

PRINTING 101

Free Ebook

The Definitive Guide to Different Printing Methods & Techniques

FREE EBOOK FOR MARKETERS AND CONSUMERS
IN THE PHILIPPINES AND BEYOND

By:

PRINTIXELS™

www.printixels.com

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By PrintiXels

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About The Ebook:

This free ebook is a definitive guide to different printing methods and techniques to help you in your marketing campaign. Here you will learn about printing processes, inks, color jargons, and practical tips on effective printing and marketing strategies. It is intended for both marketers and consumers in the Philippines and beyond.

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Contact Information:

PrintiXels Enterprise

Address: 412 J.M. Loyola St. Carmona, Cavite, 4116, Philippines

Telephone: (046) 430-3546

Mobile Phone: 0977-720-4095 / 0920-628-6240

Email: printixels@gmail.com

Website: www.printixels.com

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PRINTING BASICS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

What Are The Different Types Of Printing?

What Printing Process Will Work Best For Your Project

Ink And Its Printing Quality

Paper Grain And Printing Matters

Understanding Color Printing Jargon

Going Digital On Color Printing

Printing On A Wholesale

What Are The Different Types Of Printing?

Not all printing companies are created equal. There are those that are able to give you full color printing for your marketing collaterals. Still there are printing houses that offer excellent offset printing to provide you a cost effective print job, hence, bigger savings.

Whatever kind of printer you need to accomplish the job you require, you also have to learn to distinguish the differences among the printing techniques. This is so you could discuss with your printer the most suitable method for your marketing campaign.

Here are the different types of printing that you may want to get acquainted with before you go to a [printing company](#) for your print job:

Offset Lithography – The most common printing method in the industry, most printers use offset lithography to save on ink and limit set up time. Hence, you are able to avail of a more affordable and cost effective print job for your color printing requirements. What printers usually do is to offset the ink (thus, the name) from metal plates to a rubber cylinder and then transfer it onto the paper stock.

[Digital Printing](#) – It is probably the most popular printing method since its introduction. Digital printing is very effective since it reduces the time to complete the printing process. It doesn't need films and plates anymore. What it does is to transfer the digital file directly to the printing press with the help of a computer. It's relatively fast that customers often rely on digital printing to meet deadlines and schedules.

Letterpress – Created by Gutenberg, the Letterpress is considered as one of the first and original printing methods of all time. The letterpress gave birth to the concept of relief printing, where the image being printed is raised from the surface. However, the method is slowly going obsolete with the new and much faster methods being introduced in the market today.

Electrostatic Printing – Similar to photocopying, this method lets the color attach to a drum and is blended with the paper with the application of heat. It is similar to digital printing as it also provides cost effective production of short print runs.

Thermography – This method produces raised image that you see mostly in stationeries. What the printer does is to use a special powder or dust that easily sticks to wet ink. Then they apply heat to blend the ink and the powder to form the raised image.

These are still more types of printing methods. The bottom line is to know what would be the most suitable to your needs. We hope that the next time you hire a commercial printer for your marketing collateral you are able to discuss clearly what kind of printing method you require to achieve the results you imagined.

What Printing Process Will Work Best For Your Project

So you now have your design and your message, you even had the color printing company selected. So what's next? It's now time for you to choose the color printing method you'll use to get your ads produced.

But it's not about your knowledge of all the color printing methods available. It's more than that. It's about what would be the most appropriate for your special project. Will it be the offset litho this time, or a dye-sublimation would be more suitable to your ad?

Here are some of the general guidelines made by most color printers to help you come up with the most appropriate printing method for your project. Remember that there are no hard and fast rules; only suggestions that can help you fast track your choice process.

When you're looking at personal use, hence you only need a low volume..... it's best that you also consider using your desktop inkjet and laser printers. When you need only a few copies, you might want to try printing your stuff yourself and put off hiring your color printer for other bulk projects. It's more practical this way. Either a color laser printer or an inkjet printer will do the job suitably.

