

# PRINTtips

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## How To Be The Printing Customer From Heaven



**W**e love our customers. Honestly, we do. It gives us great satisfaction to be trusted with your print project and to deliver it on time, on budget, exactly as you ordered it and with no surprises.

To stay on time, on budget and meet quality requirements, print projects must adhere to production standards and specifications. Ours is a custom manufacturing environment, and production control is the tool we use to manage our environment. That's not something we made up – production control is a standard part of any manufacturing process.

Any successful print project needs an adequate amount of time and an adequate budget to produce the best result. When we tell you we need a certain number of working days to produce your sales brochure, we are really giving you our production standard for that job. And when we provide a quotation based on the specifications you have given us for the job, we are telling you what budget you should allocate to meet the standards you have set.

We also know that situations arise where you can't give us the time dictated by our production standards, or where the project budget is limited. Because we are printing professionals, if we agree to accept the job with its limitations, we are also assuming responsibility for producing the print project for you despite the limitations. And we're proud of our ability to get the job done even when what we have to work with is less than ideal.

How do we perform this magic?  
By working hard to learn and stay current with the latest technologies

in our industry; by maintaining control of production; and by imposing discipline on everyone involved in the production process. And here is something you may not be aware of — you are one of the people involved in the production process!

You are part of the production process in one or more of these areas: planning; document preparation; file submission; and proofing. To ensure the success of your print project, we need you to be aware of the role you play and to discharge your duties to the best of your ability. That's one of the reasons we send you this newsletter each month – to help you understand the print production process so you can be effective in your role.

### **Project Planning**

Project planning is when the budget and delivery date is set. If you know that the budget is fixed or the delivery date is critical, tell us right away – and please, don't fudge. When price is the key factor in a job, we need to know

when the budget has been set and can't be changed, tell us what it is. We price our work according to what it takes to get the job done, and we don't artificially inflate the cost based on what you have allocated for the project. If our initial quote is higher than the budget, we'll work with you to change the specifications until the cost matches the budget.

Likewise with the delivery date. When you give us a deadline, we commit production resources to your job. Nothing is more disheartening than to have met a critical delivery date, only to discover it was false. Even more importantly, if you are giving us an inaccurate due date because there are dire consequences for being late and you can't take the risk, tell us! We'll build a safety cushion into the production timeline.

## Document Preparation

If we are preparing the document for you, you are on a critical path to submit the required elements (copy, photographs, logos, line art) we need to produce the first proof. In most cases, we cannot put the job into production until everything is at hand. We will be happy to store material for you until everything is gathered, but we can't proceed until everything is submitted.

If you are preparing the document, please adhere to our production standards. This includes working in

software programs we support and selecting the right application for the job. Using offbeat graphics, obscure publishing applications and non-standard fonts puts you outside our production standards.

If you intend to submit your own document files regularly, you have a responsibility to train, to achieve a level of proficiency appropriate to the task at hand, and to use software programs in a standard graphic arts workflow. That means having software in current versions and updated with fixes the publisher has released. It means sticking with standard formats when placing files in a page layout. It means learning about the difference between design and prepress and why prepress requirements sometimes take precedence over design.

## File Submission

What kind of files do we like best? Clean ones, submitted with proper documentation describing exactly what we are being given. Our prepress department has developed a file submission form to help you with this task. The form is very detailed, and you may find it hard to complete the first time. View this as a mark of how much information our prepress technician needs to output your file. Our customer service representatives have been trained on using the form and can help you complete it. Once you understand what is being asked and why it is important, you will breeze through the form.

Part of file submission is preflight, the process of verifying that all elements needed for output are present and that file construction follows industry standards. We preflight all files submitted to us, but you also need to preflight prior to submission. Why? To catch fatal flaws – the things we cannot fix for you, regardless of our technical expertise. Your preflight will catch common problems with fonts (missing fonts, mixing TrueType and Type 1), color (presence of RGB, mixed CMYK and spot color, one spot color identified with more than one label, black created as CMYK composite) and graphics (missing linked graphics, nested graphics).

## Proofing

Proofing is one area where your responsibility exceeds ours. Respect the production schedule by returning proofs promptly. Avoid extensive author's alterations (AAs) by limiting the number of people who view the proof. And proof carefully – we may be able to catch spelling, punctuation and grammar errors for you, but we'll never be able to proof names, addresses, telephone numbers, statistics or technical terms from your industry.

