

# 45th Annual **PRINT DESIGN SURVEY**



## **Sponsored by Agfa Graphics**

Agfa Graphics has long been a world leader in prepress solutions for the printing and publishing industry, a champion of the power and beauty of printed communications, and an important advocate for graphic designers and other print buyers. In this spirit, Agfa Graphics has launched an exclusive new program, GreenWorks™, as part of the company's environmental recognition and support efforts. The GreenWorks program honors Agfa customers who are proactively involved in environmental responsibility. The program encourages print shop owners, managers, employees, and the creative community to adopt greener technologies, policies and procedures, as well as helping customers maximize the results of their green efforts and giving the company a broader platform to spread the word about the need for environmental responsibility. At the end of the survey, you will find some thoughts from Agfa Graphics on 'Green Printing Made Easy,' including 5 questions to ask your printer. For more information on GreenWorks or to find printers who have already achieved the recognition, visit [www.gdusa.com/agfa/](http://www.gdusa.com/agfa/)



## Relationship-Building

SEVERAL BROAD THEMES COULD PLAUSIBLY AND ACCURATELY SERVE AS THE LEAD STORY IN THIS, OUR 45TH ANNUAL PRINT DESIGN AND PRODUCTION SURVEY. THESE INCLUDE:

The continued predominance of print and collateral as the way designers earn a living, illustrated by the finding that 94% of GDUSA readers work in print as part of their mix.

The pivotal role of designer as paper specifier and print buyer, with 88% of readers saying they specify paper in their jobs and 87% buying printing as part of their responsibilities.

The growing influence of sustainability and stewardship in the paper decisions, as exemplified by the 48% who said they are specifying environmentally-friendly papers more often, and that third party certifications matter.

The ongoing penetration of digital printing and digital workflow in the process, revealed by the fact that 77% of readers, a new record, say they are buying or recommending digital short run.

But in the end these numbers, while revealing, are simply markers along the way to the unfolding of the real story: Print endures, despite the obvious allure of digital media, because it remains supremely effective at creating relationships between communicator and audience, between company and client.

The essence of this argument, expressed explicitly or implicitly by the vast majority of survey respondents, can be stripped down to three points.

First, the classic strengths that have made it a powerful communicator over the ages — permanence, tangibility, sensuality, physicality, convenience, portability — still matter to human beings. Indeed, these qualities and characteristics can be more important than ever in the ephemeral world of digital communications because they offer the impact of a physical experience and a human connection that is fading from our daily lives.

Second, a quality printed piece promotes credibility, trust, confidence, the promise of a relationship between sender and receiver. The very tangibility, physicality and sensuality of print suffuses the content with a sense of authenticity. The message feels real, it looks real, it springs from an identifiable source, a real person, a real location, an act of craftsmanship, an intelligence to which one can relate, a human connectedness.

Third, these positive arguments are amplified by lingering concerns over online communications: the legitimacy of information or the source; the permanence, safety, security and privacy of said message; the intrusive and offputting nature by which many messages arrive; and the veracity of claims about measurability and return on investment. This may all be as simple — and as profound — as saying that digital transmissions are too easy and, at the same time, too fragile to convey certain messages, and too diffuse to be the repository of a business reputation and a personal past.



THAT'S A MOUTHFUL FROM US. A FEW SELECTED QUOTES FROM READERS CRYSTALLIZE THE ARGUMENT WITH MORE BREVITY AND ELEGANCE.

Print is an important foundation for nearly any brand. Historically, print is recognized as a commitment to the brand, inherently valuable and respected. Until history changes, print will remain the credible choice.

— Sherie Presta, Presta Creative Service, Chicago IL

Print is very relevant in both my personal and professional life. The human interaction and connection with the tangible piece creates a relationship and is something the web can never replace.

— Melissa Mancuso, Glen Rock PA

People trust what can be perceived by the senses. Digital media only utilizes sight and sound. But print incorporates feel and touch. It involves more sensory perception and interaction than digital media, making it more trustworthy.

— Greg Blair, Blairdesign, Rockford IL

Print is a vital part of design because it puts my clients literally in their customer's hands. As a young designer (24), I would much rather have collateral in my hands ... it truly and in a tactile way, connects me to the company. I am getting tired of online mediums ... Print has so much more character and presence.

— Shanda Hasse, White Sparrow Design, Lubbock TX

There is a credibility gap between print and digital media for one primary reason: the consumer knows that today almost anyone can create a professional looking web presence without a large investment. When you're talking print, readers either know or can sense that if something has been well designed and printed ... then that means the company must have strength. As a result, printed materials inherently exude credibility.