When you want proofs for your color printing ad..... you can either utilize, again, your desktop color laser printer or inkjet for the job. They're very good at providing proofs especially for your text and general layout. But they may not be able to give you the precise color you expect. However, if you want a much higher resolution and digital proofs to boot, you might as well avail of color lasers, and [dye-sublimation printing](#) process. The last one is the process preferred by most graphic designers especially if you're looking at creating that extra high end proofing.

For bulk desktop publishing in high volume..... you would want to have offset lithography for those. This printing method is the most popular commercial color printing process when desktop publishing is involved; not to mention, it requires high volume mass production. That's why most commercial printers use offset lithography for books, [newsletters](#) and [brochures](#).

In addition, offset lithography is also best for glossy [magazines](#), brochures and catalogs that require spot color and full color printing because of the pictures and photographs in it.

For [business cards](#), letterheads, envelopes, labels..... offset lithography is also the most commonly used printing method. You can add engraving for a more subtle letterhead, and thermography for that raised look in your material.

Ink And Its Printing Quality

When you write, you need a pen. When you read magazines, books and newspapers, ink is necessary to print them. When you want to print something from your computer, ink is indispensable. You use money printed with ink. Almost in every thing you do way, ink is attendant.

What is ink? It is a dense liquid composed of dye or pigment suspended in a solvent. Early inks came from fruit and vegetable juices, barks of trees, protective secretions of octopus, squid and cuttlefish.

The very first instance when ink was used was when a man employed vegetable charcoal and glue in Egypt. It has happened 4, 500 years ago. Since then, ink has gone a long way already.

The most recent ink is divided into two – printing and the writing inks. The former is further classified into ink for digital non-impact printing which uses ink-jet and electrographic technologies and ink for traditional printing using a mechanical plate.

Ink is one vital material not only for writing but for printing needs as well. Only few people how to choose ink in order to boost the quality of their printing job. In fact, a lot are still confused about the matter.

How would you know that the ink is a high-quality ink? There are five major characteristics that have to be significantly considered to arrive at it. They are color, surface tension, cleanliness, pH and viscosity.

Color. It is the most apparent characteristic. You can utilize spectrophotometer to get color consistency. This instrument measures the amount of light energy or spectrum wavelength in the object.

Colored inks are usually made from linseed oil, soybean oil and solvent with organic pigments. Black ink, on the other hand, came from carbon black.

These inks include additives like lubricants, waxes, surfactants and dying agents.

Surface Tension. This measures the cohesive energy in an interface. To exactly measure surface tension, surface tensiometer is necessary. Inaccuracy in surface tension results to unsuitable droplet formation. Consequently, the droplets will make poor print quality.

Cleanliness. This characteristic is vital so that blotting can be avoided. A messy print resembles crap. Thus, every printing company or a consumer must ascertain first the tidiness of the ink when applied to paper, shirt and the likes.

pH. It refers to the alkalinity or acidity of the ink. The pH value which ranges from 0-6 is acidic while pH value 7 is considered neutral. The pH range of 8 to 14 is considered alkaline. Higher acidity or alkalinity can damage the print heads.

Viscosity. It is the flow rate or measure of the fluid's resistance to deformation. It is closely associated to being thick.

Now that you are well-informed, you are likely to make good decision with regards to choosing high-quality ink.

Paper Grain And Printing Matters

The direction of the paper's grain plays a significant role in your printing project. The proper use of the paper direction will ensure the quality of your printing job. It will also ensure the resilience and artistic side of your project. To bring out the best in your printing job, you must be able to determine which part of the paper is printable and in what direction.

Grain direction comes in two types, the grain long and the short grain. The first type refers to the grain direction of the paper that runs in same direction as the longest border. Short grain, on the other hand, refers to the grain direction of the paper that runs in same direction as the shortest border.

In deciding which grain direction to use, consider the type of printing product. When using full color digital printing, use the grain long direction to reduce stretching of paper during the printing process. It will also augment the visual effect of colors.

Grain direction is also vital when it comes to finishing processes. Printing processes such as scoring and folding need to use the suitable grain direction in order to have a durable product. Scoring and folding paper against the grain will strengthen your printing end products.

