

# The Long Answer on...

## ...How to reduce your printing costs with Doran Printing

### The Problem

This is a dangerous thing for a printer to say but if you prepare or deliver the finished artwork used in the printing of your job, I'm sorry to say you are paying too much regardless of whether the printing was done through us or any other printer. This is especially dangerous because many customers would not be aware of the problem as we and every other printer do our best to shield our customers from this problem. Now before my customers get ready to lynch me, you haven't been getting ripped off.

Since Desktop Publishing was invented 21 years ago there has been a fundamental weakness in the way that artwork is delivered from customer to printer. The biggest problem is that it has been there so long that most people don't even realise there is a problem.

The simple fact is that the act of copying a job from one computer to another is enough to turn a perfectly well behaved piece of artwork into the job from hell.

It's not your fault – or ours, but the traditional methods used to deliver artwork are responsible for introducing more errors into the printing process than all the other parts of the process combined.

This has nothing to do with your skill level – or ours, your computer, operating system or your preference for one particular desktop publishing program over another, but this one issue has added a huge overhead to the printing industry and has contributed to the cost of every printing job.

This overhead is due to the amount of work printers have to perform on almost every customer delivered job just to get it back to condition it was in before it left their computer. The problem for the printer is that they can't and don't charge anywhere near enough to fix these problems. So it's losses all around, you pay too much, the printer doesn't cover their costs and nobody wins as the money is just thrown into a continually self perpetuating pit of problems.

One American study has shown that 78% of jobs with customer delivered artwork need substantial work at the production end to make them print ready.

Heidelberg, the Rolls Royce of printing press manufacturers, has described the problem in this way. When a customer is preparing artwork for print it is like putting a jigsaw puzzle together, when the puzzle is complete it is time to send it to the printer.

The problem is that the methods used to deliver the artwork to the printer are the equivalent of pulling the jigsaw puzzle apart and leaving the printer to put it back together again – which wouldn't be so bad if the delivery method didn't cause some of the pieces to get broken, lost or change shape, colour and/or size on the way.

For example;

One regular printing job is a poster sized wall planner that is covered in advertisements. Each ad is virtually a mini prepress job in itself. Every quarter this job arrives and would typically take two experienced prepress staff between a day and half and two days each to prepare the file for printing (Not the customer's fault). So the best case scenario is two not inexpensive staff working 12 hours each on this job, even at the loss making rate of \$50 an hour there is a \$1200 stone tied to the neck of this job. But a printer can't hit a client with a \$1200 preparation bill, so the printer absorbs it as an overhead and a little piece of that job and all the other jobs like it get added to the cost of every printing job. With a few notable exceptions this practice is across the entire printing industry.

And this is one of the positive stories, the job is regular, the issues a known quantity, the deadlines not urgent and a good working relationship between the artwork creator and the production staff.

For every positive Customer Delivered Artwork story there are four bad ones, with the following laws applying.

- The simpler the job appears when the printer is quoting it the more likely there is to be some tiny but crucial and unfathomable problem within the artwork
- The likelihood of there being a time sapping niggly problem with the artwork is in direct proportion to the urgency of the job.

This is still the good news, this assumes that all the problems get discovered and fixed in prepress. But by sheer weight of numbers some problems don't get noticed straightaway, they slip through the cracks and go deeper into the production process with the cost of fixing them rising dramatically with every step. Sometimes it is too late, the job is printed and distributed before the problem is discovered and the printer, designer and customer take their partners for the red-faced "It's your fault!" dance.

As previously said, it isn't anybody's fault as such, the normal methods of customer delivered artwork were the only way available for a long time, so long that many industry people have just accepted that that is how it is, but there is too much money being wasted to let this problem go unchecked.

The simple answer to this problem is to create and deliver a PDF suitable for high resolution printing. But not everybody has Acrobat or is willing to fork out the \$400+ to get it. So then people try to source cheap or free PDF engines from the internet that frankly just aren't up to scratch for high quality work.

Even if the customer has Acrobat, although creating a PDF is simple, creating a PDF that will reproduce faithfully on high resolution printing equipment is not. The industry statistics are that four out of ten customer delivered PDFs will print, six will not. This is nothing to do with the capability of PDF to reproduce the highest of quality print jobs, it is about the huge number of variables when creating a PDF that trip people over.

Compounding the problem is the latest generation of Desktop Publishing Software that is able to create a PDF version that is so new that the current generation of RIPs (Raster Image Processor: we use a RIP to convert your artwork into the final format that ultimately controls the imaging of the printing plate) are unable to print.

Thankfully advances in PDF and Internet technology have delivered a solution to all these problems and some unexpected side benefits as well.

### The Solution

As you can see this is no small problem and as Desktop Publishing comes of age in its 21st year it is appropriate that this technology becomes mature enough to plug this gaping hole.

- The good news is that there is much time and money to be saved,
- The great news is that this latest method for artwork delivery is
  - Already well proven, both here and around the world
  - easier for you, your staff and / or your Graphic Designer
  - faster
  - more convenient
  - much more reliable
  - cheaper
  - provides more feedback
  - and gives you more control

## PDF Express

The job could be anything from a flyer a receptionist to put together in MS Word or PowerPoint or it could be an 88 page, 6 colour annual report prepared for a Fortune 500 company by a St Kilda Rd Agency using Indesign, Photoshop and Illustrator.

In Australia there is a clear leader when it comes to the delivery of artwork to printers called PDF Express. PDF Express is about 4 years old and delivers jobs to Printers all over Australia. You may be surprised by some of the non-printers that already use the PDF Express engine, Fairfax, University of Queensland and RMIT amongst others.

PDF Express uses a high quality PDF Engine that is available from us for you for FREE. The main benefits of this solution have to be the simplicity and speed with which a high quality PDF can be created, proofed and delivered.

This is how it works;

1. You print your artwork from the application you created it in using the supplied PDF Printer and click "OK" when asked.
2. The PDF is created automatically for high quality output on our equipment. You don't need to touch a thing. When it is finished the PDF opens automatically for you to check that everything is to your satisfaction.
3. After you have checked it, close the PDF and you will see a window open with "Preview" "Submit and "Cancel". If you are happy with the PDF click "Submit"
4. The PDF is then uploaded to the our website, where you can log-in, tell us how you want it printed and check the status of other jobs.

## Dramatic Results

Remember the job I mentioned in the problems section that had \$1200 worth of prepress in it with two operators spending at least a day and half each prepping the job? Well the customer converted over to PDF Express and the next time the job came in one operator had the job proofed in an hour and printing plates made inside 2 hours.

And the system is just as beneficial in saving your time too. One production manager at a trade magazine publisher worked an hour less everyday after converting to this workflow.

So how does this help you?

1. It's Free
2. Well, your artwork is a dream for us to work with, fast, small, high quality and no nasty surprises waiting, so;
  - a. We can turn your job around faster and be more confident in committing to a deadline for you
  - b. The ease of processing will be reflected in the prices quoted to you, meaning our quotes will be cheaper than what you are used to
  - c. As you become comfortable with the system you may decide you don't need proofs printed, saving more time and money
3. It's much faster than any other delivery method, by the time you have finished filling out the order the job is as good as in our hands.
4. It's always available, you can use it 24 hours a day 7 days a week
5. It's reliable, the PDF you see on screen is the print job you will receive
6. You can give the software to your Graphic Designer for sending your print jobs through
7. You won't dread the phone ringing when you have a job being printed