



Prepress Workflow Issues

A reference guide for an improved workflow

Common Prepress Issues

The issues arising from the improper preparation of digital files for printing can be very costly and time consuming. While many of the items listed below are done unintentionally, they can and often times delay production schedules which in turn costs more money. In the Electronic Prepress department, many of files have come through our systems possessing a various technical errors. Although customer created PostScript and PDF files save time and money by eliminating the need for application files on our end, problems in these files cannot be readily fixed on the spot. Of the thousands of files we have dealt with, the following have been among the most common in both Mac and PC platforms:

- No laser proof supplied:
While this may seem inconsequential, it is imperative that a mock-up of the book is included when sending us your files. If none is supplied, one will be created at our facility at extra time and cost.
- Missing or incorrect fonts:
This is a major issue. If you are sending us application files, we must have all the fonts that you are using. While we do have an extensive library of fonts on site, finding them does take time, your time, which takes away from your production time. All fonts must be included in PS and PDF files.
- Files/Images with the incorrect color space: — eg., RGB, vs CMYK
There are four basic, universal colors in the printing industry: Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black. Unless you are using a 5th (spot) color in your document everything should fall within these four colors, including Pantones, unless the Pantone is a 5th color. If you plan to use Pantones for fills, be sure to convert them to CMYK or use Pantone to Process. Watch the Pantone conversion as color shifts will occur.
- Incorrect page settings:
Be sure you confer with your salesman or CSR on what the page size of you document needs to be *before* sending us your files. While this type of problem can sometimes be easily fixed, sometimes it cannot. Work will temporarily stop on your job until a course of action can be determined.
- Incorrect blending options selected:
In setting up blends (such as the ones in the corners of this document) where the color fades, we have commonly found that one color is set at 100% and fades to white or 0% of the starting and sometimes different color. **Please refrain from setting up your blends like this!!** This causes unexplainable banding. While it may seem logical to do so, this is not practical because white is not considered a color in the printing world and realistically you can't have a 0% of any color. When setting up your blends, set your ending color at a minimum of 1% of your starting color. This will insure against any blending problems. If you are using a 5th color for a blend, start at your Pantone and end at a minimum of 1% of that same Pantone.

Common Prepress Issues (continued)

- Scans in the wrong file format:

Our systems take either one of two formats: EPS or TIFF. When saving files in TIFF format be sure to turn *off* LZW compression. This has been known to cause processing errors.

- Resolution too high or low in supplied scans:

As we are a web printing facility, the maximum lpi we use is 150. As a rule, the dpi(dots pre square inch) of your images should always be double that of your line screen.

Example: 150lpi=300dpi

Any image that is beyond 300 dpi, (with the exception of bitmapped images) do not print any better.

File size is another concern. Unnecessarily large files will cause a slow down in the processing of your files. An image for a 8 1/2 X 11 page + 1/8" bleed at 300dpi is absolutely NO larger than 40MB. Anything beyond that and the laws of negative returns comes into play. If an image is going to be resized up or down in your publication we offer the following sizing conventions:

1- You can safely enlarge your image to 120% of its original size in the application. Anything beyond that and the resampling rate degrades the quality of the image. It should therefore be rescanned.

2 - When reducing the your image in size, anything below 75% should be resized in an image editing program; preferably Photoshop.

For example:

A 40MB image resized to 75% of it's original size results in a 23MB file. That equates to less processing time.

- Incorrect bleeds:

Set your bleeds to 1/8"(0.125) beyond the edge of your final trim size. It is common for some to include bleed in the size of the document, our workflow does not require this. Create your page to your trim size (as referred to in the above statement) and pull your bleeds outside of your final trim.

- Missing graphics:

Missing graphics will create delays in the output in your job. Double check your links and image folders. QuarkXpress' "Collect for Output" is very handy in the case of missing images. Other applications have similar utilities.

- Incorrect use of fill boxes:

When creating a decorative fill box in your application(such as the ones in the corners of this document) please *avoid* using text boxes for your fill. This will cause errors in the page and as a result, it will not process. A picture box will always work the best.

- Spot Colors:

If your job is running 4/4, meaning colors within the CMYK ink flow, any use of spot colors will result in a color shift. Unless you plan on running a 5th color in your publication, convert all spot colors to CMYK.