— Emily Andros, The Marketing Department, The Woodlands TX

**The media world may be changing but people are the same. Print and paper are tangible and dramatic, and so continue to have value. Touch equals trust.**

— Peter Levinson, Levinsonblock, Brooklyn NY



# 94% Work In Print

## What types of media have you designed for in the past year?

Print .....	94%
Internet .....	77%
POP/Sign/Display .....	64%
Packaging .....	53%
Broadcast/Film/Video .....	24%

## What percentage of your time is spent designing for print?

# 71%

## What percentage of your projects involve print?

# 70%

## What kinds of print projects have you worked on in the past year? (IN ORDER)

1. Brochures/Collateral
2. Sales Promotion
3. Direct Mail
4. Print Advertising
5. Identity/Letterhead
6. Cards/Invites/Announcements
7. Posters
8. Publications/Periodicals
9. Annual & Corporate Reports
10. Packages/POP/Signs
11. Catalogs
12. Calendars

Before reviewing additional quotes — we received literally hundreds of them covering varied topics — let's turn to the numbers.

The 2008 survey results show the degree to which print is vital to the business of graphic design. The annual benchmark question is how many readers — creative professionals at graphic design firms, advertising agencies, corporations, non-profits and other institutions — design for print as part of their jobs. This year, a robust 94% of respondents say they design for print as part of their media mix. This is an uptick from 92% last year and 91% from the previous year. It is a huge number that is more or less consistent with every GDUSA survey in memory.

This year we also asked what percentage of projects involve print design either completely or in part. Here, too, the dominance of print is confirmed: 70% of the projects of the average GDUSA reader have a print component to them; and 71% of the average reader's time is spent designing for print. (Not that any of our readers could be considered average.)

If more than nine in ten respondents design for print, for what other media are they designing, and how does this compare?

In 2008, the most notable finding is that internet work has surged: 77% of readers

report designing for the web this year, up five percent from last year and up 15% from 2006. Other activities — for example, p-o-p and package design — remain strong and reasonably constant as well.

This suggests a few important conclusions about how designers are earning a living, and where print fits.

One is that creative firms and departments are involved in varied and complementary projects across diverse media. Graphic designers are in the ascendency in the communications world precisely because they are at the center of responsibility and control over multiple media. Strategic and purchasing influence has long been moving upstream toward designers and other content creators, and that clearly remains true.

A second conclusion, perfectly consistent with the first, is that web design is having an impact on how time is spent and money is made. Taken together with the continuing strength of print, this suggests that cross-media projects — encompassing print and web components — are increasingly common.

As you will see in several of the comments later in the article, GDUSA readers note the importance of working across media to maximize campaign effectiveness.



## 87% Buy Printing

**Do you specify, recommend, approve or buy printing?**

**87%** YES

**13%** NO

**Are you buying printing more or less often than in the recent past?**

**28%** MORE

**55%** SAME

**17%** LESS

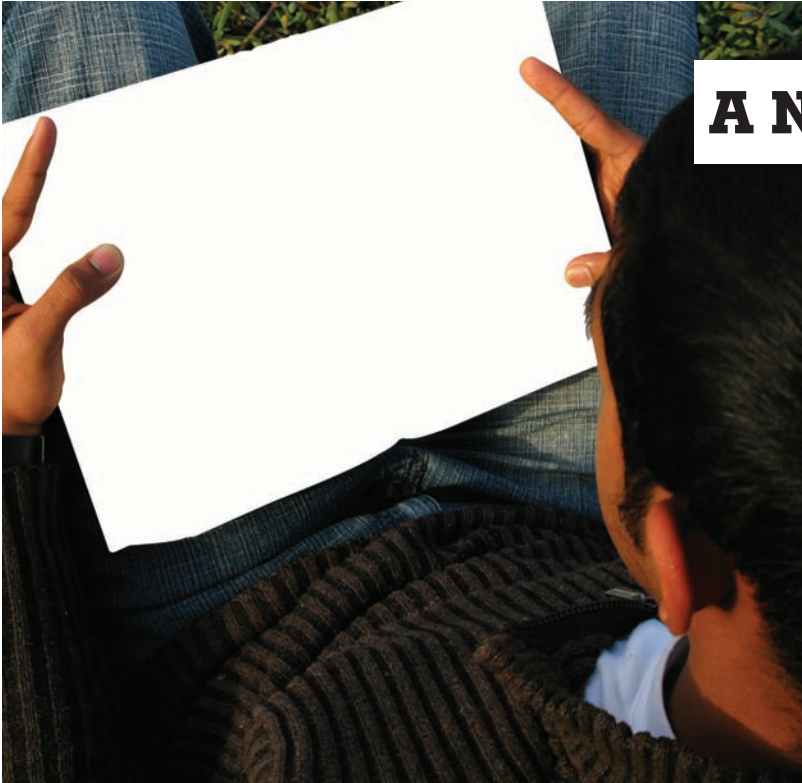
**What factors are most important when selecting a commercial printer?**

1. Quality
2. Price
3. Customer Service
4. Trust/Reputation
5. Environmental Practices
6. Digital Short Run Capabilities
7. Paper Knowledge
8. State of the Art Equipment
9. Easy To Use Website
10. Geographic Proximity

Print buying among creative professionals has been a growth activity for several years. This is accelerating as the traditional walls between design and production come crashing down, and the number of firms operating in a hierarchical manner with a dedicated print buyer function dwindles. For the third year in a row, nearly nine-in-ten respondents say they buy printing, at least sometimes, as part of their jobs. And as in the past couple of years, more designers say they are buying more printing than in the recent past.

