

August 2005

# PRINTtips

## Taking the Pain Out of Ordering Printing



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If you have been reading our newsletter regularly, you have probably noticed that we write a lot about the many technical aspects of printing. There's a reason for this. We are dedicated to the idea of providing more than printing to our customers. We strive to share our knowledge and experience in a way that will benefit our customers and make the job of placing printing orders smoother.

Generally speaking, our customers can be divided into two groups – those for whom buying printing is an integral part of their job responsibilities, and those who order the printing when necessary. Our technical topics are selected with the first group in mind.

In contrast, this issue of *Printips* is written specifically for the second group – less technical but more practical and, we hope, useful to all our readers.

**How long does it take to fill an order?**

The length of time between ordering and delivering the completed job depends on the number of production steps required. If you are

ordering a carbonless form that we've printed before and no changes need to be made, then there are five production steps: retrieving the artwork (either hard copy or electronic), making the press plate, printing, padding, and packaging.

To promote smooth and efficient production, we schedule one day for each of these operations, plus an additional day each for order entry and delivery. That makes a total of seven working days from the time you order until we deliver the job to you. When you place the order and ask us when it will be ready, we will routinely promise delivery in about a week and a half – seven working days plus the weekend.

Of course it is possible to fit more than one step into a day, so when necessary, we can fill your order in less time than seven working days. In this example, the job could be produced in two days – order entry, artwork retrieval, platemaking and press in one day; padding, packaging and delivery the next day. And if absolutely necessary, the job could be produced in one day – though doing so might compromise the finished product since the printed sheets would have to be padded and packaged before the ink was completely set.

**Due dates**

If you ask us to complete your printing job in less time than our production standards indicate, we will verify with our production team that we can meet your request before we make a commitment to you. After the production manager gives the okay for an accelerated schedule, your job will be monitored to ensure it is completed on time.

**Would you like more tips?**

Try our weekly email newsletter – Tuesday Tips. To be added to the mailing list, send any email message to [tuesdaytips-on@macgra.com](mailto:tuesdaytips-on@macgra.com)

## **Taking the Pain Out of Ordering Printing (continued)**

*“So what happens when you sign the final proof and later find an error..”*

Even though we can complete a job using an accelerated production schedule, we prefer to adhere to our production standards. There are a number of reasons for this, but the primary one is that it gives us enough time to do a quality job. Routine scheduling means we take no production risks (such as handling press sheets before the ink is fully set), no compromises have to be made (such as substituting paper), and we minimize the possibility of mistakes that result from haste.

One thing we request of you – monitor your supply of printed materials so you can order without needing an accelerated schedule. Also, don't request an accelerated schedule if you don't need it. Once we've committed to a due date, we will deliver on time, so you don't need to build in a “fudge factor”. Finally, if you are picking up the printing at our shop, please arrive on the promised due date. It is very frustrating to have managed an accelerated production schedule only to have the material still in the shop days after the agreed-upon due date.

*“...the responsibility for proof reading and checking copy lies with you...”*

### **Creating or changing artwork**

As part of our service to you, we archive the artwork from which we make press plates. Depending on the nature of the finished print job, the artwork could be a high resolution (2400 dpi) laser print, a digital file, or a film negative.

If artwork we have on file requires a change – or if we are creating new artwork for something we haven't printed before – then we cannot commit to a delivery date until you have released the artwork to press. This is because we cannot control the artwork proofing process as precisely as the rest of the production steps.

If a change is simple, then the first proof may also be the final proof. However, extensive changes or artwork creation may require a number of proofing cycles and may involve more than one person in your organization. We can request that marked-up proofs be returned on a specific day in order to keep the production schedule, but we cannot control return of proofs as we can control the rest of the production process.

### **Signing off the final proof**

To get your job into production, our customer service representatives must provide complete instructions for producing the job. They accomplish this by using our computer-based order entry system. They must also provide a sample of what is to be printed and, when changes to existing artwork have been made or if a job is in its first printing, written authorization from the customer that the artwork is accurate and can be used to make a press plate. The written authorization takes the form of a signed proof.

