

Getting better results on press

MOHAWK

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The key to successfully completed printed projects is communication. Every project has its own set of details to cover between the designer, printer and paper merchant. Mohawk Fine Papers recommends that you call your paper representative early in the design process. Their experience will help you select a stock which is appropriate for your project. Paper reps can also provide samples and promotions, dummies, and printing tips for particular grades.

Choosing a printer

Most salespeople show samples. This is a perfect opportunity to gain more insight. What were the critical areas in the sample and how did they achieve the results? Ask for samples showing the specific techniques you'll be using in your project. Because communication is the key to success, you should be comfortable with your salesperson's knowledge and understanding. Ask about any specifics you're interested in: what line screen is generally used; do they have any special bindery equipment? What is their proofing system? Do they have digital presses? Tour the pressroom. Look for an organized and clean plant. The pressroom and warehouse should be temperature and humidity controlled. Ask about quality control systems and techniques.

Releasing the project

Keep in mind that you are buying a custom made product. Your expectations should be clearly defined in the beginning. Discuss critical areas of your project and show results you like. Ask your printer for a production schedule that includes when you are to receive proofs, when they are to be returned, press date and delivery dates.

Inform the printer of your paper selection, including color, weight and finish. Every department from prepress through bindery should set up your job based on your paper choice. Proper planning by these departments will ensure better final quality. Ask for a paper dummy from your printer. It should be used as a guide for folding and binding.

Ask about what kind of proofs will be supplied. Many printers work direct-to-plate, making film unnecessary. Digital proofs are being used for both loose color, type and position. Digital proofs save time and money, and can sometimes be made on the actual paper you plan to print on.

If working with specialty inks or a critical color match, ask for ink drawdowns on your stock. This is especially important if using a cream or colored stock. Ask for appropriate coating - varnish or aqueous - to be on your drawdowns. Many times, these coatings affect your ink shade.

Confirm delivery dates for the job. Request finished samples for your OK before the job ships. Give packing and shipping instructions with addresses and choice of carriers.

It is a trade custom for printers to supply and bill within 10% over or under the requested quantity. This can usually be kept within 5% for projects with a high unit cost.

PAPER ON PRESS: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Grade
Color
Finish
Weight
Opacity
Ink holdout
Feel
Performance

PAPER CURING

Move paper into pressroom
24 hours before printing
Humidity and temperature
of paper should equal
pressroom
Humid paper will wrinkle,
causing misregistration
Dry paper will absorb the
inks' vehicle, causing
chalking

HICKIES

Most frequently seen
on runs with many starts
and stops
Causes: paper dust from
cutting, particles in the air,
paper fibers pulled from
surface, dried ink scum

PICKING

Paper fibers pulled from
the surface causing hickies
Only happens in inked
areas
Solved by adjusting ink
tack

PICKOUTS

Paper with loose fibers
Causing hickies
Seen in non-image area too
Solved by replacing paper

It is best to get most communication in writing. For example, after a phone conversation with the printer about an alteration or change, email or fax a follow-up confirmation. Request a cost and time estimate before changes are made.

On press

You should have all final proofs, original art and ink swatches/drawdowns to check against on press. Use at least a 12-power magnifying loupe for close inspection. Above all, take your time. Make a list of what to look for and follow it step by step. Make one or two changes at a time. Circle hickies last. Sign and date three sheets: one for the printer, one for you, and one for the client. Have your printer slip sheet a complete set to take with you.

- 1) For solids, all inks should be laying down smoothly. Densities should be even across the sheet and match between forms. Check by eye and densitometer. Is there any mottling? Ask if the density can be maintained consistently throughout the run.
- 2) Are images dark or plugged in? Examine the dot gain targets and dot shape. Look at the type for crisp edges.
- 3) Check position. Rule out a sheet with trims and scores. Have the sheet folded and trimmed to size. Is it backed up properly? Are the crossovers aligned?
- 4) Check registration and fit. Are two colors overlapping, causing a dark line, or not touching, causing the paper to show? Look at the targets, the edges of images and any knock out and screened type.
- 5) Color match and four-color process review. Compare the proof and ink swatches to the press sheet. To check color and image crossovers, have the printer cut the sheet for flat, side-by-side comparison. Use the experience of the press operator and production manager for color shift options. Move one color at a time and keep track of your moves on each press sheet. Concentrate on the critical areas of color like flesh tones. Keep in mind that the color on press may never exactly match the color proof. Your goal should be to make the images look as good as possible. Ask about expected dry back on the sheet. If you're concerned if the colors will look lighter or darker, quickly dry a sheet with a blowdryer, microwave oven or shrinkwrap tunnel.
- 6) Check for flaws such as broken type, odd scratches, hickies, spots and ghosting.
- 7) Review for overall impact and legibility.

Remember, the key to success on press is communication. Make sure your printer understands what you expect—and you understand their capabilities.

This information is provided for general reference only. Printing is both an art and a highly technical enterprise loaded with variables. Your printer may break all the rules and still come up with extraordinary results.

For more information and samples, please call your local merchant or Mohawk at 1 800 the mill. www.mohawkpaper.com