What do designers look for in a commercial printer? Consistent with the theme of relationship building, the answers largely revolve around personal characteristics: quality, customer service, trust, communication, reputation, and the like. This strain of thought comes across especially clearly in the comments about print buying later in this report. Of course, in this era, price is always an issue and, not surprisingly, it pops up as second on the list.

Interestingly, “Digital Shortrun Printing” capabilities remained an important element in what designers are looking for in a printer — which provides a neat segue into the next topic.



## A New Digital High

**Do you specify, recommend, approve or buy digital short run printing?**

**77%** YES

**23%** NO

**Are you buying more digital short run printing?**

**58%** MORE

**30%** SAME

**12%** LESS

**Why do you use digital short run/on demand printing?**

Quick Turnaround  
Price  
More Precise Print Runs  
Ease of Digital Workflow  
Ability To Customize/Personalize  
Color Accuracy  
Environmental Friendliness  
Paper Choice

**Have you purchased printing online?**

**43%** YES

**39%** NO

**18%** CONSIDERING IT

It is not surprising that designers are looking to their vendors for digital presses and digital short run printing options. Indeed, the only surprise is that adoption of this technology took so long. As we noted last year, the value proposition for digital short run printing — fast, clean, efficient, customizable and seamless to the digital workflow — reflects the reality of this design era. Similarly, given the overall theme of this report — that print is strong at building relationships between consumers and companies — the precision, customization and personalization that short run digital print offers again captures the spirit of the times.

Our 2008 survey continues to document the fact that creative firms are embracing digital printing as color and image quality has improved, as designers become educated about specific advantages of the technology, and as the service has become more accessible.

Today, we report a new record level of use: more than three-in-four respondents in our survey — 77% to be exact — report having used digital short run printing the past year. Further, a remarkable 58% said they are buying or specifying digital printing more often now than in the recent past, and a mere 12% report turning to it less often. Those figures are up from 72% and 34% respectively.



## 88% Specify Paper

**Do you specify, recommend, approve or buy paper?**

**87%** YES

**13%** NO

**Are you specifying paper more, less or the same as last year?**

**27%** MORE

**52%** SAME

**21%** LESS

**What kinds of papers have you specified, recommended or bought in the past year?**

1. Coated Sheetfed/Web
2. Uncoated Text/Cover
3. Writing/Letterheads
4. Opaques
5. Recycled Papers
6. Transluents
7. Papers For Digital Presses
8. Synthetics
9. Holographics/Metallics
10. Laser/Copier Papers

As a companion figure to the 94% of readers who work in print and the 87% who buy printing, the 2008 survey also establishes that 88% of readers specify, recommend, approve or buy the paper used in print projects. This figure is similar to last year's survey, though it lags a few percentage points below the highwater mark reached in the mid-1990s.

In the broad sweep of graphic arts history, this figure is substantially higher than when GDUSA commenced publication in the 1960s and 1970s. At that time, the commercial printer and the paper distributor were largely in control of the final paper decision, paper choices were much more limited, and graphic designers had less influence. As we have noted earlier, the growth in responsibility and control by the creative community over paper decisions foreshadowed its control over all aspects of production — hardware, software, prepress, workflow, proofing, print buying and the like.

As for today, the comments captured in this report tell much of the story about the state of paper specification: On the one hand, creatives are committed to, and enthusiastic about, paper and what it represents in their personal and professional lives. They fully understand that the well-designed printed piece is more persuasive than ever in this cluttered era. And they comprehend that paper character and quality can make or break, enhance or undermine, a project or campaign.

On the other hand, they reflect the critical faultline in the graphic arts today: between quality and commoditization; between good and good enough; between the judgement of the designer and that of the client. Paper specification, they seem to say, stands astride that faultline.



## Sustainability + Stewardship

**Do you specify, recommend, approve or buy recycled paper?**

**57%** YES

**43%** NO

**Are you specifying recycled papers more or less often?**

**48%** MORE

**52%** SAME

**0%** LESS

**Are you specifying FSC or SFI Certified papers more or less often?**

**21%** MORE

**79%** SAME

**0%** LESS

Concern about the environment is being taken to heart by paper specifiers, paper-makers, printers and end users. Somewhere along the way — was it 2005, 2006, 2007? — the conversation about environmentally friendly print and paper broadened from recycled content to issues of sustainability and stewardship writ large.

More specifically, the 2008 survey finds that more than half of all respondents — 57% to be exact — specify recycled papers sometimes. Interestingly, 48% say they are specifying more recycled papers now than in the past, which compares quite favorably with the 32% reported in 2007. Similarly, a growing number of designers are taking FSC or SFI certifications into account, with 21% stating that they specify third-party certified papers more often now.

Similarly, as noted above, designers, in their role as print buyers, also claim to be making print decisions based on the eco-friendly practices of commercial printers, with “Environmentally Friendly Practices” rising to fifth in the list of print buying factors.

