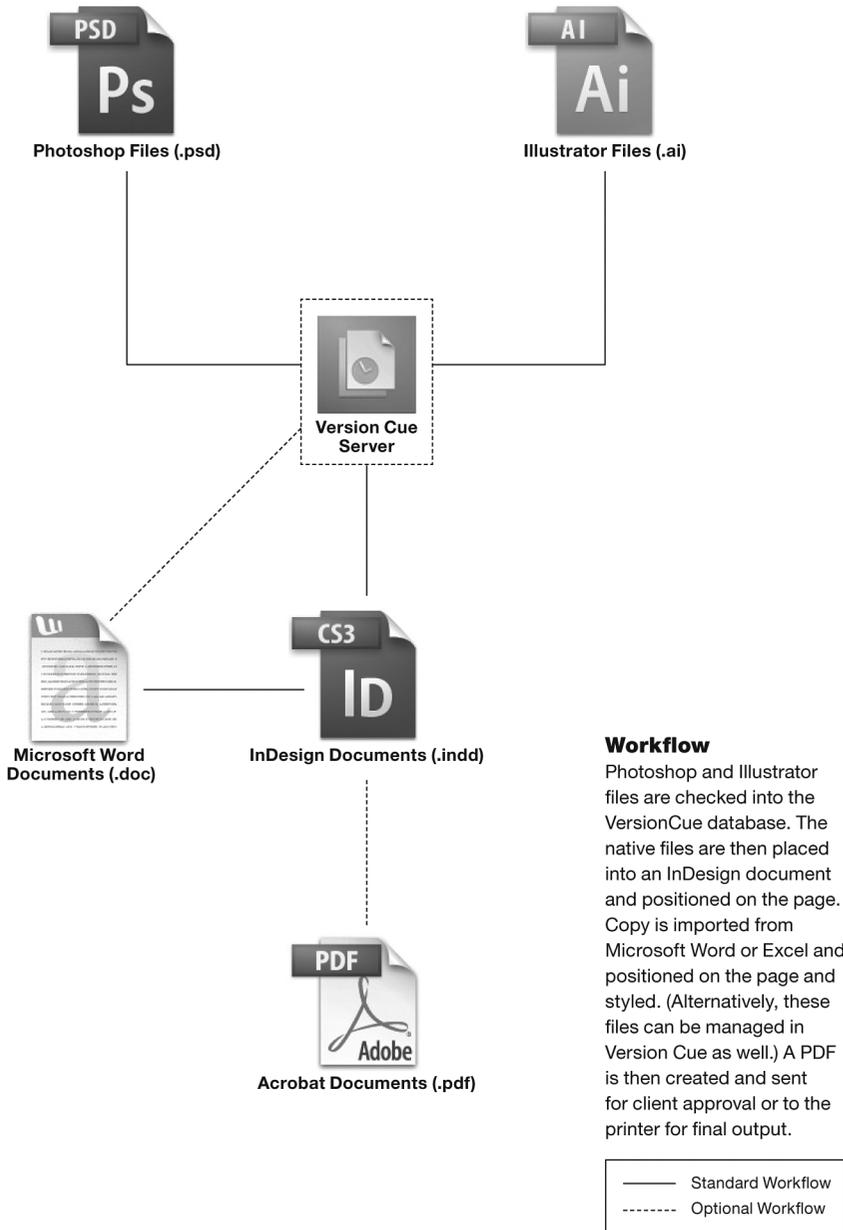
Adobe InDesign

The brochure was laid out and assembled in a single document inside InDesign. Fold and trim marks help a printer prepare the final printed piece correctly. The photos and artwork were placed into the layouts, and additional text was then imported from Microsoft Word and styled to complete the design.



Microsoft Office

Text from a copywriter or the client is imported from Microsoft Word or Excel. Text formatting (such as font and style information) can be maintained or ignored on import.



