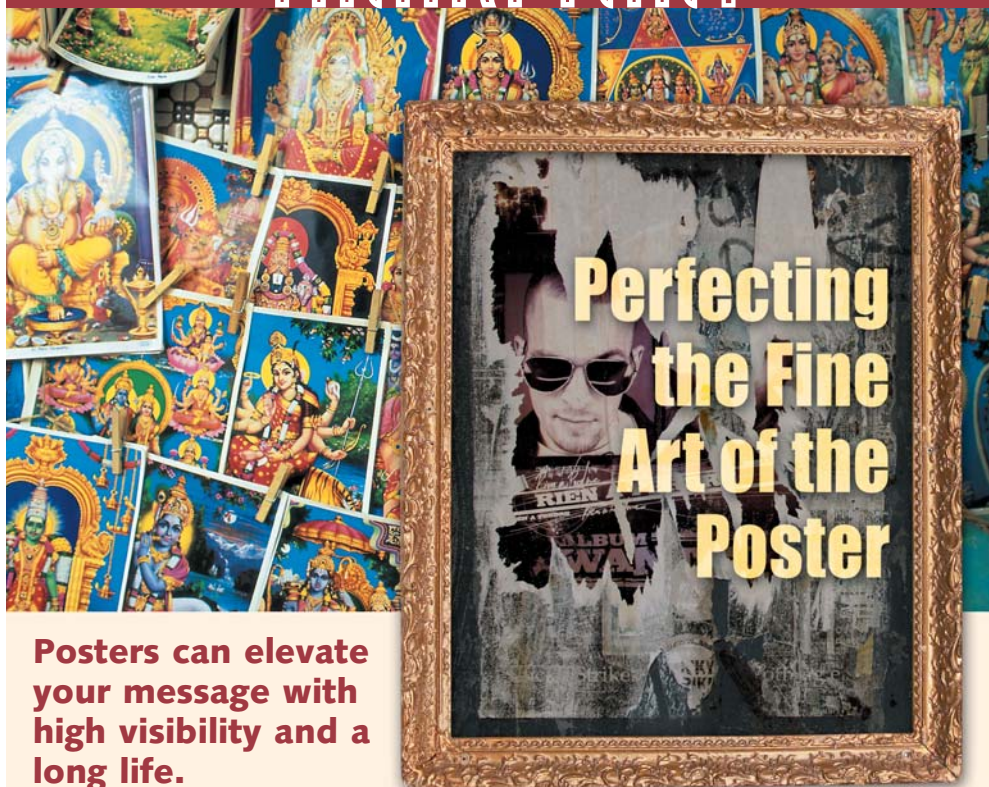




ThinkPrint!



Posters can elevate your message with high visibility and a long life.

A New England manufacturing company ran a long-term campaign built around quarterly posters, and created a strong local reputation as a result. The posters used a fresh design each time that captured an aspect of the firm's service in an amusing or thought provoking way. The company has changed its approach since then, but many of those posters can still be found, years later, brightening offices throughout the region.

A High Value Medium

With a beautiful image or an engaging idea, a poster can be a valued gift to potential customers – one that continues to advertise in a subtle way for as long as it remains on display. It might be used as a premium to

reward sales, or for internal company communications.

Posters are also one of the most effective means of getting the word out about events and promotions with local appeal. Places to put them up are abundant, transit advertising creates excellent opportunities, and they can be produced economically in small quantities. Being easy to create and distribute, inexpensive and versatile has made posters a firm favorite of low-budget marketers.

Return on Investment

We might think of the "lost kitty" poster and the promo for the teenage garage band's next show as tying for the bottom end of the production scale. However, even the crudest

poster can be effective by communicating the right message, being placed where the appropriate audience will see it – and fitting a budget.

Design Considerations

The key to effective poster design is simplicity. Ideally, your design will be striking and interesting so that it catches the eye of passers by in even the most crowded environment. To be really successful the poster must go a step further, by immediately communicating the essence of what you wish to communicate. Even if you can be sure your audience will take the time to decipher your work, you must still appeal to their interest and pull them in.

As you develop concepts, consider how you can distill your message into one simple graphic idea that dominates the poster. Perhaps it will be an image, perhaps just type, or a compelling combination. Think about what the most important things are that you want your audience to take

Continued inside



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A Checklist for Preliminary Proofing

When you output desktop prints to review your project in progress, bear these pointers in mind:

1 Print your pages at a full 100%

Some errors are hard to detect when pages are reduced to fit the sheets your laser printer can handle. Tile the output if necessary.

2 Review layout details carefully

Layout elements to keep a close eye on include trim, bleed allowance and gutters. Do they allow for your printer's requirements and the binding or finishing method? Check screen builds for correct values and colors.

3 Review as composite and as separations

Print separations to make sure there are no extra plates created by spot colors or placed eps files. Also check traps, knockouts and registration.

