



November 2012

PRINTtips

The Secret to... Saving Money on Printing



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Are you the person who buys printing for your company or organization? If so, we want to talk to you! Whether you are ordering business stationery, functional forms and documents, or marketing materials and sales collateral, we'd like to help you get the most from your printing budget. So keep reading to learn our secret that will help you save money on printing.

Printing = Manufacturing

Printing is a custom manufacturing process. When we fill your order, we aren't taking something off the shelf and shipping it to you. We start from scratch each time, with paper (either blank or preprinted for business card shells or newsletter templates), ink or toner, and a digital file containing the images to be printed (either provided by you or retrieved from our secure file storage).

All printing jobs have at least two manufacturing steps: prepress and printing. The prepress step uses a digital file (usually a PDF) to create a raster image or bit map — a grid of x and y coordinates with instructions on which coordinates to illuminate to create monochrome or color values. Printing is the output and reproduction process, which may be done on an offset press or a digital printer.

Depending on the requirements of the job, it may also require finishing steps such as trimming, folding, stitching, drilling, binding,



and assembly. Jobs being printed for the first time may need design and preflight.

Like all custom manufacturing jobs, printing requires clear, unambiguous specifications to guide the manufacturing process. These include the type of paper, the ink color(s), the finished size of the printed piece, and whether finishing work is required. For each new printing project, we write the initial specifications based on the choices you make. To eliminate errors that might be caused by rewriting specifications each time the job reprints, we use a computerized print production management system to store the specifications.

The Secret to... Saving Money on Printing (cont.)

“Tell us the real due date.”

Custom manufacturing takes time, and haste makes waste. Recognizing this, we have developed production standards that tell us how much time to allow for each step in the manufacturing process. Our production standards aren't arbitrary; rather, they were developed to allow our production team enough time to read and understand the job specifications, decide the best equipment to use for the job, and operate the equipment in a manner that produces quality results while ensuring operator safety.

Can we speed things up when necessary? Can we pull rabbits out of hats and perform minor miracles? Of course. But that's exceptional work, not our production standard.

Printing = Partnership

You need the products and services we provide, and we need the income from providing those products and services. This is the basis for a mutually beneficial relationship where both of us do our respective parts to ensure success.

We learned long ago that being dependable is the most valuable thing we can offer you. Our goal is to deliver your printing on time, as ordered, and at the agreed-upon price. But we need your help to do this.

- Tell us the real due date. We will have your job done at the agreed-upon time-period. That means you don't have to pad the due date because we might be late. If you prefer to have all printed materials in-hand a week before the meeting at which they will be used, we understand and will have the job ready. If you intend to pick up the job on your way to the meeting, we also understand. Either way, we won't let you down.
- Respect the price we give you for the job. We don't pad our prices. If you find a lower price somewhere else, it is because the specifications changed (even though you may not know it), or the other printer

“Provide your inputs on time.”

is more efficient at manufacturing that particular item. Can we shave the price a bit to meet your budget? Probably, especially if you are a regular customer. Will you get us to lower our price by announcing you can buy it for half as much somewhere else? Not likely. Instead, we'll congratulate you on finding a better price for that item and suggest you take the deal.

- Provide your inputs on time. Remember our production standards? They are the basis for developing the production timeline. When you are providing inputs — a PDF file, text, photographs, illustrations, mailing list, postage deposit — we will give you an interim due date for each input. The interim due date is when we must receive the input for the job to stay on schedule and be ready on time. If others in your company are responsible for some of the inputs, we suggest you share the interim due date so you won't be late. If you're on time, we'll be on time.
- Provide inputs in industry-standard format. Microsoft Word is an industry standard for a report, but not for a brochure or a mailing list. Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop are industry standards for drawings and illustration or color correction and photograph manipulation, but not for page layout. Some programs can make print-ready PDFs, others cannot.

“Provide inputs in industry-standard format.”

A special word about design, file repair, and desktop printing; our job is to make you look good in print, and we take this seriously. We want all your printed materials to represent you well and for your branding to be consistent. That is why we may suggest that you let us design your new printed piece, or redesign an older one that needs refreshing. We may suggest redrawing a pixelated logo or creating a digital file of a document that currently exists only as hard copy. We may also offer to print something that you have previously printed yourself on desktop equipment.

The Secret to... Saving Money on Printing (cont.)

We make these suggestions as part of our job as print professionals. We will always provide a cost estimate and will not proceed with work you have not authorized. Most of the time our suggestions are based on a short-term or one-time expense that we can demonstrate will save money in the long run.

The secret to saving money on printing

So what is the secret to saving money on printing? Simply this — find a printing

company whose equipment and capabilities match your needs, and develop a relationship based on mutual responsibility and trust. Learn about printing as a manufacturing process so you can provide inputs and evaluate suggestions. Be a key liaison between your company and the printing company. And call us at 513-248-2121 to learn just why we are that printing company.

“We will always provide a cost estimate...”

A Vocabulary of the Graphic Arts

Bindery: the department in a print shop where finishing work is completed. Sometimes called post press.

Bit map: rows and columns of dots representing a graphic image. The value of each dot (i.e., whether it is filled in or not) is stored in bits of data. A single bit is sufficient to represent monochrome images of black and white. Colors and shades of gray require additional bits. The density of the dots (i.e., resolution) determines the sharpness of the image.

Digital printing: a printing method that uses a digital image to print directly to a variety of substrates. May refer to desktop publishing, large format, or high volume laser or inkjet printing. Digital printing enables on demand, short run, and fast turnaround of printing projects as well as variable data printing (image modification for each impression).

Due date: the agreed-upon day and time for delivery of a printing project.

Graphic design: visual communication that combines images, words, and ideas to convey information to an audience.

Interim due date: the day and time for customers to provide inputs (such as text, photographs, drawings, mail lists, and postage) to keep a job on schedule.

Manufacturing capability: the aggregate of equipment, supplies, and staffing that defines the possible range of products that can be produced by a printing company.

Manufacturing capacity: the total amount of work that can be produced in a given time.

Offset printing: the process of printing by indirect image transfer using a metal or photosensitive plate to transfer an inked image to a rubber blanket then to the paper or substrate.

PDF: an acronym for Portable Document Format, a universal file format that preserves the fonts, images, graphics, and layout of the source document regardless of the application and platform used to create it.

Pixel: a contraction of picture element. The basic unit of programmable color on a computer display or in a computer image.

Preflight: evaluation and analysis of a digital file to ascertain whether it has all the elements necessary for accurate output and whether it conforms to printing specification standards.

Prepress: all operations other than preparation of the output device that are required to prepare a job for printing.

Raster image processing: translating PostScript and other page-description software files composed of vector data into pixels or dots (bit map data).

“PDF: an acronym for Portable Document Format, a universal file format that preserves the fonts, images, graphics, and layout of the source document regardless of the application and platform used to create it.”



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Managing Your Printing Inventory

Actively managing your inventory of business stationery and forms is a great way to avoid the stress of last minute ordering and staying within your printing budget.

- Estimate a 3-6 months supply. 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. An easy way to estimate is to ask yourself how many of this item you use in a specific interval (per day, per week, per month).

- When you order an item, ask to have it included in our reorder reminder system. We'll check your order history, predict when you might be running low, and notify you when it is time to reorder.
- When reordering, ask us to price additional quantities. Our computerized estimating and pricing system makes it easy to recall a job from history and to produce a current quotation using multiple quantities. Then you can evaluate the tradeoff between storing an item and the cost savings of a longer print run.

If you need help developing reorder quantities, contact us at 513-248-2121.



*"...avoid the stress
of last minute
ordering..."*