

Tips from Printers

COVER DESIGN TIPS:

- 1) Avoid cover designs with strong color breaks between the spine and front and back covers. PPI's on stocks can have a mill variation of plus or minus 5%. While this may not seem like much, it does pose issues and may cause the spine to wrap to the front and back covers or vice versa.
- 2) Avoid covers that are framed with a border. When covers are placed on the book blocks, there may be variation in the trim up to 1/8th inch that would cause the border to be uneven on the cover.
- 3) EPS files or flattened tiff's? EPS files allow for manipulation if needed (spine bulk for example).
- 4) Be sure to use colors with strong contrast when overprinting type. When colors in the same intensity are used together, legibility will be a problem.
- 5) Be aware that coating may affect the ink colors and clarity of the printed design on the cover. For instance, a matte lamination will darken color and will diminish the crispness of the images. Matte Lamination should not be used with metallic inks, as it will negate the metallic effect.
- 6) Be aware that printers cannot match colors to laser proofs on offset jobs. Laser proofs are created with toner, and offset ink colors are either CMYK build or pantone mixed ink.
- 7) Be sure to map all black elements to the same black. There are differences between rich black, registration black, pantone black and process black. If the elements are not mapped to the same black they will not be the same shade of black when printed.
- 8) Maintain an area of blank space around the barcode to insure it will scan accurately. The scanner must be able to detect where a barcode begins and ends. Also, be sure barcodes have a strong contrast to the background color. White background with black ink would be the best to insure scanning accuracy, but no matter what, do not include any black within your color build for the background of a barcode.
- 9) Make sure all fonts are embedded.
- 10) Make sure all files are high resolution. If a file is too small, understand that simply enlarging the dimensions will not maintain its resolution. For example, if a graphic is placed at 300ppi, then enlarged 200%, the result is a graphic at 150ppi. It is now a lo-res graphic.
- 11) Don't mix process and pantone colors, unless you mean to!
- 12) Trim, crop or bleed marks in the document should use "registration color" rather than black only. This insures that the marks will appear on all plates to maintain registration on press. InDesign and Quark provide this as a built-in feature.
- 13) Black elements automatically set to over print: Keep in mind what the elements are over printing. Printing over different colors will affect the shade of black. Black over printing is a great tool, but make you use it for a consistent effect.

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PRINTERS HAVE DIFFERENT REQUIREMENTS. FIND OUT THE FOLLOWING BEFORE YOU BEGIN:

- 1) Ask for a dummy. As soon as it is approved, ask for jacket and case templates with correct spine width.
- 2) Are you producing a casebound book? Ask for head- and tail-band samples to choose from.
- 3) Does your printer want you to supply RGB or CMYK files? If the latter, ask them to supply their printer profiles for converting RGB files correctly. (Some printers will prefer to do their own CMYK conversions.) Are you printing halftones or duotones for your b/w images? If the latter, you might consider getting a test proof for a couple of images, to ensure that the PMS color you choose will give you the effect you want.
- 4) What should your margins be, for type and images from final trim? What bleed allowance should you use?
- 5) What is the minimal resolution desired for images (color, grayscale, line art)? Conversely, make sure that the printer you are using can produce images of the quality you need.
- 6) Confirm that your printer can work from your software files (InDesign, Quark, Illustrator, PhotoShop, PDFs) and understand the advantages of each. If your printer works from PDFs, find out if they have a PDF Export Profile.
- 7) If you use a rich black, does your printer prefer a specific build?
- 8) What is the minimum width for rule lines? .5? .3?

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CASES IN POINT:

“Reprint cover must match previous printing”: Those were our instructions from the customer. The customer had supplied a new cover file since they had made corrections to the 4-color cover, but they were insistent that the cover colors were the same as the last printing. The new cover files were used to produce the cover. Soft proofs were approved and when the cover got on the press we could not get the colors to match. The operator spent a lot of time, making adjustments to the density levels to get the colors to match to the previous sample. The press operator contacted customer service to let them know there was an issue with the color match. Customer service reiterated that the customer wanted the colors to match the previous printing. The job was pulled off press to have the files checked. As it turned out the new cover files supplied did not have the same CMYK build as the previous printing so there was no way for us to match the colors with the new files supplied. The customer was not happy that this happened.

When new cover files are supplied for a reprint, we are not pulling or looking at the old files. We had no idea the build was changed for this cover.

Specialty cover stocks: Keep in mind that mills discontinue specialty cover stocks. We run into this from time to time, where a stock is discontinued and we have to scramble to find a substitute stock. If the color has been discontinued, we will sometimes print a background color that is the same as the previous stock, but then you are adding an additional plate and have to decide if you want the inside covers printed in this background color also. Cloth colors can also be discontinued. If a cloth color is discontinued there is usually a close substitute, but the color may not be an exact match.

Keep in mind the size of the file: We once had a file where every image on the cover was a separate graphic. The cover was designed with a polka-dot background, and each dot was a separate image. We could not get the file to open; we crashed our server trying to open the file. Once we got it open, we had to go in and flatten the cover file to process it.

When you convert certain pantone colors to CMYK for digital or offset print there won't always be an exact match. (The same issue can occur when converting RGB to CYMK.) Colors that do not convert well are blue 277 – 281 and orange 150 -167. Some customers have had disappointments with these colors.

If a text stock changes, the bulk will change, and if the cover/ dj file is set up as one large graphic, we will be limited as to how we can adjust the spine. Try to keep in mind when designing the cover that at some point, the spine bulk may need to be readjusted.