Finally, looking at the results from another angle, it is revealing that there was minimal talk of the traditional barriers to recycled paper specification — higher prices, aesthetics and performance concerns. Objections on these bases simply did not arise this year, in stark contrast to past years.



# Designers Assert Control

## Who is the most influential in the final paper selection?

(OUT OF 10)

1. Creative/Designer . . . . . 9.1
2. Client/Customer . . . . . 5.1
3. Production Manager/Buyer . . . 4.0
4. Paper Merchant/Spec Rep . . . 3.6
5. Printer/Print Sales Rep . . . . . 3.1
6. Prepress Shop . . . . . 1.2
7. Office Supply Store . . . . . 0.1

## Generation Gap

For printophiles, the robust results of the 2008 survey should be gratifying and encouraging. And yet, for the sake of intellectual honesty, a sobering issue needs to be raised. That is, lurking in the background is the notion of a coming generational transformation, a subject noted several times by survey respondents.

The theory is simple: each generation is growing up with more and more digital exposure, competence and comfort. At some point, so it goes, new leaders will take the reigns of the graphic arts industry who are less familiar with the strengths of print and paper — or, at least, more enamored with the strengths of digital and electronic media. What, then, will the results of GDUSA's 50th or 60th Print Survey look like? What then will all the talk about touch, tangibility, trust and relationships mean? The answer, to paraphrase Shakespeare, is not in the stars but in ourselves.

Who actually controls the paper decision? Historically, the question has intrigued the industry, and there has been a competitive tension among creatives, clients, production people, printers and paper merchants.

To address this matter, we ask GDUSA readers to rank, on a scale from one to 10 — with 10 being the most important — which titles or functions most influence the final paper decision.

No surprises this year. Designers rank themselves as highly influential in the paper decision process, with an average of 9 out of 10. This compares with a score of 9.2 last year and 8.4 in 2006. In a show of muscle flexing, three of four designers rank themselves as either a 9 or a 10 in decision-making power. The results would appear to be quite definitive, though it is always useful to remember that human beings have a tendency to see themselves as more central than they may be to a particular situation.

Runner up in the rankings is “The Client” at 5.1. During this decade, it has been fashionable to see the client as increasingly integral to the decision-making process — either as partners or as meddlers depending upon one's perspective. But, in truth, the past two years have seen perceived influence fade at bit. Several other highly knowledgeable actors also play a role in the elusive paper decision, paper merchant and printer in particular. A complete chart accompanies the story.

# Select Comments

## DOES PRINT ENGENDER TRUST, CREDIBILITY AND CONFIDENCE?

Print is an important foundation for nearly any brand. Historically print is recognized as a commitment to the brand, inherently valuable and respected. Until history changes that, print will remain the credible choice.

— Sherie Presta, Presta Creative Service, Chicago, IL

I totally agree that print is a vital part of design because it puts my clients literally in their customers' hands. As a young designer, I would much rather have collateral in my hands as opposed to having to look at it online and print it out. To me, a company is much more credible when I have their business collateral in hand — it truly and in a tactile way, connects me to the company. I am getting tired of online mediums because it all ends up looking the same — print has so much more character and presence.

— Shanda Hasse, White Sparrow Design, Lubbock TX

Traditional media is seen as more credible than digital media overall, but there is no doubt that traditional media must be partnered with digital media to effectively communicate, especially across age groups — Generation Y and younger age groups are immersed in digital communication.

— Cris Trautner, Infusionmedia Publishing, Inc., Lincoln NE

There is a credibility gap between print and digital media for one primary reason: the consumer knows that today almost anyone can create a professional looking web presence without a large investment. However, when you're talking print, readers either know or can sense that if something has been well designed and printed (especially on high end papers), then that means the company must have strength and the corresponding budget to be able to produce such an item. As a result, printed materials inherently exude credibility.

— Emily Andros, The Marketing Department, The Woodlands TX

On the issue of trust and credibility in print, I think it is still the most reliable medium. Its longevity is unmatched and people still like to handle and feel neat things. Interesting papers aren't used as much anymore because of turnaround time and cost, but if you can create something using them, even the CEO will show it to his friends. Nevertheless, we still need to adopt more technology in marketing. You can grab them with a cool printed piece, but if you want your target to respond quickly, electronic is the way to go.

— Michelle A. Lisec-Talarico, Information Technology, Inc.

Good print takes more time, thus more devotion. Yes, I think there is more trust in a well-done printed piece.

— Marshall Jones, Vision 3 Creative, Indianapolis IN

Digital vs. Print. Trash vs. Treasure. Fake vs. Fabulous. Quicky vs. Quality. "No" school vs. "Old" school.

— Clara Rosenberger, Rosies Graphics, Wickliffe OH

I don't think print pieces are necessarily more trustworthy. I think it depends on the design and method of delivery for the web piece. I do think that print is necessary in most campaigns, and that web is best used as support for the message.

— Brianne Swezey, Sensory 5, Tampa FL

Our real estate and financial clients still require print for reasons of trust and confidence, but they are slowly moving toward digital distribution such as PDFs and web-based apps.

