



9 BIGGEST Print Mistakes and how to avoid them



Your Print Management Partner

9 BIGGEST Print Mistakes & How To Avoid Them

Print is a BIG part of business life, without it we wouldn't have the simplest of items.. like business cards, leaflets or letterheads.

This guide will iron out some common mistakes that we often come across and make it easier for you to decide how to buy your print.

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1 - DIY

This is the most common mistake made by businesses and one we see all the time - thinking you can create the artwork yourself. There are many reasons why you shouldn't be doing this.

1) is your time best spent creating artwork rather than concentrating on your business?

2) Do you have the necessary skills to create artwork to a print ready spec? There are many problems associated with creating artwork and not knowing the common print errors that you could be setting up. As an example... did you know there was more than 1 black you could use?

3) Do you have the necessary software to create the type of item you're having printed? Using a basic word processor software to create a leaflet is seen all too often - the result will never look like you want it to.

Creating artwork for print is not as easy as it would seem. You should always trust this part to professionals. They will take a detailed brief from you, create concepts for you to check through and then create the final print ready artwork to be sent to print.

ALWAYS make sure you own the rights to the artwork, not the designer, so that you can change suppliers in the future if needed.

2 - Colour Me Bad

This is a big one but don't feel bad if you've done it! We've worked with large, well known companies who's print buyers have said this...

"I've just received our new brochures and the colours don't match the colours on my screen...have you printed it wrong?"

You see, unless you have a calibrated monitor running to the same set up as the printers then your screen will always show a different colour to what will be printed. If you have an item that is colour critical then you should always ask for a printed proof. However, if you have used specific Pantones in your artwork then rest assured that they will always be printed correctly. There are a few kinds of proof - just so you are aware these are:

- PDF Proof - Ideal for content and layout checking
- Lo Res/Imposition Printed Proof - Again, ideal for content and layout, at size. We also use this to check for correct folding & finishing.
- Hi Res Printed Proof - This should usually be a calibrated proof and is ideal for checking colour - be aware that this can always differ dependant on the final paper being printed on.
- Wet/Press Proof - The most expensive of proofs. This proof requires an actual set up of the machinery used and is a printed example on the press using the actual paper.

3 - Stone, Paper, Scissors

There are so many paper stocks out there that you'd be forgiven for thinking it's all just classed as "shiny", "not so shiny", "like a letterhead", "quite thin", or "fairly heavy"!

A paper with a gloss coating reflects light well, as compared to matt-coated paper. It is also called art paper. The colour printed on gloss paper is usually brighter and shinier than on silk paper, although the reflection of light makes the text a little difficult to read.

What about uncoated paper? Use it! Because of greater ink spread, the images are duller than on glossy paper; the ink is absorbed more into the paper, the black will not be a rich deep black, but that's not important if you print a flashy fashion catalogue, a classy spa pricelist, or a bulletin about youth education.

Paper type also makes a large difference as to how the colours look and what finishing needs to be done. Silk (or Matt) paper produces nice quality print but does not have that vibrant colour finish achieved with Gloss. Silk paper also produces a non-glare picture. Coated papers above 170gsm that need folding will also need to be creased to avoid cracking - you should also be careful of too much ink across the folds.

If you're still not sure what type or weight of paper to use always ask your printer for advice - tell them the type of item you are having printed and what you're using it for and they will be able to recommend the best stock for your job.

4 - The Choice Is Yours

A common question we get asked is how we constantly manage to save money for our customers. Well our knowledge and experience in the print industry means that we know how to create every piece of your print.

We know what machinery, the processes it must go through. Every printer is different. Each one has different equipment and different employees who know how to do certain kinds of jobs.

Printing is art & craftsmanship combined. Most people who buy print don't truly understand that despite all the technical advances, printers still use the same techniques as twenty or thirty years ago, and in some cases 150 years ago. Printing is not just running paper through a machine. It takes skill to turn out quality print. Press operators have to adjust ink, water, plates and paper before they can print the first sheet. So how do you choose?

Communication is the key to picking the best for you:

- Ask what type of work they print.

- Ask to see samples.

- Ask what their average turnaround time is.

- Ask what type of jobs they do not handle themselves

This will help you decide if they are the best printer for you. After you ask your questions, it will become pretty obvious which company you should choose.

4 - The Choice is Yours cont.

The company that wants your business will prove to you they are the best printer to do your work. Conversely, a reputable printer will also tell you when they can't meet your needs.

It's good to remember that a printing press costs money to stand still, jobs will sometimes be placed onto machines that aren't the most ideal - just to keep them running, which could mean you're paying more than you need to.

Take your time to decide which printer you would like to use. and keep in mind, that unless your company employs a specialist print buyer, it is usually better to use a print management company as they will know which suppliers are best suited to produce different types of print and will be able to always get the best quality for your item at the best price.

5 - Bleedin 'ell

One of the biggest mistakes we see is not having enough (or any) bleed on print jobs. Bleed is an extension of artwork that runs beyond the edge of a design. It allows any movement in the finishing to be compensated for so there are no white areas showing around the edges after printing.