## Be A Customer From Heaven

Printers and their customers both want the same thing – the best possible result on every job. By working together as a solid production team, we can achieve success each time.

## Take a Plant Tour

**W**e believe that a solid relationship with our customers promotes good printed jobs. So let us get to know you by giving you a tour of our facility. A plant tour gives us an opportunity to introduce you to the people who produce your jobs and for you to see first hand the steps your job must go through. We will explain the entire process, from design to

distribution, and let you see the equipment in operation.

We conduct tours by appointment, and also on-the-spot if you have the time. We put a lot of effort into keeping our plant clean and well organized and we love showing off.

We also think it's important for the production staff to know you as a person just like the customer service staff does.



## a vocabulary of the graphic arts

**AAs:** Abbreviation for author's alterations. Refers to changes made after a job has been submitted (such as changes in design, layout, copy, graphics or photographs). Printers charge for AAs.

**Contract proof:** A color proof representing an agreement between the printer and the customer regarding the standard for color and quality of the printed product.

**Image carrier:** The part of a printing device that contains the

image to be printed. Image carriers can be manual (woodcuts, engravings, stencils or stones); mechanical or electromechanical; photomechanical (exposing light-sensitive material to light); electrophotographic (xerographic technology); thermal (laser); or digital.

**Layout:** A drawing or sketch of a proposed printed piece. The layout may be a rough visual, a loose comprehensive or a rightly rendered comprehensive.

**Proof:** a print made from the artwork (electronic or mechanical) that will be used to produce the press plate or digital image.

**Specifications:** A listing of exactly what will be used to produce a printed piece – paper, ink, sides to be printed, number of pages, bindery requirements, finished size. May include customer-provided inputs (such as artwork or copy).

## What To Look For When Proofing

**B**efore we print your job, we will submit a *proof*: a print made from the artwork we will be using to produce a press plate or digital image. Your job is to inspect the proof and report the results to us – OK to proceed to press; make corrections as marked then OK to proceed to press; make corrections as marked and present another proof.

We will not proceed to press until you have signed off on the proof. By industry standard, when you sign off on a proof, you are agreeing to accept the job as long as it looks like the proof. Even if you later discover an error, even if the error makes the piece unusable, and no matter who made the error, when you sign the proof, you have agreed to accept – and by extension to pay for – the job. This makes proofing a serious task.

To help you proof accurately, we have prepared a checklist of items to examine while proofing. Remember, it is best to proof against something – your original layout or an earlier proof.

*Layout*: are all pages complete (no dropped copy or images); are all graphic elements (text, photographs, graphics) in the correct position; are all pages in the correct order; is type aligned on facing pages; are type, rule lines and photos on crossover pages in correct position?

*Typography*: are fonts correct; does text break as desired; is justification correct?

*Copy*: are telephone, FAX and pager numbers correct; are addresses correct; are people and place names spelled correctly?

*Color breaks*: are colors separated correctly?

*Page numbers*: is the numbering sequence correct; are page numbers correctly placed?

*Notations*: is the location of folds, trims, perforations, die cuts, embossing, foil stamping and other post-press operations correctly noted?

*Blemishes*: are there any blemishes (broken type, spots, scratches)?

*Prior changes*: have all changes to the prior proof been incorporated?

*Reader's perspective*: from the reader's perspective, is everything clear and comprehensible?

If you notice anything that is not correct, mark it plainly and return the proof to us with instructions. We will correct errors we made for free; we will charge for author's alterations.

**Q.** *When is the best time to ask my printer for a quotation on a job?*

**A.** As soon as the specifications are firm. Printers distinguish between an estimate and a quotation. An estimate is a "best guess" based on loose specifications and is not considered binding on the printer. A quotation is a firm offer to produce the job exactly as specified and is considered binding unless specifications change.

If you in the planning stages for a project and just need a ballpark

figure for budgeting purposes, ask for an estimate rather than a quotation. (Be aware that estimates are sometimes given as a range.) When your plans firm up and you know the exact parameters of the job, request a quote. We will lead you through the specification process. If there are still decisions to be made (such as choice of paper), we can give a provisional quote, subject to modification as necessary.