— Lawrence Zempel, Cartifact, Los Angeles CA

I'll be honest, there's still something about holding a piece of well-designed material in my hands. Though I know even in my daily role at the University we push towards more web-centric materials, with the rising popularity of FSC and SFI grade papers I don't think print will ever really die out.

— Breanna Fowler, Biola University, La Mirada CA

All age groups have a certain innate mistrust of digital — either due to lack of familiarity, to stories of identity theft and phishing, or even to their techno-savvy allowing them to understand just how changeable and dangerous the digital world can be. Until this changes, print will reign as king in terms of credibility.

— Jeff Jensen, Lutheran Family Service of Nebraska, Omaha NE

The trouble with online media, specifically the advertising, is that it is more invasive to users in the online space, creating a block between user and content. Print is more stable and respectful about letting the user decide where to put his or her attention, and this behavior has built up over generations. Perhaps online media is too new to have the same kind of relationship with its viewers. Print engenders the greater trust.

— Aaron Hoffman, Best Buy, Richfield, MN

The notion that print is more credible is a generational perception and will change in the next 5 to 10 years as leadership positions are filled by today's young professionals. They will figure out how to establish trust over new media.

— Juan Carols Lopez, Nema Associates Inc., Newark NJ

Print is effective at building confidence and relationships, especially for more expensive purchases such as cars.

— Patrick Kersey, Roland Digital Group, Irvine CA

I think print advertising is perceived to be more reputable. It has been around longer and is more recognized across generations not completely immersed in the web.

— Lenny Dichiaro, GSK, Parsippany NJ

I agree that print is better at building trust and relationship between company and consumer. However, I also believe that credibility depends more generally on the quality of the design of marketing materials and of the organization that stands behind them. Printed media engenders more trust than digital, but there are other factors to be considered.

— Billy Suherlan, Bus Creative, Alhambra CA



## Select Comments

### IS PRINT AND PAPER STILL RELEVANT IN YOUR LIFE?

The media world may be changing but people are the same. Print and paper are tangible and dramatic, and so continue to have value. Touch equals trust.

— Peter Levinson, Levinsonblock LLC, Brooklyn NY

Print is still very relevant personally and professionally. Even though there is increasing emphasis on the internet, I still think there is nothing better than physically holding and interacting with a well-designed printed piece. The human interaction and connection with the tangible paper creates relationships and is something the web can never replace.

— Melissa Mancuso, Glen Rock PA

Print will always be important. People like to touch and see things. Things will never change over entirely to web or digital media.

— Nora Mott, Nora Mott Designer, Kings Park NY

Print is always available and not at the mercy of technological breakdowns. No issues with software versions, computer/monitor settings, fonts, server failures, so you know what the recipient will be seeing. Most print is more portable than carrying around a laptop, and smart use of paper and inks can communicate and reinforce your message.

— Joan Connors, Merck & Co., North Wales PA

Paper still matters on boutique projects or high-end projects. All branding and identity projects incorporate the paper as part of the overall design and are as much an element of design as is the art going on it. The sense of touch is still important to the design process and can carry more weight throughout a branding campaign.

— Loren Gillum, Loren Gillum, Los Angeles CA

I recognize the importance of printed, tangible products in a world of websites-as-marketing. The majority of my entertainment and information comes from the web; however, I still read books, magazines and other printed materials — and paper offers a multi-sensory experience that the web cannot begin to imitate. The web has grown in importance, sure, but not to the exclusion of quality print work. Print is neither dead nor dying, for that matter, and it will always be relevant to businesses and consumers alike. It will simply coexist, just as radio, television and now computers coexist.

— Vincent Maglione, Big Sweater Design, Marietta GA

Paper is still very important. It says as much about the project as the design printed on it. The client may not always be aware of it. But the consumer will be, not so much if it's the right paper, but if it's wrong. And they may not even know what's wrong, but they won't feel right about it. I'm not sure if the brand of paper is as important as the type. I may be different than many designers, but I get excited about paper, I go online and subscribe to paper samples all the time. And I get giddy like a little schoolboy when they arrive!

— Daniel Tiller, Superfly Studios

I love paper in books, calendars, in most well designed, thoughtful and useful applications. Paper can make a piece very personal and portable. I hate the huge waste of paper in direct and junk mail. Even if it is recycled, we waste a fair amount of paper and, more importantly, water.

— Christopher Richard, Public Broadcasting Service, Arlington VA

Print is still very relevant in my professional life. As a consumer electronics company, we print our packaging and owners manuals for all our products. We have cut back on print quantities for literature because we post PDFs on websites and many customers will print it out from there. Print is also very relevant in my personal life. As a person who reads a lot, I can't imagine life without printed materials.

— Mike Keeley, Harman Consumer Group, Woodbury NY

In my opinion, regardless of how technologically advanced our society becomes, print will always be a timeless and indispensable medium to communicate. It just has the ability to grab your attention more than other mediums of advertising.

— Kristine Bowman, Navitar Inc, Rochester NY

Print is relevant, tangible, real, a record of time and place.