Workflow

Photoshop and Illustrator files are checked into the VersionCue database. The native files are then placed into an InDesign document and positioned on the page. Copy is imported from Microsoft Word or Excel and positioned on the page and styled. (Alternatively, these files can be managed in Version Cue as well.) A PDF is then created and sent for client approval or to the printer for final output.

FIGURE 3.3
An example of
an ad campaign
workflow.

Workflow: Advertising Campaign

CS3
ID

Adobe InDesign

The ads were assembled in a single InDesign document, where the designer can specify trim sizes as well as a slug area — a place to include specific job and client information in an area that won't print. The photos (.psd) were placed into the layout and cropped, copy was added, and the logo (.ai) was dropped in place.

PSD
Ps

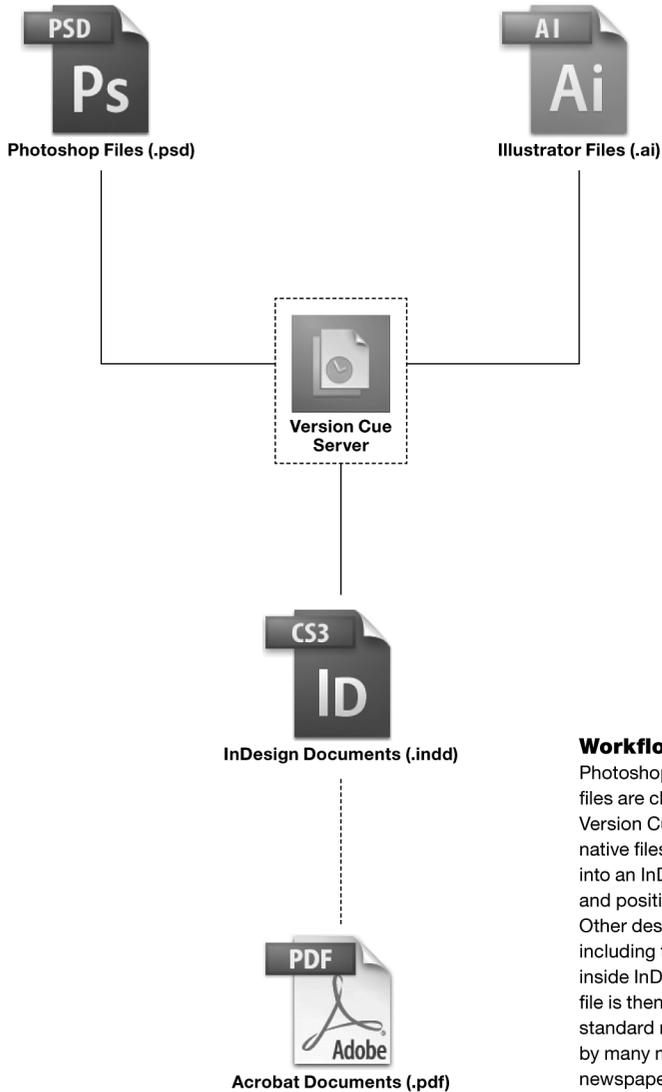
Adobe Photoshop

This ad campaign relies on the powerful photos that were carefully chosen. Adobe Bridge helps designers and photographers choose the right photo for the job, and Photoshop makes them perfect.

AI
Ai

Adobe Illustrator

The logo was created in Adobe Illustrator and saved as a native file (.ai), making it simple to adapt the logo for just about any use.



Workflow

Photoshop and Illustrator files are checked into the Version Cue database. The native files are then placed into an InDesign Document and positioned on the page. Other design elements, including text, are added inside InDesign. A PDF/X-1a file is then created (a PDF standard now adopted by many magazines and newspapers) and sent for client approval or to the publisher.

— Standard Workflow
----- Optional Workflow

FIGURE 3.4
An example of a
web banner
workflow.

Workflow: Web Banner



Adobe Photoshop

Stock photography was chosen and edited in Adobe Photoshop. Photoshop files (.psd) can then be opened or placed into Illustrator or Flash.



