

# Turn up the Volume!

Amplify Demand for Digital Print



## Make Your Processes a Sales Asset

In the printing business, selling goes hand-in-hand with collaborating and communicating. By helping customers understand and perform key file preparation and submission practices, you build relationships and business. Processes that help you help your customer – and vice versa. As a result, everyone enjoys smooth production schedules with output that exceeds expectations.

### File Preparation Made Easy

Help Customers Succeed with File Preparation and Submission



➤ **This guide** shows you how to address file preparation issues with customers so you can develop understanding, respectful, and more lucrative relationships with clients. It also helps you save your customers a lot of time and money.

When you work with clients toward common goals you automatically amplify demand and set yourself apart from less attentive competitors.

## Four Ways to Help Customers Help You

New clients, and even existing clients, need to feel confident that your file preparation and exchange processes are efficient and well communicated.

In order to help your customers help you, you'll need to be comfortable with just a few semi-technical processes, namely:

- graphic preparation
- font considerations
- file submission guidelines and
- communication



### ► Graphic Prep Tips – From Your Customers' Perspective

Digital output for printing consists of several parts – graphics, fonts, and the complete design document. It's your job to make sure your customers understand your requirements and the specific deliverables they're responsible for.

Effectively managing graphic files is a key part of the total "customer service" equation. Here are some general guidelines that will make life easier and get projects moving toward completion.

#### ***Make sure your customers:***

- 1.** Know which printer-friendly graphic formats you use. TIFF files are the preferred format for bitmaps, and EPS files work best with vector images. If you accept other formats, let the customer know. Encourage them to stay away from Web formats like JPEG and GIF that are compressed.
- 2.** Know to provide linked graphics with their page layout application document. Missing files or low-resolution place holders create confusion, delays, and print errors.
- 3.** Know how to convert RGB images to CMYK. While RGB looks great on a monitor, it's less than ideal for PostScript printers. CMYK is the standard for professional printing.
- 4.** Save graphics in uncompressed formats (TIF). Compressed graphics (JPG, GIF) jeopardize printing quality.
- 5.** Avoid changing graphics file names unless they're re-linked in the application document (i.e. Quark, PageMaker).
- 6.** Refrain from tweaking and modifying graphics in the layout and design application. Have them modify graphics in a graphics package like Photoshop to avoid quality degradation.

### ► Font in File or Font on File

Sometimes fonts are rendered within graphical files, but sometimes they're not. In cases when customers use actual font files in their layout documents, you need to insist that they supply you with their fonts. Even though fonts have the same names, they vary from vendor to vendor and from TrueType to Type 1. The little differences can compromise print integrity and throw off text flow.

#### ***Here's a quick checklist of font considerations. Make sure your customers:***

- Send the fonts for EPS files with embedded fonts that are not converted to curves.
- Send the exact same version of the font that's in the final file.
- Avoid mixing TrueType and Type 1 fonts in the same file.
- Send both screen and printer fonts (for Type 1 fonts).
- Comply with copyright laws and provide license agreements if you require them.

One easy way to avoid all these details is to have customers submit PDF files. Since PDFs contain embedded fonts, they solve the problem of font incompatibility between computers. They also support complicated page layouts common in PostScript printing. Make sure you discuss all these options with customers before following any particular approach.

### ► Submission Guidelines Ensure the Best Results

As with graphics and fonts, your customers need to know your file submission expectations. They need to know what software you're using, what formats you prefer, what platform you're on, and how files should be packaged for the printer.

If you prepare a short customer service document with these answers, then you're way ahead of the game. You can also include instructions on how to prepare PostScript files with Adobe Acrobat and how to create custom Job Options for specific printers.

## > Countdown to Production

Once your customers understand what kinds of files they can send, they need to know how. Be clear about what kinds of storage media you can handle – CD-R discs, Zip disks, and SyQuest disks are common. If you allow submission via Internet channels, let them know which ones. Examples include email (for small projects), FTP, and specially designed Web interfaces.

Depending upon the project, you may want to encourage additional submissions that help speed the process along.

### ***These include:***

- A laser-printed copy of the design file. The printout helps print technicians spot font discrepancies, missing graphics, and layout anomalies.
- A PostScript laser proof of each color separation. This helps the printer match his output with the customer's expectation.
- Font lists and file lists. These can also be included in a "readme.txt" file on the disk.
- Additional artwork or photographs that replace FPO (for position only) placeholders in the digital file.
- A dummy or mock-up of the finished project that indicates cuts, folding, or binding specifications.
- Any special instructions.

Have customers label everything thoroughly with their name, address, phone number, job number, and so forth. They can also include a digital "readme" file that includes lists and contact data.

## > Remember Three Words: **Communicate, Communicate, Repeat**

All of these tips and guidelines require a good measure of friendly but instructive communication. Some of your clients will already speak "print production" and can easily deal with standard procedures, but many, especially in the small business realm, are new to complex printing projects. Help them by keeping communication lines open, asking questions, offering assistance, and encouraging them to speak up when they don't understand something.

If you don't connect with customers on these file prep details, you can waste a lot of time and money – and develop frustrating relationships while you're at it. The way to win and keep customers is to quickly get on the same page and establish a strong sense of mutual understanding. At every step of the way, there are numerous opportunities to be a star and really help the customer out.



### **Steal This Document – Create a Customer Service Plan From It**

It's a good idea to keep everyone in your company up to date with your file preparation and submission policies. Use these checklists and tips as a general outline for your own customized customer service plan and then share them with your staff and customers. Clear, well-communicated service policies are fundamental to keeping customers loyal and increasing demand for your services.