— Phillip Kesler, JSU Department of Art, Jacksonville AL

In my line of work, print is crucial. We actually rely heavily on print. Every week we put out around 15 to 20 ads to major publication locally. It is what gets us the business we need to stay successful. In my personal life it is just as big. I love to create print work to go on walls. Hanging artwork is a beautiful thing. There are very few people out there who could buy 1,000s of computers and hang them on the wall in their home or give to friends as gifts.

— Trevor Barley, FCCJ Artist Series, Jacksonville FL

# Select Comments

## WHAT DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A PRINTER?

It still all comes down to three basic musts: Quality, service and price! Some printers can offer one or two of the musts, but a great printer consistently delivers on all three of them. Of course it's a two way street: the studio or agency must adhere to exceptional communication and preparation to ensure a quality finished piece. Building a lasting and loyal relationship with print suppliers is good for the agency, the printer and, ultimately, the client.

— William T.P. Herrick, BH Graphic Arts Productions, Burton OH

A great commercial printer's not just great on price, but quality of print and quality of customer service. When you find someone that is just another extension of your company and puts as much effort and care into each job, you need to keep them!

— Amanda Henschen Rupert, BFM Graphics, St. Louis, MO

I want a printer to bring new ideas and concepts. As a media communications company, we need to stay in front of technology. Print is no different. We need vendors to bring new and exciting information about green initiatives, paper industry, new techniques and samples, samples, samples.

— Michael Deiner, JPL Productions, Harrisburg PA

Service is one of the key things I look for in a commercial printer. One that works well with us has good communication and is willing to do whatever it takes to get our job printed. Unfortunately that usually involves helping us put out fires. A good rep is always a plus for a printer because he or she keeps that company's name in the forefront of your mind and shepherds the job through for you. A trust relationship is built with the company through this person.

— Linda Bushnell, Lamb Graphics, Lincoln, NE

I prefer to have one printer who can provide all of my needs. This printer: prints most, if not all, standard products at competitive and fair prices; collaborates with me on solutions including printing test prints on various papers; accepts jobs with tight deadlines and provides reasonable turnaround; provides low-cost, low-volume digital printing; provides responsive customer service; is always available for face-to-face meetings; shows, explains printing and finishing techniques and processes; provides a mailing service; and is interested in establishing a long-term relationship.

— Juliano Boronka, Digital Studio Ten

Service, knowledge, capability, honest setting of expectations and delivering to those expectations consistently, the ability to help educate me and my team on print know-how and cost.

— Matthew Guest, Gaylord Hotels Brand Marketing, Nashville TN

Quality, speed, price and flexibility make a good printer. We use printers for a variety of projects — choice depends on many factors. Sometimes cost is the most important one. But yes, some printers are better suited for jobs based on the types of presses they have. Obviously if we have a six-color job, we need a printer with a six-color press.

— Amy Philips, Peak Biety, Tampa FL

Great customer service above all else! I want jobs followed up on and delivered on time! It's not all about the price for me; it's the relationship I depend on.

— Julie Schorr, Square Dot Productions, Goldens Bridge NY

I do not shop price, although it is a factor with some clients. I look for shops that offer excellent printing; near perfect on the first pull they show me, and who maintain a consistent press run matching my approved sheet.

— Michael Burgoon, Burgoon Design, Boyertown PA

Good communication supported by a competent and organized customer service team makes for a great working relationship with my print vendors. Good price, ease of the transfer, and quick turnaround, is what I look for when buying print. I rely more on my vendor's inhouse production team than I do on the relationship with the sales rep. I want to be able to speak to production whenever necessary.

— Marie Davis, Christopher Radko Starad, Tarrytown NY

"No" is not a part of vocabulary. A great printer just gets it done.

— Ken Deleon, Bozell, Plymouth Meeting PA

Great communication and a willingness to have the flexibility that some projects require. Specialized printers with more experience in specific processes.

— Carole Mayer, SJI Assoc., New York NY

The best printers I've worked with are interested in and sensitive to my expectations for a high quality piece. If there's a problem in preflight or on the press, I want to know that my printer is doing something about it and thinking independently. There's nothing worse than a big gang run printer who blindly spits out poor work, delivers it to me, and then sends a bill!

— Lisa Noble, Arlington, VA

I look, first and foremost, for a printer who prints color accurately.

— Daniel Mam, Clipper Magazine, York PA

I am always looking for a printer who will not sacrifice quality over a quick turnaround on a job. Every job is important to me. While I like to have projects back to my clients in a timely fashion, I also know that a high quality product is the highest priority. You cannot expect to have clients happy with the results if the printed product is poor.

— Scott Swain, Scott Swain Design, McCordsville, IN

Quality control will always be the most important trait in a printer. Of course, price and quality expectations differs depending on the project and, mainly, on the client's budget. Quality control is essential though; if it's either on a large commercial printer or an online discount printing company.

— Vanessa Correa, DPG Inc., St. Petersburg, FL

Obviously, a printer needs proper equipment and staff. But more important is the sales representative and customer service representative. If you have great reps, someone who will be an advocate for you within the printing plant, then you can build a strong, successful relationship.