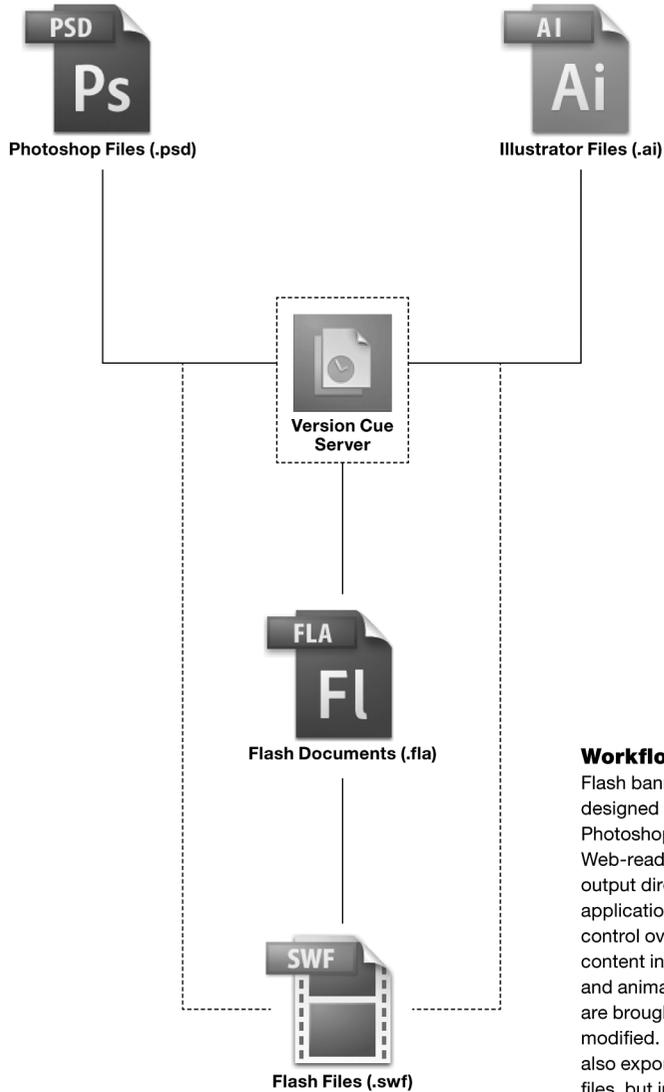
Adobe Illustrator

The ad banner was designed in Illustrator, allowing elements of the design to be repurposed for print projects easily if necessary. The file was saved as a native Illustrator file (.ai) and opened in Flash.



Adobe Flash Professional

Once the design is created in Photoshop and Illustrator, the art is brought into Flash to add interactivity and animation. ActionScripts may also be added for additional functionality.



Workflow

Flash banners can be designed in Illustrator, Photoshop, or Flash. Web-ready content can be output directly from these applications. For complete control over interactive content including rollovers and animations, designs are brought into Flash and modified. Photoshop can also export animated GIF files, but interactivity is then limited to simple animation.

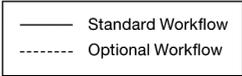


FIGURE 3.5
An example
of a website
workflow.

Workflow: Website



Adobe Illustrator

The logo as well as some text elements for the site were created in Adobe Illustrator. The initial concept for the site design was also created using Illustrator and Photoshop.



Adobe Photoshop

Stock photography was chosen and edited in Adobe Photoshop to get the look the designer wanted. Some elements were then placed directly into the Web layout or sent to Flash for further editing. Photoshop was also used, along with Illustrator, to provide a comp (design idea) to the client for approval.