4 Proofread copy and images separately

Look for typos thoroughly, and review images in a separate reading – look for correct placement, orientation, crop and correct caption.

5 Take Your Time and be thorough

Avoid rushing through – it will not be as easy and cheap to fix problems in later stages of production!

Treat Everyone As Though They Could Be a Prospect

One thing is certain – people change positions, transfer, quit, get promoted and hired – and the person you are selling to today may move on and be replaced down the road.

It is simply good practice to extend to others some of the courtesy and helpfulness you dedicate to cultivating your main prospects. The “underling” you give a little royal treatment to regularly may be the decision-maker some day, or may be hired somewhere else with buying responsibility. If you have already established a relationship you are in a much stronger position. If not, you have simply created a little extra goodwill – never a bad thing.

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away from your poster. Put them in order of significance and compose the poster with a hierarchy of elements that follows this sequence.

Paper as a Design Element

You may need to use full color to get your message across if you plan on using photography or a colorful design. However, because of the unique way posters are displayed and seen, a strong graphic idea can communicate just as clearly using only minimal resources, which is a great help to advertisers on a tight budget.

Because posters are seen from a distance and less likely to be handled, choosing paper is simplified – there's no need to consider handfeel or folding characteristics.

If you are imaging in full color your aim will be to support the best reproduction your budget allows, using a white coated stock with an even surface formulation.

An alternative is to use a paper color that strengthens the presentation of your concept. A colored stock can supplement a limited palette of ink colors, allowing even a one-color design to gain impact with an eye-catching color contrast.

A good way to select stock weight is to consider the expected longevity of your poster – a longer life will require heavier stock, while for an ephemeral piece you can save some money by specifying a lighter sheet.

We're Here to Help

If you need inspiration for your project or practical assistance with specification, you can always rely on our team of printing professionals. Our goal is a successful outcome for you!

PrintHint!

Making the Gradient

Gradients are easy to create using almost any illustration or layout software, but there are pitfalls to avoid – particularly banding, where transitions between values appear conspicuously stepped. One way to sidestep the problem is to avoid creating a gradient as a fill.

Instead, use your image editing software to create a TIFF file of the gradient, either directly or by rasterizing the file from your illustration application. Using the “add noise” control, at 3 or 4%, will add enough irregularity to the halftone dots to avoid any visible steps. You may also wish to experiment with blur and median controls. You can then use the TIFF image in your layout program as you would a photograph, or in your illustration instead of a fill.

Proof Positive

Q. What are some of the advantages of the different types of proofs that are available? Which is the best choice?

A. There is a greater variety of proofs available now than ever, although many are simply proprietary variations on the core technologies.

Proofing Basics

The purpose of a proof is to see what the result of a stage of production looks like. Different types of proofs are good for showing different things at the various stages of a print job. The best choice for you is going to be the proof that shows best what you are most concerned to check at any stage of your project.

Desktop Proofs

These are the proofs you use to check your work before release to pre-press.

Soft proofing is checking work on your computer's monitor. *Hard proofing* is outputting the job on a desktop printer. The aim of proofing at this stage is to eliminate errors in copy and layout, not to check color accurately. It is very important to proof carefully early on, because changes and corrections are relatively cheap at this stage.

Pre-Press Proofs

These simulate the final appearance of the printed job at the stage where the plates or files that will be used on press are prepared. *Contract proofs* are accurate enough for a client to sign off and for the press operator to match on press. Ask your printer how closely their proofs predict color on press. You may still need to allow for differences in dyes, pigments and stocks from proof to press.

Pre-press proofs are used to check

color and tonal accuracy, registration and imposition, trim and fold marks, dot gain and moiré problems.

Proofing systems used depend on whether the workflow is film-based or digital (ie. computer to plate).

Analog Proofs

These include proofs made by exposing a sensitized substrate to light through composed film separations.

Salt or *blueline* proofs are best used to check copy, position of elements, color breaks, and for making folded mockups. They cannot indicate actual color, so for process jobs, or more complex match color jobs, a class of proofs called *photopolymer laminate* proofs are more suitable.

Different technologies are available, some of which can predict color very accurately, and some can laminate to the stock to be used on press.

Digital Proofs

A strong advantage of proofs output from digital files is reduced turnaround time. Again, some can predict color very accurately. The key factors are colorant, substrate and simulation of halftone dots – the most accurate systems use pigments close to those used on press, can proof on the stock to be used and have high enough resolution to reproduce halftone dots.

Press Proofs

Early sheets from the press are used in makeready to bring the job “up to color”, and at a press check, press proofs are what you evaluate. They allow you to check color accuracy, registration and dot gain – factors that are controlled by manipulating the press. Of course, changes to copy and layout are very expensive at this stage.

Some digital proofs are essentially press proofs because some digital workflows simply output a single sheet for you to approve the appearance of the whole run. This is close to the ideal of seeing exactly what your job will look like before it is printed.

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