8 Tips for Managing Print Buying

Our goal in publishing Printips each month is to provide useful information to our customers and prospects on the things that we know best – printing, digital printing, mailing, and web services. Often we discuss technical or production issues that are important for you to understand, or share ways to that the products and services we provide can help you expand your business. But sometimes – like this issue – we reveal inside information that will help you better manage the process of buying printing.

Tip #1: Understand the manufacturing process.

A typical printing project has four stages: design; prepress; printing; and bindery. *Design* is the process of taking the idea for a brochure or other printed piece and assembling all the elements (text, photographs, graphic images, logos) into an example of what the final product will look like. We offer design services; and sometimes our customers do their own design, providing us with a PDF file to print from.

In the *prepress* stage, the PDF is turned into a raster image – a grid of x and y coordinates with instructions on which coordinate to illuminate for monochrome or color values. A raster image is sometimes called a *bit map*. Before beginning raster image processing, we check the PDF file to be sure there is nothing in the way the file was constructed that will prevent successful completion of raster image processing. This process, called *preflight*, is

required for every PDF file, whether we have produced it or it was provided by our customer.

Printing is the output and reproduction process. This may be done on our offset press or our digital high speed printer. *Bindery* is the last stage in the process, where trimming, folding, stitching, drilling, and other finishing services are completed.

Tip #2: Understand how design affects manufacturing.

How a printed piece is designed has a great influence on the overall cost.

- Designs that incorporate features such as a *bleed* (*i.e.*, the extension of an image to the edge of the piece), a complicated folding pattern, or embellishments like foil stamping or blind embossing, require more manufacturing skill and processes and so cost more.

- Designs that use a non-standard paper size may waste paper. For example, two flyers that measure 5.5 x 8.5 can be cut from one 8.5 x 11 sheet, while only one flyer

measuring 6 x 9 can fit on the same size sheet.

- Designs that use more than four ink colors or use metallic or other special inks require more press time to both run the job and remove the special ink color from the press.

Tip #3: When doing your own design work, create the file using industry standards for photo image resolution, file compression, and allowances for bindery functions.

During preflight, we check the file to be sure it will successfully complete raster image processing. We also check photo and other image resolution and the allowances for bindery functions such as bleeds, folds, booklet binding, and drill holes. If the file you submit has not been constructed carefully, we will return it to you for correction or quote you the cost of having us make the repairs.

Tip #4: Use the right design tools.

When designing, use the right tools. Microsoft Word is a good tool for writing a report but it is not a printing industry standard for laying out a brochure. Adobe Illustrator is an industry standard tool for drawings and illustrations, but not for page layout. Adobe Photoshop is an industry standard for color correcting and manipulating photographs, but not for page layout.

Tip #5: Submit a print-ready PDF file.

PDF is now an established industry standard for file submission. Learn how to adjust the settings in the native application you are using so when the PDF is created, the allowance for bleed is maintained and all fonts are included with the PDF, including linked fonts.

Tip #6: Be open to using either offset or digital printing.

Many items such as business cards, brochures, flyers, invitations and 4-page programs can be successfully printed on our offset press or digital printer. Let us suggest which one to use based on the specific parameters of the job – quantity, type of paper, total production time, and budget.

Tip #7: Allow enough time for the job to be completed using our normal production standards.

We always work best when we are not under time pressure. When we have to rush a job through the production process, there is less time to double-check our work which means we can't be as dependable as we like to be. We understand that some emergencies are unavoidable (a top salesman is out of business cards) or are the result of a sales opportunity. We just ask that emergencies are the exception, not the rule.

And as much as we'd like to meet impossible deadlines, sometimes it isn't physically possible. Our equipment might not have enough capacity to meet the requirement in the time available, or there may be too many production steps for the available time.

Tip #8: Develop a relationship with us.

To be successful at what they do, our best customers need the products and services that we provide. We have learned about their business and understand the role that printing plays in their success. We use our printing expertise and experience to make suggestions and offer options. And we keep our commitments to deliver a quality product, on time, and at the agreed-upon price.

If you are not experiencing this level of performance with your current printer, we invite you contact us at 513-248-2121 to discuss how we can be of assistance to you.

Managing Your Print Inventory

Managing your inventory of printed materials is a great way to avoid the stress of last-minute ordering and the possibility of rush charges. You can develop an internal system for determining when an item should be reordered. Or you can ask us to include you in our reorder reminder system. Here's how it works:

- For the items you order regularly, we'll ask you to predict how long each one will last. If you aren't sure, we'll assign a projected reorder date of between 3 and 6 months.

- Using the projected reorder date, we'll set a reminder flag in our computerized estimating and pricing system.

- When we get the reminder, we'll contact you to see if you do need to reorder.

If this system sounds like something useful, call us at 513-248-2121, and we'll set you up.

Q. *How much does the paper I select for a job affect cost?*

A. In a typical print job, paper accounts for 8-15% of the cost of the job. Depending on the quantity ordered, making a change in paper may not affect the overall cost of the job by much.

Ten years ago, there was a significant difference in the cost of printing in full color versus one or two ink colors. But with advancements in digital printing technology, that gap has been narrowed and full color printing has become affordable in almost any quantity.

TECHNE ⬢ GRAPHICS INC.

2002 Ford Circle, Suite D
Milford, OH 45150

Address Correction Requested

513-248-2121
Fax 513-248-5141

www.techgra.com
info@techgra.com

The Proofing Process

TRICKS & tips

"A proof provides a means for you to review an example of what the printed piece will look like..."

Proofs are an important part of the printing process. A proof provides a means for you to review an example of what the printed piece will look like and to check for errors in the text, verify that colors are correct, and that the overall design is acceptable. We have a responsibility to present error-free proofs to you; and you have a responsibility to review our work carefully.

Printing projects can be unnecessarily delayed or even turned from standard production times to emergencies if proofs are not reviewed and returned to us promptly. If more than one person in your organization will be proofing, be sure everyone understands the importance of prompt review.