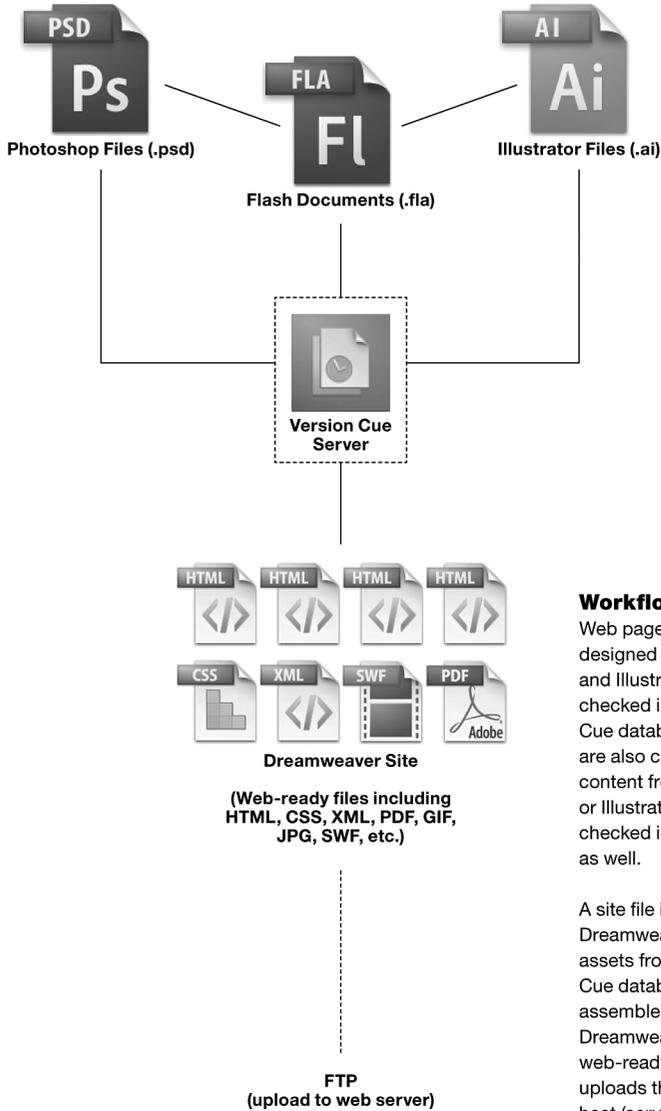
Adobe Flash Professional

Animation and interactivity was added to the site with Flash. Content can either be created from scratch in Flash itself, or artwork can be placed from both Photoshop and Illustrator.



Adobe Dreamweaver

The website was laid out and assembled in Dreamweaver. Usign CSS templates, pages and links were set up and then Illustrator, Photoshop, and Flash content was added. Dreamweaver also handled the website management, including uploading the site to the server and checking all of the links.



Workflow

Web pages layouts are designed in Photoshop and Illustrator, and files are checked into the Version Cue database. Flash files are also created using content from Photoshop or Illustrator, and those are checked into Version Cue as well.

A site file is then created in Dreamweaver. Using the assets from the Version Cue database, pages are assembled and generated. Dreamweaver creates web-ready files and then uploads them to the web host (server).

