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# PRINTtips

## 8 Ways to... ...Save Money on Printing



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**W**hat's your company's budget for printing? Is it a measurable part of overall expenses, or such a small amount that it doesn't even have its own line item? Whichever it is, we'd like to offer eight ways to make the budget dollars go farther.

### #1: Order the right quantity.

There are three elements that determine the cost of every print job; preparation, paper, and production steps. The cost of preparing to print (gathering files, adjusting image placement, and creating press plates or printable digital files) is a fixed cost incurred each time the job is printed. It doesn't change, regardless of the quantity being printed. (Note: preparation costs are different from the initial cost of design or the cost to make changes on subsequent printings.) Two orders of 500 will incur two preparation costs, whereas one order of 1000 will incur just one. On the other hand, if you order 1000 to save preparation costs but end up not using 400, then you probably haven't saved on money.

So how do you know the right quantity to order? We recommend a 3-6 month supply of anything that isn't subject to change or that changes at a predictable time. You can determine whether you are following this guideline by asking us (we keep a history on each job we print for you) or by looking at your past invoices. If placing an initial order when you are unsure how long the printed piece will last, ask us to quote more than one quantity so you can compare unit costs.



### #2: Order before you run out.

Seems obvious, doesn't it? But if it were so easy, then there would never be emergencies or rush orders. What's needed is a reliable reminder system that provides an alert when the supply of a particular item gets low. For companies that use a central supply system, taking a monthly inventory could work. But for decentralized supply, something different is needed.

Because we don't like emergencies any more than our customers do, we have developed a reliable reminder system that is a part of the order history we keep for each job. When we enter an order, we simultaneously predict the reorder interval based on what the intervals have been in the past. Once a month we get a report of

## 8 Ways to Save Money on Printing (cont.)

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*“The design of a printed piece has a great influence on overall cost.”*

*“We pride ourselves on having jobs ready at the promised time.”*

expected reorders, and can contact you with the information. This isn't an automatic reorder; you still get to determine whether it is time. But it will prompt you to go check your supply and avoid the surprise of running out.

### **#3: Let us choose the production method.**

In most cases, we have several ways that we can produce your order. For example, we print using both digital and offset equipment. Years ago there may have been a discernible difference between the two, but that's no longer the case.

Here's another example: if the size of the finished printed product is smaller than the press sheet, we may prepare the artwork so that more than one image is printed on the press sheet. This method, called imposition, reduces the number of press sheets needed to produce the finished quantity, saving press time and paper costs — most of the time. For a very small finished quantity, the cost of imposition may exceed the savings in press time and paper.

The final word: let us use the best production method based on the specifications of the job, the time frame to produce it, and your budget.

### **#4: Understand how design affects cost.**

The design of a printed piece has a great influence on overall cost. Designs that incorporate features such as a bleed (i.e., the extension of an image to the edge of the piece), multiple post-press processes (i.e., cutting, folding, binding), or embellishments (die cutting, foil stamping or blind embossing, for example) require extra press sheets to accommodate the need for setups on each subsequent process. The amount per process varies, but is usually figured as a percentage of the number of finished pieces with a minimum amount. With enough post-press processes involved, the number of press sheets needed could climb to 120% to 150% of the finished quantity.

### **#5: When doing your own design work, submit a print-ready PDF file.**

This requires more than just saving a file as a PDF. Print-ready means that all we have to do is receive the file, check it for print readiness, and

create press plates or a raster image. Here are some of the things that prevent a PDF from being considered print ready:

- Photo resolution that is too low to produce a good quality image.
- Images that bleed have not been extended beyond the trim line.
- No adjustment has been made to panel sizes to ensure a flat fold.
- Text and images have not been shifted left and right to allow for drill holes or booklet binding.

We do check for these flaws and will notify you if they will compromise the finished print product. You can make the corrections yourself and resubmit the file, or we will provide a cost to make the corrections for you.

### **#6: Allow enough time for the job to be completed using our normal production standards.**

We pride ourselves on having jobs ready at the promised time. We carefully manage the production process by setting interim due dates — the date each step in the production process has to be completed to meet the promised date. Rush jobs disrupt the normal manufacturing flow, so we reserve the right to charge extra for the disruption. Before we agree to take a rush job, we will provide a quotation so you can determine whether the added cost fits within your budget.

### **#7: Provide inputs by the date requested.**

By inputs, we mean something that is necessary for the job and only you can provide. Examples are text, photos, and other items when we are providing design services; return of proofs with comments or authorization to proceed; a mailing list; a postage deposit. This is closely related to #6, as the interim due dates for production steps depend on having your inputs available at the needed time.

For projects that have many steps — such as an invitation package or a direct mail marketing campaign — and also have a firm deadline, we

## 8 Ways to Save Money on Printing (cont.)

will be happy to provide a timeline that clearly states the interim due dates for your inputs and also shows you the steps in the process.

### #8: Avoid surprise or hidden costs.

We don't like surprises — especially those that upset our customers, such as add-on costs that appear on the final invoice or aren't mentioned until after the order has been placed.

Our policy is to provide a written quotation as soon as the job specifications are firm. As part of the quotation, we describe the job specifications in plain English so you can verify that we understand what you want done. Our quotations include all the costs of the job — design, printing, tax, shipping, special delivery or handling, postage — whatever elements are applicable. As long as the specifications don't change, the final invoice will always match the quotation, with no surprises or hidden costs.



### Ensure That You Get the Best Price

We don't always have the lowest price. But we always do have the best price — the price that represents the balance of job specifications, production time, quality, and on-time delivery. If you are not experiencing this level of performance with your current printer, we invite you contact us at 513-248-2121 to discuss how we can be of assistance to you.

*“We don't always have the lowest price. But we always do have the best price...”*

## How to Obtain a Quotation...

The first step in obtaining a quotation for printing is to specify the job. This means defining not only what will be printed (such as a brochure) and the quantity, but also its physical dimensions, the paper it will be printed on, the ink color(s) to be used, and whether there are any embellishments like foil stamping or die cutting. With this information, we'll develop a production plan and determine the costs associated with each process. Here's a checklist of information we need in order to provide a quote:

- **Overall:** what is being printed? What quantity?
- **Artwork:** will you be providing a print-ready PDF or will you need design work?
- **Printing:** is the printing on one side or both sides? How many ink colors are on each side? What paper? If a multi-page document, is the same paper used throughout, or does the cover require something different than the interior

pages? What is the final size? Does the image bleed and if so, on how many sides? Do you want a coating applied after printing?

- **Special processes:** does the piece require special processes such as die cutting, foil stamping, or embossing?
- **Finishing and binding:** Will the piece need folding, drilling, or numbering? If a booklet, how will it be bound (staples, spiral, or glued)?
- **Other:** is any special packaging required? Will you pick up or will we deliver?

When you ask for a quotation, we'll lead you through the job specification process by asking a series of questions until we have all the information we need. If you don't know all the answers, we may be able to provide an estimate, but we will reserve the right to change the estimate when the specifications are firm.

*“When you ask for a quotation, we'll lead you through the job specification process...”*



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## The Proofing Process

*“A proof provides a means for you to review an example of what the printed piece will look like...”*

**P**roofs are an important part of the printing process. A proof provides a means for you to review an example of what the printed piece will look like, to check for errors in the text, verify color correctness, and approve the overall design. We have a responsibility to present error-free proofs to you, and you have a responsibility to review our work carefully and promptly.

Printing projects can be unnecessarily delayed or even turned from standard production times to emergencies if proofs are not reviewed and returned to us on time. If more than one person in your organization will be proofing, be sure everyone understands the importance of prompt review.

