



# Ensuring a Quality Print Job: 5 Essential Elements

Your company's print pieces can elevate your reputation and make important new client connections, but you also have to balance cost and timelines when creating them. Knowing what to prioritize with your print services partner can help guarantee a quality piece. Here are some expert tips from Staples' Stephanie Cassel, Premedia Specialist, and Charlie Takita, Senior Operations Manager, to help you decide where to focus your attention during the printing process.



## DESIGN

Great design is the foundation of any effective print piece. Cassel suggests finding a printer that understands that and will act accordingly. They may be able to propose design ideas you hadn't thought of, such as interesting die cuts or folds. That outside perspective on your design ideas can be invaluable, and their expertise can also help you achieve your goals without exceeding your budget.



## MATERIALS AND SPECIAL TECHNIQUES

Once you have the right design, you need to make sure you're using the materials and special techniques that will showcase it in the best possible light. Consider details like the weight of the paper, coating, size and shape. Cassel cites spot varnish, a special finish that adds shine to printed areas, as a great way to emphasize aspects of the letterhead or business card. "Something like that will stick in a consumer's mind and will speak to the uniqueness of your brand," she says.



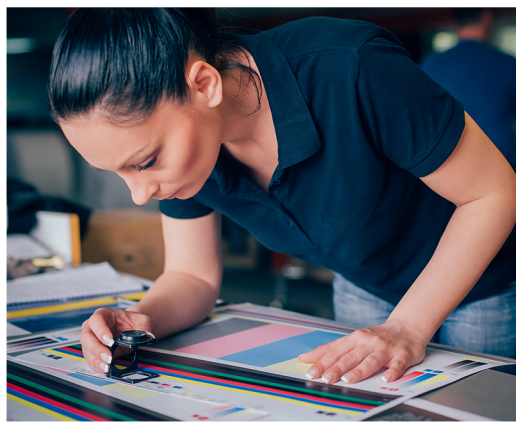
## FIFTH COLOR OPTIONS

Printers are no longer confined to the limitations of the traditional four CMYK inks. According to Cassel, fifth color stations, which make white ink possible, now allow you to print on colored or metallic papers. In addition, a clear toner-based coating can make elements like watermarks more readily available.



## DIGITAL VS. OFFSET

Understanding printing techniques can help you decide which method suits different print jobs. Takita notes that color fidelity has come a long way in digital. In many cases, only the most discerning eye can tell the difference between digital and offset -- and for quick-turnaround, relatively low volume jobs, digital is best. That said, when color matching is essential and the volumes warrant it, traditional offset is the way to go.



## PROOFING

A rigorous proofing process helps ensure your print job won't be delayed by reprints due to printer error. Your printer should send you an online proof, but the process shouldn't end there. In digital printing, for example, Takita says printers should proof the "first out" to make sure it matches the online proof. And for all jobs, the printer should do periodic random checks to ensure color consistency. Ask your printer about their quality control process.



## ACCOUNT MANAGER

Through all of these decisions, your printer should feel like a partner. "You should know your account manager and be communicating back and forth — a lot," Cassel says. Takita adds that your account manager should be willing to work with your budget limitations and timelines, too. "They should listen, understand your intent from the beginning and provide alternate suggestions without breaking the bank."

To learn more about the printing process, visit Staples online at [www.staplesadvantage.com/print](http://www.staplesadvantage.com/print) or call 1-844-243-8645.