It's always best to have a minimum of 3mm around all edges that bleed off the page. This could be more depending on what you're producing.

****BONUS POINT 1****

Almost the opposite of bleed is a quiet zone. This area, on the inside of the cut, is to protect important text or images in your artwork from getting cut off or hidden when the item is folded or stitched. I would always advise adding a 3mm clear zone from inside the cut/fold line where nothing important is placed.



6 - Knowledge is Power

We hear this one quite a lot:

“Buying print is easy!”

Well yes - the purchasing of print is easy. You send over your file and some money and that's it, done. What isn't easy is the knowledge of the ins and outs of what you're actually buying.

- Is the item your buying exactly what you need?
- Is it being produced the most economical way?
- Could there be a better way of producing it to get better results?
- What kind of paper is it being printed on and what effect does this have on the colour or finishing that's needed?

For example an item that needs folding and is printed on a stock at 170gsm or heavier will need creasing before it's folded to prevent cracking of the paper.



7 - Time to Talk

Always talk to your printer about your project. Maybe they have a large amount of work coming up that will mean your item can't be produced in the timescale you need.

Communication is the key here. It will also give you a better working relationship with your printer. If you have a project coming up - pick up the phone, call your printer and let them know. This will ensure they not only know your item is coming up, which means they can put it in the schedule, it also means they'll have everything they need in for when your job is in production.

When it comes to the timing of your jobs always keep your deadlines in mind and remember that the more time before your deadline that you approve your final artwork then the more likely it is that any problems can be ironed out. Ink drying time, large volume print runs and finishing are all processes that need time and many jobs can take several days from sign off to delivery.

While we're talking about delivery, remember that your jobs will usually be delivered by courier - if you need your item on Monday morning make sure you tell your printer that you need your delivery on the Friday.

It may seem obvious but short/unknown deadlines are one of the most common issues a printer has to deal with.



8 - The Price Is Right

The old saying, “You get what you pay for” is completely true, especially in the print business. If you want quality print then you should choose a company because of the overall value you receive, not because they are the lowest priced.

Remember; Quality + Service + Price = Value

It's impossible for any company in any industry to offer the cheapest price, have the highest quality, and provide the best service all at the same time. You can get high quality and super service, but it won't necessarily be the cheapest.

Just like in your business, you hire the best people and buy the highest quality products — consequently, you should charge a price that reflects those aspects.

Inevitably, you will come across problems when you pick a printer who only offers the lowest price. Cheap printers don't usually stand behind their work if there is a mistake. Sure, other printers might do your printing for a little less money, but how will they treat you when there is a mistake with your job? This is especially true with online printers who usually operate from only an automated website.

To give the cheapest price, printers usually have low-waged or inexperienced employees who have not been adequately trained. They cut corners by using cheaper inks and lower quality paper or their machinery has not been serviced or maintained correctly. The end result is that you get what you pay for.

8 - The Price Is Right cont.

The little bit of money you saved ends up costing you more in the long run and the message that your printed items send out about your company isn't a good one. 500 Business Cards for £5 is not a good deal when you see the final product!

Remember that bad print directly reflects on the professionalism of you and your business and the standards of work you are willing to accept and deliver.

To avoid buying on price alone, we suggest you rank quality, service and price in the order that is important to you. The order of priority is likely to change depending on what you're having printed and what you'll be using it for. Then have a conversation with your printer or print manager about your priorities. It will probably become clear which print company is going to best meet your needs.



9 - Don't Join The Darkside

Outsourcing is not a new word. But it's usually an area of business that's frowned upon for certain services!

Lets look at a few areas of your business you may already outsource:

Accounts

if you're not an accountant then your strength will not lie in accounts, so I bet you employ an accountant especially to sort your taxes.

HR

If you don't have an HR director/Worker, then most likely you outsource this specialism, to make sure it's done correctly and within the law.

Cleaning

If you rent your own office or warehouse space I bet you don't spend Friday afternoon dusting the desks and emptying your bins. You can see where I'm going with this...

If you're outsourcing for some aspects of your business and still sorting your own print then it will be another area you can improve on. You see, print is a specialist area - if you have the right company on board to help with your print then you'll not only get better results, you'll even save money and precious time.

About Us



We're a family run print management company based in Northamptonshire, looking after print communications for a wide range of customers. We use our knowledge and experience of the print industry to save you time and money without sacrificing quality, leaving you to focus on your business.

Quite simply we provide high quality print, managed by experts to help you save on costs while growing your business.

Blue Star Print Solutions was founded in 2011 by Richard Markie with the sole aim to provide superior printing and distribution services that enable clients to easily and cost-effectively communicate with their customers.

We've worked, not only with local start up's, but multinational and internationally recognised brands to improve their purchasing and procurement of print and bring control of their brand back to the business.

To stop making mistakes on your print, and to experience a little print freedom for yourself. Get in touch with us now on 01933 698 123 or email us info@bluestarprintsolutions.co.uk.

It's Your Print, Our Passion



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