— Stephen Paris, Lancaster Colony Design, Dublin, OH



## Select Comments

### DO ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS EFFECT YOUR PAPER SPECIFICATION DECISIONS?

The environmental impact of paper and printing is an important consideration for me, when specifying paper or printing. My focus is on sustainability, energy efficiency, and forest stewardship in a broad sense. Eco-friendly decisions are made by my clients and I in combination.

— Jennifer Whitelock, Philadelphia University, Dowingtown PA

With the growing emphasis on “going green,” it has become increasingly important to find an environmentally conscious paper that fits the project. It seems that all print elements of a firms’ identity package require a specific paper that fits the overall company message. Unless the budget on a piece requires absolutely the lowest price possible, selection of a paper that “fits” the message is always a crucial point of the design process. Promoting a LEED certified building, for instance, requires specific attention to texture, content and character of the paper. Direct mail pieces often benefit from a catchy design on an equally interesting stock. In my experience, choosing the perfect paper is as important as the design itself for reasons of print and unique appeal.

— Rachel Goss, Wiginton Hooker Jeffry, Plano TX

I would like to focus more on recycled/environmentally friendly paper. I would like to raise my clients' awareness about the issue. Most don't really care unless the job is well done and they are satisfied with the final product. I would like to see more information and resources devoted to the issue.

— Lucie Kolarova Stewart, Lucie Stewart, Falls Church VA

You can never be too green. Period.

— Adam Bank, Fish Head Design, Huntington NY

I use recycled papers more and more to try to do our part. There are many more good papers every year, with higher

recycled content. Some clients request it; more often than not I recommend the papers.

— Stuart C. Hellinger, Strangelande Productions, New York NY

Becoming eco-friendly is driven from within our firm as well as by clients. We are searching for a “house-sheet” at the moment and all the environmental concerns are critical.

— Lynda H. Donati, Green Soup, Williamsville NY

I still find that cost is still a serious concern for most clients. Only our most environment-savvy clients are willing to look into recycled papers.

— Tara Hoellerman, Tara Hoellerman Graphic, New Wilmington PA

I am actually sick to death of the entire hype of the green movement.

— Amy Stewart, Ami Designs, West Grove PA

Being an eco-conscious print buyer is extremely important to me. There are times when we stray outside of that, but very rarely. I'm working with folks within our institution to promote a recycling program. Currently, the college does not have one but, with a little effort, we hope to have everyone on campus recycling and conserving paper soon!

— Wendy Howell, Albany Technical College, Albany GA

I specify environmentally responsible papers when I can. Some clients ask for recycled specifically. It is all important!

— Kathy Corff Rogers, K Corff Design, Buffalo NY

We tend to complement our clients on issues of sustainability, and sometimes have the opportunity to enlighten them on recent eco-friendly developments in the printing and exhibits manufacturing areas. If not a client-driven initiative, we still look for opportunities to make the most informed, environmentally sound decisions.

— Russ Gazzara, Gecko Group, West Chester PA

# Select Comments

## DO YOU BUY OR SPECIFY DIGITAL SHORT RUN PRINTING?

I like the control I get with utilizing a digital press. It's a lot faster and I find the whole process faster. It is also very cost effective for me to go digital.

— Jordan Majkszak, Nest International, Gloucester City NJ

Color quality has come to scale. There are great options in variable data!

— Janice O Driscoll, Carient Communications, St. Charles IL

Overall, I find the digital printing experience satisfactory. Love the ease of workflow and the ability to offer shortrun color printing to clients as I live and work in a small-town rural area. I find that color accuracy can be a problem depending on the printer I deal with and their experience. With a little work and cooperation the final products have been fantastic. Overall, digital gives me the opportunity to provide small business clients with professional-looking 4-color product at a fairly reasonable price in short runs.

— Susan Hill, Papernet, Hastings MI

Our overall experience has been good. For most of my clients it is a great resource since they have a lot of collateral in which information is constantly in need of change and update.

— Sarah Harwerth de Marco, Harwerth de Marco Creative, Arlington Heights IL

Digital printing has come a long way in just the past few years. The quality is getting better and better. With low cost per price for small quantities, it is a great option for clients with small budgets on a tight deadline. I've found it to be very useful for direct mail projects.

— Brian Dnager, Intelligent Fish Studio, Woodbury MN

I have had a good experience. Digital printing is less expensive and more efficient.

— Paul Barth, Generate Design, Raleigh NC

The quality has gotten much better. For short runs or projects that have content that is likely to change relatively soon — it's great. We haven't used customization yet. Paper choices are not great yet or the printer's reluctance to use other papers may be at play here.

— Phil Means, Black & White, Louisville KY

We are using digital short run printing more than ever, mainly because of its price and the ability to print short runs. Information changes so frequently and digital printing allows for the design to be refreshed when necessary. The quality and color is still sub-par compared to offset printing but it has really improved in recent years.

— Steven Butler, CSI Image Design Group, Norcross GA

I like the quick turnaround... Digital printing is great for short run direct mail projects and special client-related presentations and/or books. We will continue to go digital based on the project and investment.