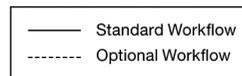
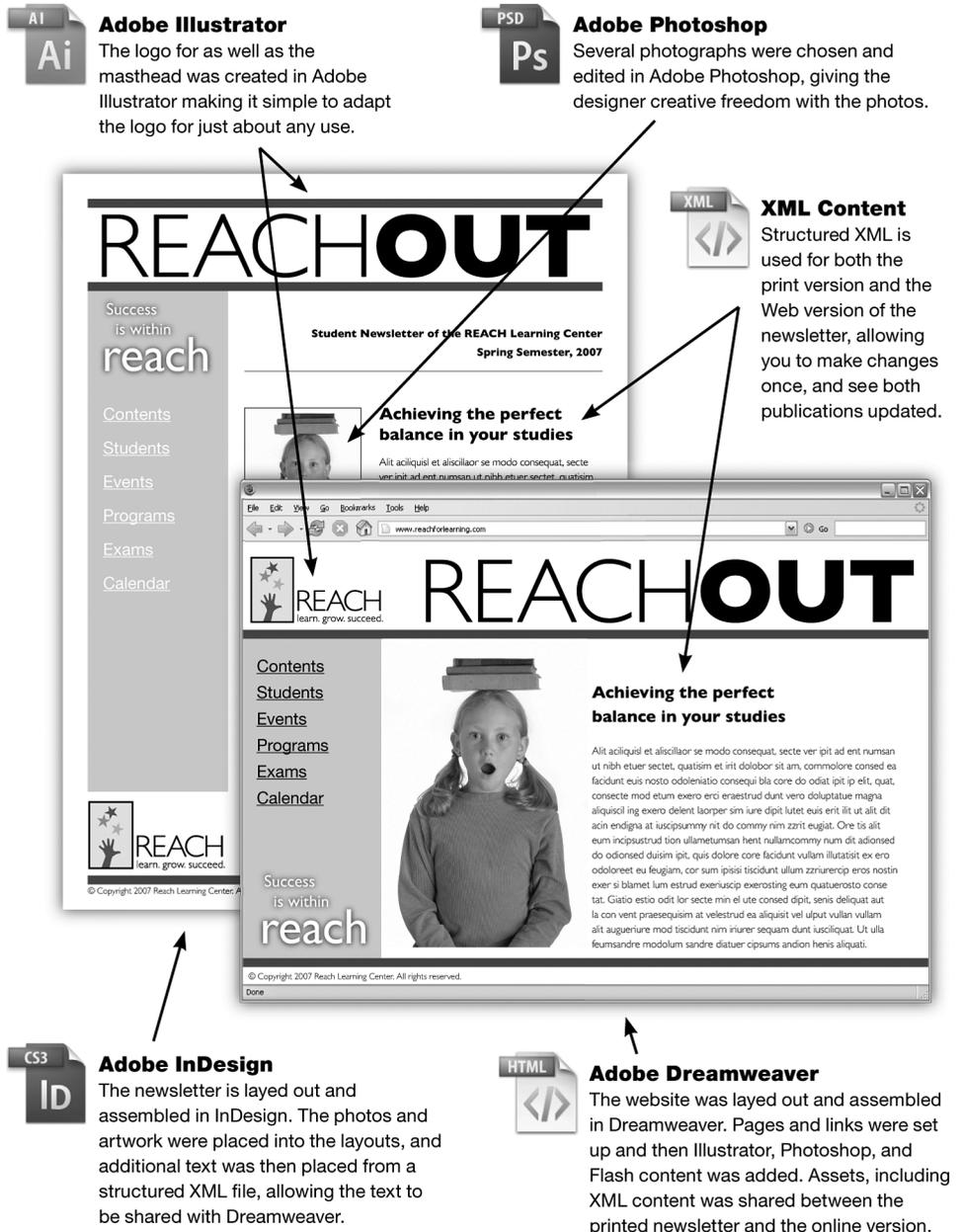


FIGURE 3.6
An example of a cross-media newsletter workflow.

