



McLELLAN MARKETING GROUP
Where strategy and passion collide 

PRINT PRODUCTION CONSIDERATIONS

The key to print production is to start from the end of the process and work backward. *When do we need to have it?* is the question to ask when beginning a project. Once you establish when you must have it you can work backward deciding when to do each step.

Every job is different, but some things are consistent to almost all printing projects. If you can develop a systematic approach to handling your print projects it will help avoid common mistakes and help you and your vendors work better together.

Understanding vendor capabilities is key to selecting the appropriate vendor for the job. This will help insure quality and probability of meeting your deadlines. Vendor reputation, experience, responsiveness, equipment are all key components to a good print job.

When asking a vendor for a quote or giving them a print job, try to have as many details/specs available as you can when you discuss it with them. It's a good idea to type up a formal specifications sheet that you can fax or email to them. This will give you and your vendor something to refer back to before and after the project and make sure that nothing was misconstrued in a verbal conversation. Some print reps have others doing their estimating or writing up orders for them and it is better if they can pass on a sheet of specs rather than verbally trying to remember all that you said.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. A good vendor should be able to answer your questions and offer solutions for better quality and cost-saving options.

ESTIMATE REQUESTS and SPECIFICATION SHEETS:

Here are some things that should be included in your estimate request or spec sheet:

- Quantity/quantities
- Flat size (before folded)
- Finished size (completed size after trimming and folding)
- Number of pages
- Stock/Paper (weight, color, texture, brand)
- Ink colors (i.e.: four color process or Pantone inks)
- Bleeds (ink prints to edge of paper)
- Special finishing (die-cut, embossing, foil-stamping, etc.)



McLELLAN MARKETING GROUP

Where strategy and passion collide 

- Bindery (Folding, stitching (staple))
- Samples (make sure to note if you need samples above the ordered quantity)
- Storage (will vendor be storing these until needed)
- Packing, shipping and delivery instructions
- Art – (how the art is provided (i.e.: disk) and the file format of digital files)
- Proof (list type of proof needed)
- Due date
- Printouts of the project, preferably to scale if possible.
- Mailing and/or indicia instructions and quantities

Providing printouts will show them how the piece should look and be folded, it will also indicate how it should be collated in a multi-page document. Printouts are also your insurance policy with that vendor should any problems arise that are their mistake.

PROOFS:

Always ask to see a vendor proof before they print. Here is what to look for:

- Ask to see the vendor proof along with the laser printouts you gave them.
- Always put your changes in writing.
- Ask for a cost to make change if there is any before you make a change, to make sure your change is worth the expense.
- Always ask to see if and how this change will affect the deadline.
- Make sure if it was a printer error, the vendor and you acknowledge that to be the case so that you are not charged to make the change.
- Look for color differences in the proof from your expectations. Note if any screened areas are darker or lighter than you expected.
- Check for changes in how the text wraps from line to line. Also note any font differences that might have occurred. Are any words missing?
- Are the photos placed and properly cropped?
- Make sure the color separations are the same as your printouts.
- Ask for a “dummy” to check for page sequence and other assembly issues on multi-page projects. It is a good idea to have your proof trimmed and folded like the finished project to make sure the layout is correct.
- On digital printed projects you can usually request to have your proof printed on the stock the finished piece will be on.
- If time and budget allows it is a good idea to request a second proof if you made a lot of alterations to the first one.
- Make sure the indicia and/or mailing permit number is correct.



McLELLAN MARKETING GROUP

Where strategy and passion collide 

PRESS CHECK PROOFS:

Request a “press check” to see the job as it is being run on the press if you are really concerned about how it will look. Look for the following:

- Is it on the right paper?
- Have the changes from the proof been made?
- Do the colors meet your expectations? Too light, or too dark?
- Are the colors registered (aligned in relationship to each other) properly?
- Are the solid areas consistent, without streaking or specks?
- If applicable, make sure the printing on both sides is backed up appropriately.

There are many things to consider depending on the project, but these should cover the main things to look for. This will help you avoid mistakes/surprises, and get the best quality while still meeting your deadlines.

This document is protected by copyright law. McLellan Marketing Group 2004. All rights reserved.