Project Design Tips for Printing

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An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure...

- This information is found at: www.fineprint125.com. Ask your printer for information and specifications, such as line screen resolution, how many colors, what kind of colors, paper or film (right reading emulsion down or up), etc. This is the time to contact your service bureau to be sure that they can accommodate your file application and transport media.
- In a page layout or image editing program, set up your document to a minimum resolution of 300 pixels per inch. Set your color mode to CMYK Color, 8 - 32 Bit Depth.
- Set up your document to the final trim size of the finished piece. You can extend images beyond the indicated edge of the page, such as bleeds, or dotted lines to indicate folds - anything that actually touches the page will print out. The computer or image setter will automatically and more accurately place trim marks to the size of the document when imaging.
- Gripper margin is the non-printing area on the leading edge of the paper needed to carry it through the press. The size of the margin differs with each press. A generally safe margin is 3/8 of an inch, but some can be as small as 1/8 of an inch. If you can design your piece to fit on a sheet the size of your finished piece, you're saving on paper waste, and the time to wait for the ink to dry before it can be cut. Set your default margins in your layout programs for new documents to be 3/8 so you won't need to worry about measuring.

Be Accurate

Use your information palette to type in the exact position of your image or type box. If you are duplicating images, use the step and repeat command in Quark Xpress, or multiple paste items in PageMaker. These two commands make pasting a breeze. Create the image/design/type to be repeated. Copy the item(s) with the pointer tool. Go to the repeat/multi-paste command and specify how many times it will be repeated and the direction to paste - horizontal or vertical.

Be Neat

In the design stage, import graphics to try them out, moving them off the page when you can't decide, or store copied items on the pasteboard. Once you've settled on a design, get rid of all the extraneous stuff. Although they won't be printed on the page, they will still be imaged through the process of printing your document - and slow it down. Clean up after yourself. Zoom out to fit in window view, or even fit in pasteboard view and, with the

pointer tool selected, choose "select all" to find all those pesky pieces and delete unwanted items. When you've done that, "SAVE AS" (instead of SAVE) to completely rewrite over the old file - it saves a more compact, efficient file.

Print out your job and carefully inspect your work...

...including composite and color separations. Many glitches and mistakes can be easily found on paper and missed on the screen. It helps the printers considerably if you bring these with your job. They match them up on the light table with their output to catch any possible text re-flow, and they help us understand your job at a glance. Label each separation with the intended color, and indicate if they are printed out at 100% or else the % reduced. (Often, to indicate a bleed, you may wish to print out at a reduced size, or better yet, print out on an oversized sheet of paper.)

If your job takes a long time to print

- In PageMaker, you have a choice to include a complete copy of an imported graphic in the PageMaker document itself - NOT a good idea, as it vastly increases the size of your document. Link them instead and include those original graphics on the disk with the job.
- Reduce the resolution of the print out - ask for 300 dpi instead of something higher. In Quark, under the Options tab in the print dialog box, you have the option of printing your graphics at low resolution.
- In PageMaker you can choose to print out a draft copy - greeking your images, or in the print dialog box, Options button, you can send TIFF images as low resolution.
- Crop and size your images in Photoshop, instead of in your page layout program. It is a good rule of thumb for the resolution size, expressed in pixels per inch, to be two times the lines per inch (lpi) of the final output. For example, if your piece will be imaged at 150 lpi, your photo, at 100%, should be 300 pixels per inch. This is a good idea to do as general practice anyway, as you get better results and faster imaging.

Do not use "styles" on your fonts

(Mac platform only) Bold, italic, underline, drop shadow, outline and the like, applied through the Type Styles Menu work with laser printers, but may cause unpredictable results with imagesetters. Sometimes, imagesetters cannot replace the stylized versions with the actual PostScript version of bold, italic, etc. Sometimes they ignore the styles altogether, but leave the letter spacing spread out, or substitute the PostScript version, but do not change the letter spacing, so your type will be squished together. For accurate typesetting, specify those typefaces from the Fonts Menu instead of the Type Styles Menu. Effects like drop shadow, underline, etc. will have to be crafted utilizing the actual fonts and graphic effects in order for them to appear correctly on film output. (EG: for drop shadow, copy the type and make it a tint of the color used and offset it manually.)

Styles on a PC platform

(Mac platform only) Bold, italic, underline, drop shadow, outline Font selection on the PC platform utilizes styles to select the Normal, Bold, Italic and Bold Italic versions of a font. To image correctly, those font versions must be installed in your system. Do not use the other style options such as underlining, shadow, outline, etc. (see above explanation.)

Supply all fonts used in your piece

PostScript fonts are the most reliable and widely used fonts in the printing industry. They are made up of two parts. The screen fonts, usually bunched inside a suitcase icon, contain the code for the monitor to show the font in detail on your screen. The printer fonts are individual files that contain the code to describe the different versions of the font (bold, italic, etc.) to the PostScript printer. Both are needed to image your job successfully.

Supply all graphics used in your piece

Quark really makes it easy to save all related EPS and TIFF images and the Quark file in a folder along with a DETAILED report including a list of all the fonts used in your document. Be aware that it does not copy PICT files! Under the File menu, choose the feature "Collect for Output". Select a disk, select a new folder, name it, and hit the Collect button. Sometimes the report is overkill, but better to have too much than not enough information. In PageMaker, use the Save As feature under the file menu, and you'll find in the dialog box, under Copy: you can select the button that says "Files for remote printing", select a folder, and it copies all imported graphics you used all in one place. An even better feature is the "Save for Service Provider" plug-in under the Utilities Menu. This option saves your fonts you used in the document as well as your imported graphics, document, and a report all in one folder.

Communication is vital

Tell the next person in line, whether the service bureau or printer, what is going on. You can do this in a number of ways. You can physically speak to each person along the route of your job, telling them all the same information along the way. Or, you can write it down once, and it can be passed along to all.

Each service provider will have a form to fill out that describes your job, lists everything used to create it, and informs the prepress people what kind of job output you want.

Although this seems tedious, consider the first option listed here. You don't want a call from your service bureau asking for detailed information at the last minute! Often, it's easier and more efficient to fill out the form while you've got your job open on your computer. It's then fairly easy to check the fonts, the names of the imported graphics, the PMS colors, etc.