Workflow: Print/Online Newsletter



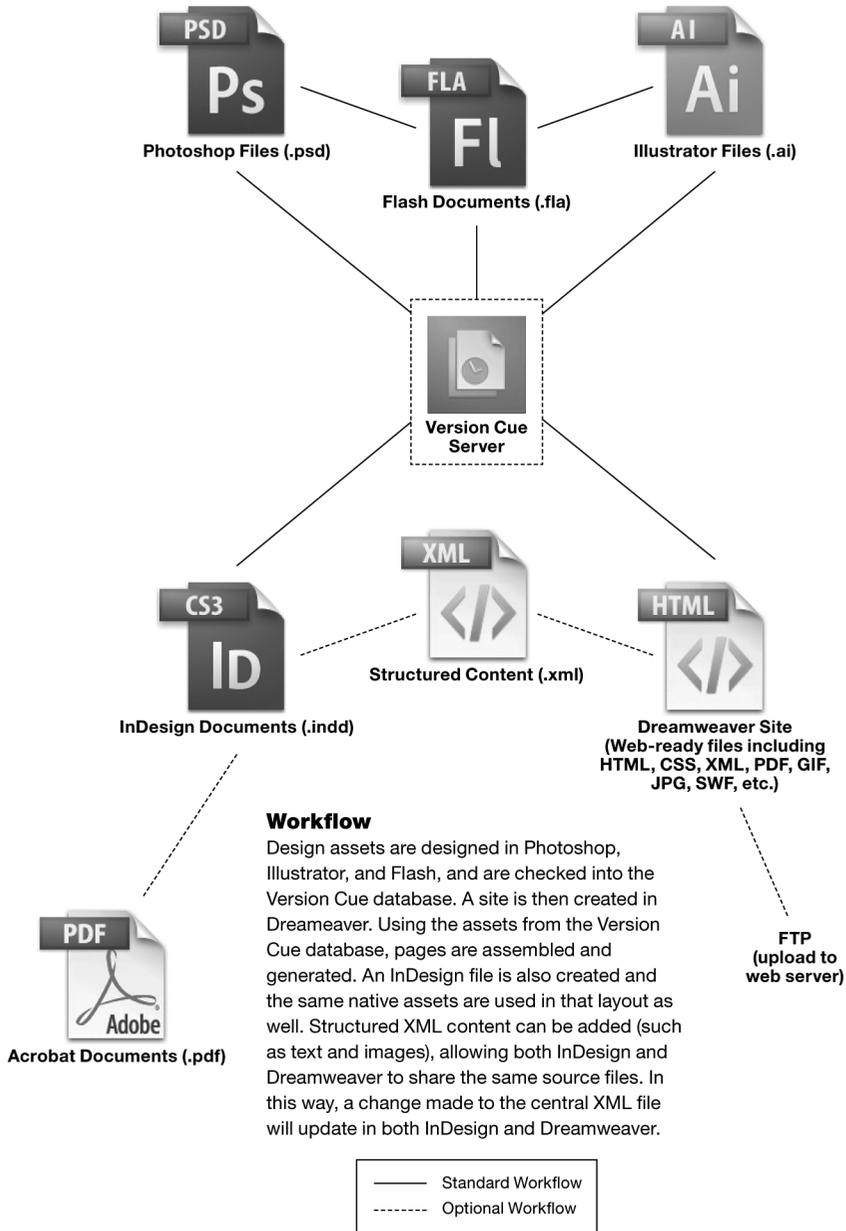


FIGURE 3.7
An example of
an interactive
PDF workflow.

Workflow: Interactive PDF



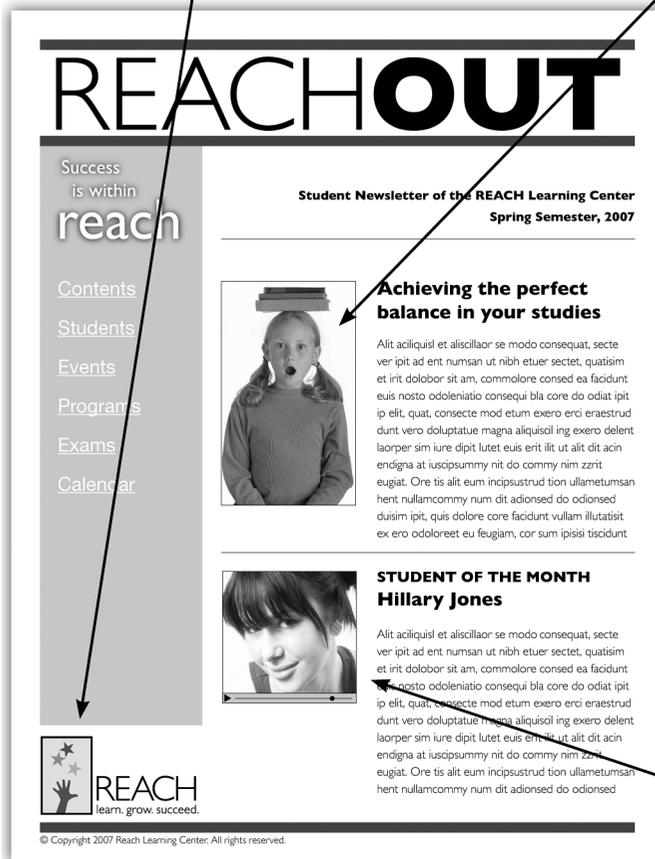
Adobe Illustrator

The logo was created in Adobe Illustrator and saved as a native file (.ai), making it simple to adapt the logo for just about any use.