When you sign a proof, you are telling us that everything about the artwork meets with your approval and is correct. We strive to present perfect proofs, with no spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors. Our prepress technician uses spell check and our CSRs review the proof prior to submitting it to you. Ultimately, though, the responsibility for proof reading and checking copy lies with you – particularly for things like telephone numbers or people's names where errors can't be caught by spell check.

So what happens when you sign the final proof and later find an error that you missed? First, call the error to our attention so that we can change the artwork immediately. We do not want to archive something that is incorrect. Secondly, decide how serious the error really is. Some may be a “fatal flaw”, rendering the printed piece unusable. (An example would be an incorrect telephone number.) Others may be embarrassing but not fatal. (An example is a preferred wording of a sentence.)

### **Remember – we're here to help**

While we may have more activity from some of our customers, our standards for doing business are the same for everyone. We promise to deliver a quality product at the agreed-upon time and for the agreed-upon price. If you feel uneasy because you don't order printing very often and are afraid of making a mistake, please call us. We'll do our best to remove the anxiety and aggravation – you can count on us.

# Deciding on Order Quantities

**A**s a guideline for deciding what quantity of printing to order, we recommend you order enough to last between three and six months. More than a six month supply could mean that you are tying up money in inventory and, in some cases, running the risk that the printed piece may become obsolete.

Less than a three-month supply and you are foregoing cost savings that result from a longer print run. The savings result from two factors – set up costs and press speed. For example, 1000

sheets of letterheads will cost less when ordered as one lot of 1000 rather than two lots of 500. This is because there are two sets of press plates and make-readies (versus one). In addition, proportionally more of the press run is at the lower speed needed during the make-ready phase.

If you need help developing reorder quantities, give us a call at **513-248-2121**. Our computer-based job tracking system keeps a complete order history that we can access while we talk to you.



*“...we recommend you order enough to last between three and six months.”*

**Q.** *I have a color inkjet printer and a black and white copier. Can you give me some examples of when it would be better to have you print what I need rather than doing it myself?*

**A.** We can think of four situations when it makes sense to give us a job you are capable of producing yourself:

- *When there isn't enough time for you to complete the work, due to the speed of your printer or copier.* Our copiers produce many copies per minute, and our offset presses are even faster. Under certain circumstances, we may even be able to complete your job while you wait.
- *When the quantity needed is large enough that your cost of materials exceeds our price to print the job.* This is likely to occur when comparing the per-copy cost of color inkjet cartridges to our per-copy price.
- *When the result you are getting on your equipment isn't adequate for the purpose.* If the printed piece contains photographs, screens, or fine lines, you may need the higher resolution that is possible with our equipment.
- *When there is finish work – such as folding, collating, drilling, or padding –required.* We have equipment that automates our bindery processes, making them not only faster but more accurate than performing the same tasks manually.



*“...to give us a job you are capable of producing yourself.”*

# PRINTtips

## Referral Groups that Work!

BNI is now the world's largest referral organization with chapters in many countries around the globe. It was started in 1985 by Dr. Ivan Misner, one of the world's leading experts in networking and word-of-mouth marketing.

Its mission is to help people increase their business through a structured, positive, and supportive word of mouth marketing program.

Only one person per professional classification is eligible to join a chapter.

Success in BNI means you need to be a positive and active member of an organization based upon mutual support. This requires commitment to your fellow members, as well as to the philosophy of "Givers Gain" ... by giving business to others, you will get business in return.

If you would like information about joining an existing chapter or becoming part of a new chapter in the area, give me a call: Gregg MacMillan at 513-248-2121 ext 712.



### With BNI you can:

- Grow your business!
- Fine-tune your presentation skills
- Develop an advisory group
- Participate in joint marketing efforts
- Arrange speaking engagements
- Become a resource for your customers
- Learn to "work" a trade show
- Create a personal support group
- Become a networking "Guru"
- Learn new sales techniques
- **And, receive qualified referrals**



Please Route to the Printing Buyer

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