Printed items such as business cards, postcards, posters, letterheads, stickers and the likes will be enhanced by printing in the long grain. This is because long grain gives stability. It will preclude them from dripping or buckling.

When it comes to labels, cd/dvd covers, pocket folders and other printed items that use heavy ink coverage, short grain must be used. This is because short grain makes folding and scoring smooth. It also reduces the chance of cracking of the items due to the heavy ink.

Now you know what grain direction redounds to your greatest advantage. Seize the opportunity because that will lead you to having quality printed materials. Believe me, it can make a difference!

Understanding Color Printing Jargon

Do you know the difference with colors? For most people, a color is a color. But for a professional who uses colors for a living, there are more to it.

Printers are well aware of the difference processes in color printing. Let's talk about this color printing processes so you would understand what each means.

Most color print projects use either spot colors or process colors. In every project, budget plays a large role in the decision as well as the printing method and the design elements used in the layout. As a rule of thumb, a couple of spot colors will definitely cost less than a four-color or process color printing. However, when you use full color photos, a more expensive color process may be your best option.

What are spot colors? As we've said before, spot colors are cheaper than the full color ones. When do you use spot colors? Well, there are several guidelines to determine whether spot colors would do the trick. Here are a few:

- If your publication has no full-color photographs.
- If your publication needs a color that cannot be accurately reproduced. This includes CMYK (cyan, magenta, yellow and black) inks which are often used for precise color matching of a corporate or logo color.
- If you're printing a specific color on something that requires page to page color consistency.
- If you're using a much larger space such as that of your poster, spot color can provide that even consistency look in your marketing ad.

- Spot color can give you a more vibrant color than the CMYK can produce in your color printing ad.
- Or if your ad needs special effects that requires producing inks such as metallic or fluorescent ones.

On the other hand, you'll definitely need to apply process colors, e.g. CMYK inks, when...

- Your ad has full color photographs in it.
- Your ad has graphics that require producing multi-color inks.

You'll then have to produce many color inks if you use spot color instead of the process colors.

- And if you need more than two spot colors in your ad, it is better to apply process color instead. Most of the time, you can save on costs with process colors than using four or more spot colors to produce your shade.

And if you have an ad that has photographs that integrates both spot colors and process colors, you can always use both applications. This is especially true in your logo color. For better results, ask your color printing company so you'll be sure to have the best application to produce the colors you need for your marketing campaign.

Going Digital On Color Printing

If you are one of the many people who are looking for the best and new way of color print, look into [digital color printing](#). Digital color printing offers the cleanest, best looking print. Nowadays, most commercial printing companies offer digital color printing.

Digital color printing is clearly an added value to all printing companies to their print offering, and widens their reach into profitable new markets. Using digital color printing, you may be able to switch jobs very quickly, even without the stopping of your process, or maximizing your process.

Because it is digital the variable data printing feature is particularly useful. You may be able to make changes and if for instance in the text, image, or date on a label by label basis. This feature is used for specially numbered, coded or personalized labels at full press production speed.

Full color printing is another area where digital printing offers a big advantage to flexo. (Flexo is Flexographic printing that was introduced to the printing industry during the 1980s.) The process for color printing is so much more complex with flexo due to its technical limitations. Multi-layered prints, for example, are extremely difficult to realize in flexo. With digital color printing, color labels are no longer a time and labor-consuming job.

Base from the testimony of digital color printing clients, they are pleased with the high quality of the printed label, the flexibility in designs and the virtually limitless finishing possibilities. So they keep on returning to the printing company with digital color printing services offer.

If you have this service in your printing company, perhaps your company will likely have a stronger selling position than other printing agencies. You can even always say 'yes' to your clients to all their designs, regardless of their complexity, because there are no limits anymore. No matter what your printing needs, somehow, digital color printing can be able to meet them.

The advantages of digital color printing are many and important. For instance, customized designs and printing arrangements are easily programmed, and as I've said earlier you can also make changes in your design with no hassle. Your project can be produced on a mass scale, even for coding and marking. Excellent workflow efficiency is another notable characteristic of digital systems. Businesses can have output on demand and great inventory control with digital technology.

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