The battle between efficiency and quality in packaging graphics has raged for decades. Flexographers have been conditioned to choose one or the other. Equinox reproduces custom spot colors with standard 7-color process, delivering both.

Equinox Expanded Color Gamut (ECG) Technology is Esko’s patented technology for converting packaging graphics from RGB, CMYK, and spot colors to 7-color process. It uses a truly superior 7-color profile technology. By quantifying only subsets of 4-color combinations, Equinox 7-color profiles contain hundreds of times the amount of color data as a 7-color ICC profile. These profiles are used to convert industry standard ink books into tint build books for a specific press.

The Equinox Photoshop Plug-in uses the 4×4 profiles to convert images from RGB or CMYK to 5C, 6C, or 7C. It can work automatically or with user discretion as to which colors should be expanded and by how much.

Equinox is applied in the prepress department when preparing jobs for press. Converting entire files results in extremely close matches to spot colors, improved images, and the ability to print more spot colors than available ink stations on the press, resulting in improved image quality and brand impact.

The major benefit, however, is realized in the pressroom: jobs print more economically and consistently. The ability to create an infinite number of colors from seven process colors promotes “gang” press runs. Economic savings can surpass $1 million per press per year. Customers report that using Equinox ECG technology profitably in a production environment has let many of the world’s largest consumer product companies (CPCs) convert entire product lines to expanded gamut.

Esko Equinox is a major achievement because it moves flexography and package printing a giant step closer to being the economical option.
manufacturing process that major global CPCs are demanding, especially as brands seek shorter runs and brand owners realize that extended-gamut printing can improve the visual impact of a package on a shelf. As one printer indicated, “Customers whom we have migrated to Equinox have no desire to go back to spot colors. In terms of color accuracy, once a customer has approved an Equinox color build, we find it easier to match and to keep on target than a spot color. That is progress where everyone wins.”

In short, Equinox improves the competitive position of flexography and package printing, both economically and visually. Spot colors print more stably with Equinox than with custom mixed spot colors. Images look better. In fact, one of the judges noted, “In exhibiting expanded gamut, things look sharper; it cleans things up.” Above all, the total economic impact is extreme. For most package printers, implementing 7-color process is the single largest step they can take to increase profitability. Equinox makes this sophisticated task uncomplicated.