

FIREPRO
GRAPHICS

AMD



Playing free

AMD FirePro™ professional graphics enables creativity to thrive under deadline pressure

Customer:

Wicksteed, Northampton, England

Industry:

Education

Business opportunity:

- design to customer briefs effectively and speedily
- meet daily deadlines for the despatch of proposals

Solution:

- AMD FirePro™ professional graphics supplied by Micro Concepts.

Business impact:

- designers maximise the time spent on creative input
- graphics team fully supports the sales process

“The AMD FirePro™ cards have made a clear difference for every user, giving designers back precious time to spend on scenes and supporting their productivity.”

Jane Titterton

A child's paradise

Climbing, swinging, riding, rocking, balancing and jumping: just some of the activities you can do in a Wicksteed playscape. You can even have a quiet sit down in the shade when you're in need of a breather. These play zones are such a hit with youngsters because they reflect and incorporate customer feedback – children are frequently consulted through user group projects.

Wicksteed has been designing, building, installing, landscaping and looking after playgrounds since 1918. Offering the widest range of playground equipment, sports court and safety surfacing in the UK, it is the country's leading supplier to local councils, architects, schools, builders, holiday parks and the community. The company regularly wins awards for inspirational design, high quality and the use of sustainable products and recycled materials in its landscape-led play environments.

Bringing play worlds into real life

Wicksteed's in-house graphics design facility is probably the most advanced in the industry with nine graphics specialists using Design Suite 2012 software that was supplied by Micro Concepts, an Autodesk® Gold Partner for the Manufacturing Industry and one of the UK's leading providers of manufacturing solutions and training. Designers bring play worlds to life by incorporating local features and sensitively blending each playscape into the surrounding environment with careful use of color and layout.

As a reflection of Wicksteed's position and success, the design team is always on the go, meeting a series of rolling deadlines. The company wins much of its work through competitive bid processes so is continuously producing proposals as well as fulfilling orders. “Most days we are working to two or three deadlines,” says graphics designer Phil Cox. The statistics for one typical twelve-month period illustrate this: the graphics team worked on 1219 proposals, producing 1250 plans in AutoCAD® and 1330 drawings in various styles. “It's not easy to get a group of Councillors all

sitting around a screen so our customers tend to prefer drawings. Each day ends with a courier pick up so we are always aware of a definite timescale.”

The freedom to be creative

As the models Wicksteed creates are both extensive and detailed, they are often quite large. Phil explains: “I was working on one model in which there were trees and hills as well as our equipment and the file size was 235 MB. Every time I tried to move the model around on the screen to look at it from different angles, my whole system froze completely and I had to switch my machine off.” Knowing the pressure under which the department works, Micro Concepts suggested using AMD professional graphics and Phil therefore conducted a benchmark to compare an ATI FirePro™ 7800 from AMD with his existing card.

“There was a huge improvement in my ability to move the model around the screen with the ATI card. The model never froze as I panned across and zoomed in and out. I could run animations without hesitation. Previously I'd been turning off color to allow my computer to run more easily, but doing that makes it harder to see detail so I spent my time switching color on and off. The new card gave me so much more power that I could leave all the colors on the screen which meant my workflow was much better.”

Andy Prentice found the same benefits. “I'm working regularly with files up to 300 MB in size and the ATI FirePro™ 7800 card is great for rendering scenery. When I develop a site model I want things to move as smoothly as possible so that I can get a good idea of what is going on. The card provides superb processing power for visualisation. It speeds up coloring and shading, switching between views and moving objects around the screen. It is definitely a lot more fluid and quicker to respond.”



AMD FIREPRO™ V5900 AND ATI FIREPRO™ V7800 PROFESSIONAL GRAPHICS



AMD FirePro™ Professional Graphics Fast Facts

- AMD FirePro™ V5900 and ATI FirePro™ V7800 for speed and reliability, image quality and high resolution

When workflow seconds matter

“We will not lower our standards by rushing but even on a tender with a big budget we only have a couple of days to turn around the design,” comments Phil. “The sales process is therefore more efficient when we can model a scene to a very high standard within those two days.”

Andy again: “When I am modelling a scene I start with an idea of what I want to achieve and then, provided I have the time, I can use my imagination and experiment. With the ATI FirePro™ 7800 I now have that time. That’s the way to win a job.”

Phil agrees, “Our chances of winning directly correlate to the quality of work we produce. Any time we spend not being productive means less time to spend on creativity. Whenever my machine froze, I was forced into cutting corners, making say a simpler animation when I knew that time spent smoothing out the camera movement would pay dividends. Our designers spend most of their time working with scenes, any extra time we can gain supports the sales process.”

Jane Titterton, Graphics Design Manager at Wicksteed reports, “The AMD cards made a clear difference for Phil and Andy, giving them back precious time to spend on designs and supporting their productivity. I suspected that AMD FirePro™ professional graphics would also make a difference for other members of staff.” As a result, another Wicksteed Designer Brad Neuville, was supplied with the AMD FirePro™ V5900 card. With 2GB of blazing-fast GDDR5 memory, 512 stream processors supporting three simultaneous monitor outputs from a single card, he reports that this made an immediate difference.

“It improved the overall stability of my machine straightaway even when multi tasking in different software programmes. I am using 64-Bit 3ds Max 2012 and when I moved or rotated a scene it would frequently freeze or crash. Every time it crashed I lost ten minutes of productive time and in the worst case scenario I sometimes lost work on a scene since the last automatic save – that could be another ten minutes. Since I’ve had the AMD FirePro™ V5900 card my computer has never crashed. It has only frozen once when I was attempting some very high resolution rendering with fine hair and fur type tools to depict grass and it returned to the scene so I could carry on working. The AMD card has been superb for day to day rendering and my computer has been a lot more reliable. This is a huge advantage for personal productivity.”

Jane concludes, “The AMD FirePro™ cards have made a clear difference for every user, giving designers back precious time to spend on scenes and supporting their productivity. The company is now investing in several more graphics cards from AMD.”



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