

TIPS FOR PRE-PRESS PREPARATION

The following tips could save you time and money by avoiding technical problems when preparing your files for digital output.

Always - Provide a hard copy (laser print) of the final file for us to check your film against.

1. Always use the correct software package to assemble your files and graphics. Microsoft Word, Power Point, and Word Perfect were not intended for prepress use, and lack some of the colour and font-handling abilities necessary for quality output. Try and always use applications like Freehand, Illustrator, Indesign, Corel Draw and Quark Xpress. Avoid drawing programs to produce your page layouts for long documents and booklets as they don't impose well.

2. Illustrator, Freehand or Corel Draw for vector-based graphics and always save them in the EPS format if you place them in a page layout program like Quark, also remember to convert the type to curves/paths before exporting.

3. Stick to the TIFF (Tagged Image File Format) or EPS (Encapsulated PostScript) formats when saving colour or greyscale raster images, and always use TIFF when saving 1-bit line-art raster images. TIFF and EPS are the most stable formats in the industry, and will rarely pose output problems.

JPEG format images are not compatible with high resolution OPI RIPs, and BMP or GIFF formats will not RIP at all. RIFF, DCS and WMF files are also not supported. The presence of any of these images in your file will necessitate extra system time. PICT files will image, but not trap, and should be avoided. (Note: TIFF format 1-bit line-art images are the only 1-bit images capable of being trapped).

4. Postscript® Type 1 fonts should be used if available. TrueType fonts often yield good results, but can be unstable, and sometimes drop certain characters or yield major kerning problems. We can accommodate TrueType, and are happy to do so, but cannot be responsible for the problems they sometimes present. Do not use "styles" for fonts in the application. If the font does not have a bold or italic version, it will not print that way on our Postscript 3 system.

5. When incorporating graphics into your layout, always import them - never copy and paste them onto the page. Pasting graphics from the clipboard results in no OPI callout being referenced in the file, and hence cannot be trapped. In many cases these graphics can prevent the file from RIPing at all. Also, even though some programs support proprietary formats such as native Illustrator or Freehand files, always use either TIFF or EPS format for your graphics.

6. Never use the hairline rule option in your page layout or drawing programs. This tells the Postscript device to image the line or rule at the thickness of one device pixel. On a 600 DPI laser printer this would appear fine, but on a 3600 dpi Imagesetter, the line will almost disappear and will not transfer properly to plate. Always stick to a thickness of at least 0.2 points.

7. Pay close attention to your spot colours. Spot colour jobs are much more difficult to manage than CMYK, and require special attention to assure that your film is not missing graphics or text because elements were assigned a CMYK colour instead of a spot colour.

8. Avoid using QuarkXpress to create "fake" duotones. Even though XPress enables you to fill a picture box with a colour behind a photograph and give a duotone effect, it will not image on a RIP. Use Photoshop to create the same effect by making a duotone with the spot channel set as a flat line to the desired percent of background fill.

9. Make sure none of your XPress graphics have a Non-White Areas clipping path. This type of choppy clipping path is automatically assigned to graphics in v3.x documents opened in v4.0 to 4.02, whether they need to be clipped or not, and is undetectable on screen. Use the Modify-Clipping dialog box to double check suspicious graphics.

Do not use MS Word or MS Office programs for colour printing.