Adobe Photoshop

Photographs were chosen and edited in Adobe Photoshop and saved as a native file (.psd), giving the designer creative freedom with the photos.



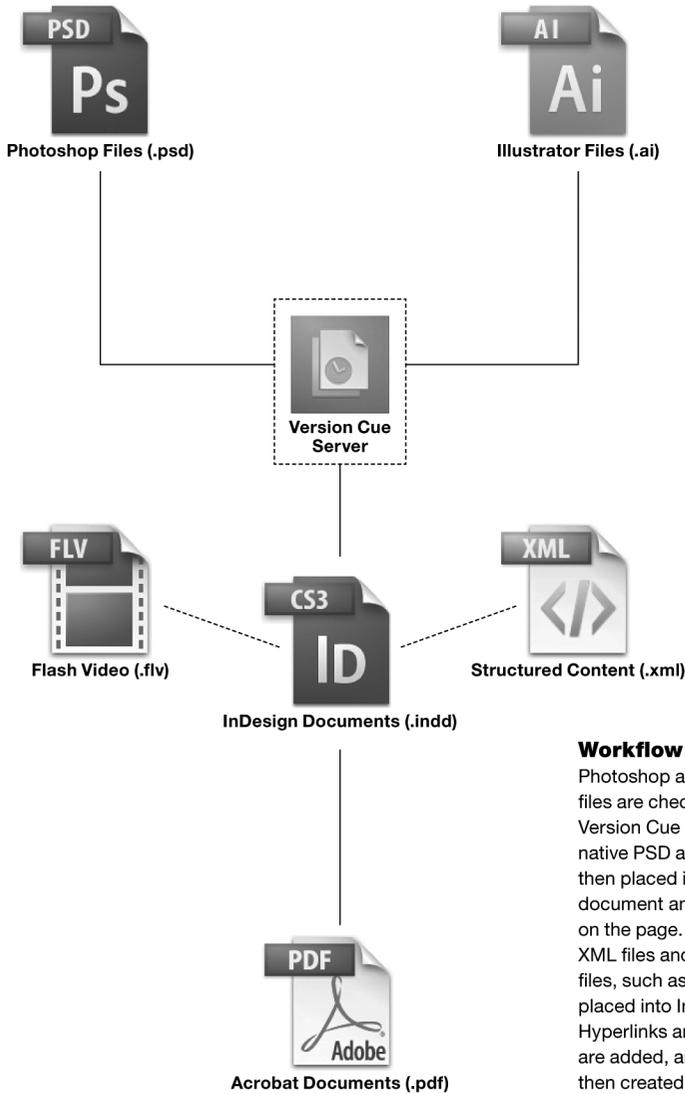
Video Content

Place video directly into InDesign and specify playback settings. The PDF 1.5 format supports the embedding of movie files, so your movies play back when viewed in Acrobat.



Adobe InDesign

The document was laid out and designed in InDesign, pulling elements from Illustrator and Photoshop. Using structured XML text files means that text will reflow correctly even if the PDF is viewed on alternative devices like PDAs and cellphones. InDesign can also add interactive elements like buttons, rollovers, and hyperlinks.



Workflow

Photoshop and Illustrator files are checked into the Version Cue database. The native PSD and AI files are then placed into an InDesign document and positioned on the page. Copy from XML files and interactive files, such as movies, is placed into InDesign as well. Hyperlinks and bookmarks are added, and a PDF is then created and opened in Acrobat Pro for any final editing.

