

What You Should Know About Graphic Design and Commercial Printing BEFORE Your Next Printing Job

By Graphic Design Services

Many consumers step into the world of commercial printing unaware of basic principles that can save them time, headaches and money.

1. ALWAYS talk to your printer before having ANY designer begin your next printing job. The printer will be able to give you valuable information about measurements, size requirements, the types of computer files he or she will accept and price differences in one, two, three or four color printing jobs. Sometimes a project could be processed cheaper as a one or two color printing but because the design is setup as a full four-color project, the printer will have to run it as the more expensive full color piece.
2. As the name implies a one color job is one ink color, two color two inks and so on, however, it is often not that easy for a novice to distinguish the difference. For instance a printed piece that consists totally of red and black may actually be a full four color print job. Why? Commercial printers use a color process known as CMYK to print full color jobs. This stands for Cyan (a turquoise blue); Magenta (hot pink); Yellow; and black (represented by a K to avoid confusion with blue). These four colors blend to make the entire spectrum of full color. It works in much the same way as when your art teacher told you red and blue make violet. When a commercial job is printed, each of these four colors has its own plate. If an inexperienced designer (or one that doesn't know you want to run your printing job as a one or two color project) designs your piece more likely than not they will convert your images into a CMYK color mode. Therefore, instead of your red ink being one plate and your black ink one plate you will actually have four plates, cyan; magenta; yellow; and black combining to make your red and black colors.
3. When your printing job is not CMYK but ran as a one or two color-printing job, it uses what printers call spot colors. These ink colors are not built in layers like in CMYK but use the actual ink color placed in "spots" directly on the piece. This type of printing is done mostly on letterhead, envelopes, and where specific Pantone™ colors are needed. (See #4) Usually one, two and three color work is cheaper than full color jobs but not always. Check with your printer.
4. Pantone™ colors are specific swatches printers use to match color. If you go into a print shop, the printer will most likely have a set of these for you to look through. They are like paint samples at the hardware store that help you choose ink colors. Professional design and art programs like Adobe Illustrator™, Photoshop™ and PageMaker™ incorporate these same swatch colors to help designers and printers work together.
5. HOWEVER, be forewarned. The sample swatch you pick out may not look exactly like the finished product. Why? There are several factors at play. Color matching is not an exact science. Designers and printers often wish it were. Pantone™ spot colors usually match up pretty well but if your job is a full color one and you have only seen it on a computer screen, be prepared for a difference. Computer monitors use a color mode called RGB which is completely different

- from CMYK. Most notably bright blues will shift to a darker, sometimes navy color. Purples also undergo this shift. Monitors also have brightness and contrast settings in addition to different color mode settings themselves. Check in your control panel on the computer. 16 bit, true color, high color, each will make your project look different. You can't trust your inkjet printout from your home computer either. Most home printers are not calibrated to render an accurate color proof comparable to a commercially printed piece. The bottom line? Have realistic expectations. So your cornflower blue looks more navy. On most jobs, your consumers won't notice. If you must have color accuracy, be prepared to pay the price. Color accurate proofs from printers can start at \$200 and move steadily upward.
6. Make sure your designer includes all font files and images before you take your job to the printer. Many advertise as designers but you'll often find they rate high on creativity but low on technical expertise. The design may be great but if your printer is missing fonts and images, they won't be able to print it.
 7. Start your project early. Many mistakes happen because insufficient time is given. Take the time to proofread your job before it goes to print. Don't realize the phone number is wrong after you've okayed a proof and 5000 copies are printed.

I hope this pamphlet has been helpful and if you should require good design services at extremely low rates (\$15 an hour) check out our website at graphicdesignservices.net