— Stephen R. Killebrew, Equifax, Buford, GA

I'm torn. I appreciate the ability to inexpensively produce short runs, but I've had enough experience with color banding and shifting to mourn the declining use of the offset process.

— Lisa Strand, Magnetstreet, St. Paul MN

Digital short run printing provides a quick turnaround, is less expensive and more efficient. The color is not yet as good as offset but with new technology innovations, I am sure one day it will be.

— Jason Caetano, Nebco Amwins Group Benefits, Warwick RI

When it comes to the overall look, I prefer to go with offset printing. The reality, though, is that more and more jobs are requiring shorter, digital runs whether it is due to a short turnaround time, or the ability to customize jobs more. Pricewise it is still pretty costly, but it seems like digital short run is becoming more and more affordable as the technology is refined.

— Lena Elkhatib, FJ Westcott, Toledo OH

Our inhouse studio has [a DocuColor] with great finishing and oversized print capabilities allowing us to produce short runs of practically anything we dream up. There are some amazing papers available for digital presses. Our machine and inhouse capabilities are essential in our fast-paced industry where architects are making changes to presentations up to the last minute and our designers are expected to produce results in a short timeline. Creativity on demand!

— Chris Sparks, Lionakis Beaumont Design, Sacramento CA

## DO YOU BUYING ONLINE PRINTING?

The print industry has vastly changed. No longer do designers order printing locally — primarily printing is now ordered online. Location is no longer a factor. Press checks are a thing of the past. Price, ease of FTP/instructions/templates are all important. Speed and quality determine price. Since I mostly am in the publishing/self promotion greeting cards/booking business I need a beautiful product and low price... I'll try some new printers online this year.

— Irene Zevgolis, Irene Z Design, Olney MD

As we move into an increasingly digital age, I'm always looking for quicker and smoother ways to improve my process. Online printing allows for instant gratification in file sharing, workflow, and ultimately end results.

— Stephen Swanson, Infogix Inc., Naperville, IL

The price is obviously great, as is the turnaround time. The online interface is easy and the whole ordering process is clean and simple. The drawback for us has been consistency. Even within the same run, but especially re-orders, color has been off. When we need high quality printing, we use our more conventional sources.

— Matt Bellisle, Spark Advertising, Neenah, WI

I have printed business cards through digital short run printing and found it to be convenient and inexpensive for the small amount that I needed. The quality was great for the cost and turnaround time was very quick. If I needed to use these services again, I most certainly would.

— Mitchell Miller, Letterhead Press Inc., Milwaukee WI

# AGFA

## Green Printing Made Easy

Creating a powerful message while keeping the job on budget is a designer's greatest challenge! Add to this environmental considerations and it's enough to make your head spin. But don't fear, we've created a short checklist of things to consider before starting a design project.

### Size Does Matter

Selecting the size of your document up front can help you avoid waste. Consult with your printer early to determine the best size of paper for your project.

### Recycled vs. Certified Paper Products

FSC or SFI certified materials are approved by a third party and assure that wood and paper products come from forests that meet strict environmental and social standards. If taking a stance on the environmental is important, consider FSC or SFI paper products.

### Should I Print It?

When done properly, print is a good choice that can also be environmentally sensitive. The key is to determine the best medium for your project to ensure success and then to carefully choose your vendor partner.

## GOING GREEN

### Five Questions To Ask Your Printer

#### 1. Does the printer have any environmental certification or seals of approval?

Printers can receive FSC or SFI certification by warehousing eco certified paper because it guarantees that the paper can be tracked back to an approved source.

#### 2. Has the printer won any environmental awards?

Manufacturers and environmental organizations are recognizing greener printers. Agfa Graphics, a leading supplier of pre-press solutions, recently launched GreenWorks™ a customer recognition program that recognizes printers who are taking extra steps to decrease their environmental footprint. Visit [www.gdusa.com/agfa](http://www.gdusa.com/agfa) to find a GreenWorks printer.

#### 3. Is your printer using computer-to-plate (CtP) chemistry-free , or low-chemistry plates ?

Most printers have made the switch from film to computer-to-plate equipment saving the additional step and the use of harsh chemicals, solvents, and developers. Today, eco-friendly printers are also choosing to use chemistry-free or low-chemistry plates, like Agfa's chem-free :Azura or low-chem :Amigo plates, which eliminates the need to develop the plate after it is imaged. And that eliminates even more chemicals.

#### 4. Are renewable energy resources being used?

Using renewable energy (hydro power, wind mills, etc.) can significantly reduce a printers impact on the environment.

#### 5. What about using soy- or vegetable-based inks (vs. petroleum)?

Do they varnish with aqueous-based coating? Soy- or vegetable-based inks are made from renewable resources. They emit dramatically fewer VOCs (volatile organic compounds), which are linked to greenhouse gases. Aqueous-based coatings also emit fewer VOCs than conventional petroleum-based varnishes.

**Agfa Graphics is the sponsor of the GDUSA 45th Annual Print Design Survey.**