

OUR DIGITAL INDUSTRY

Digital copy preparation is now virtually universal. Its application to typesetting, art creation, image capture, and page makeup has replaced the traditional forms to such an extent that the mechanical “board” is the exception rather than the rule.

However, the requirements found in the traditional mechanical still exist in the digital file. While application programs provide file originators with a fantastic array of new tools, the significance of communications between the printer and the designer has not lessened. In fact, early collaboration has increased in importance.

As some responsibilities shift from the prepress provider to the customer, the functions previously performed by that provider must now be understood and implemented by the designer/creator of the file.

The file preparer is compelled to comprehend how the work performed on the computer has to reflect the needs of the ink-on-paper product that is the final result. If the anticipated goals — cost savings and quicker turnaround time — are to be realized, these needs must be accurately reflected in the final file given to the printer or prepress provider.

Prepress and printing basics are included in this section to guide you in these efforts.

DESIGN

Choosing a designer who can efficiently and effectively execute in the digital environment can result in achieving some of the time and money savings that software vendors promise and customers now demand. Communication has become an absolute requirement between the print buyer, the designer, and the printer to ensure smooth delivery of the steps leading to the final printed piece.

Beyond electronic wizardry, consider today's wide spectrum of papers, plus the creative production techniques such as folding, embossing, and coating. These contribute to the effectiveness of print as a medium that gets marketing results.

“SPECING” THE JOB

Detailed, accurate specifications are the key to success with any printing job. Your printer must have complete information to fulfill your expectations. In this section of the PINC Print Buyers Guide, you'll find a checklist for writing printing specifications that will help you organize all the details. You can use this “spec sheet” to help fill out a request for quotation and for issuing a purchase order.

SELECTING A PRINTER

There are thousands of printers, so how do you choose? First, get to know your local printers. Take tours of their plants and note their specialties. Get to know a variety of printing salespeople and start a file of printing samples. Ask friends or associates for references. When other things are equal, it may be best to go with the company that will provide value-added services that fit the needs of your business, whether that is in full coordination of your project, design, or distribution. Establishing an ongoing relationship enables your printer to know your printed product requirements and offer suggestions that can save time and money.

HOW TO COMPARE ESTIMATES

Each printer should have a mock-up of your design and complete specifications. Request written estimates. If you change a specification for one printer (for example, paper) be sure to change it for all. Otherwise your estimates are not comparable. Most estimates are good for 30 days.

Scheduling quick turnaround is the rule, but it requires intelligent coordination. Begin with your distribution date and work backwards with your printing sales rep. Then stick to your schedule or alert your rep in advance if there are unavoidable delays. Tell your rep you expect to be informed if there are delays on the printer's end. If you are contracting tasks separately, account for the time that each vendor needs, including delivery.