

When it comes to a printed job, there are certain questions you should ask at the beginning to prevent costly errors and to make the most of your print budget.

Here are 12 important questions to consider before printing your promotional material:

#1 Did more than one person proof-read the job?

No matter how many times someone proof-reads a job, They can overlook the same glaring error each time they pass it. Another set of eyes can pick up on different errors. In fact, the more people that can proof your job the better. Unlike a website, print is permanent and mistakes can't be corrected.

Note: It's a fact that a spell checker will not catch all the mistakes on your text. More specifically, it will not catch misspellings that form other valid words.

#2 If we change the size of the printed product can we print on a smaller press and save money?

There's no need to have your A5 sized flyers printed through a large commercial printer. Never use one printer for all your projects. A printer who specialises in small-run jobs will be much more competitive for those 'spare of the moment' needs.

#3 Did you make a "dummy" or mock-up to check configuration and presentation of your job?

If you're producing a folded leaflet, for example, always the printing pages yourself to be sure you have them in the correct order. If you're in any way unsure, ask for help. The professionals will check the composition for you.

#4 Are you absolutely sure about the quantity to be printed?

A second print run will cost a lot more than extended first runs (or "run-on" as printers call it). If you're asking a printer for a quote of 10,000 copies, for example, be sure to ask them to provide "run on" costs as well. This will help to confirm how many copies your budget allows for.

#5 If there are photos in the document, do they need to be retouched?

One of the most common image changes I make in Photoshop is to adjust the 'levels' of an image. This is to make sure that white areas are bright white and black is actually black. This really helps with image contrast. Also, colour prints tend to get darker after scanning, and large reductions can make shadow areas heavier. Your designer will be able to help out here.

#6 Is the paper opacity sufficient or will there be any see-through?

If you hold a newspaper up to the light, you can read the text and see the images on the other side of the paper. This might be fine in the newspaper industry, where paper costs are astronomical, but you obviously don't want your corporate annual report to have the same effect. By choosing a good weight of paper stock (approx. 150gsm) you'll not only prevent this from happening, but your colours will print more brilliantly too.

#7 What about the texture of the paper?

Cheap paper feels cheap to touch. Is this the impression you want to give? When receiving a quote, why not factor in a few different weights of paper? You might be surprised at how little extra you need to pay for a higher quality paper.

#8 Can we substitute our choice of paper for a stock that is less expensive, while still looking as good?

Again, your printer will help here, and one factor this depends on is the amount of ink you're going to use. For instance, if you have large areas of black to be printed, you'll need a decent paper stock to prevent the paper going out of shape.

#9 Will ink colours change when printed on a particular type of paper?

Printing inks are transparent and will change depending on the brightness or "yellowness" of a white paper. Remember, paper critically affects the colour of your printed product.

#10 Does the printed sheet need a varnish?

If your print job is to be stacked and packaged, you have to be careful that the ink doesn't transfer from one brochure / poster / business card to another during storage and transit (this is called offsetting). Varnishing can be a useful preventative. You can also consider aqueous coating to guard against fingermarking and scratching. Most printing presses will apply anti-offset powder, which is a fine powder lightly sprayed over the printed surface of coated paper as sheets leave a press. This is normally sufficient to prevent ink offset, but if in doubt, ask.

#11 Can we print four colours on one side of the sheet and black on the reverse to give the illusion of a "four colour process" job?

If you want to use colour, but find that it's too expensive, you can always print one side of the paper using full colour with the reverse in black only. Newspaper companies use this technique to give the appearance of full colour printing. What you'll find however, is that a lot of the time only one side of a newspaper page shows colour, whereas the reverse of that page is in black only. This saves money, yet keeps a higher quality appearance.

#12 Can we combo-run any of the elements for a cost-savings?

Always ask the printer if there will be extra work. You could, perhaps, print some extra business cards on the same batch of brochures, perhaps saving you money.