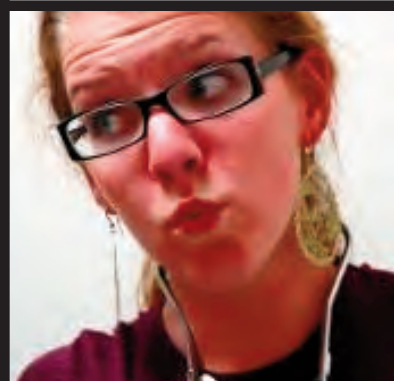
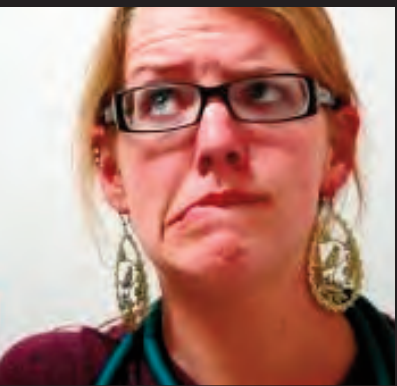


46th Annual Print Design Survey

MIXED SIGNALS

With the economy contracting and digital media expanding, one might reasonably expect this 46th annual survey to show our readers fleeing from print design. One would be wrong. The findings indicate that professional graphic designers remain deeply committed to the medium as a practical and a philosophical matter. They also indicate that the medium is going through an extreme period of change and challenge. It is fair to say that the signals — and the emotions — regarding the state and future of print are mixed.



Sponsored by Agfa Graphics

Agfa Graphics, once again, is the exclusive sponsor of GDUSA's Annual Print Design Survey. The company is a world leader in prepress and proofing solutions for the printing, publishing and packaging industries, a longtime advocate for the creative and production communities, and at the forefront of promoting green products and practices among printers and print buyers. The Agfa GreenWorks™ program was launched last year, and it has since recognized 100 printers from the U.S. and Canada for their environmentally-friendly printing policies and practices. To learn more about GreenWorks™ and for a list of recognized GreenWorks™ printers, visit www.gdusa.com/agfa

AMONG THE KEY FINDINGS:

Designers today still value print for its classic strengths as a medium — permanence, tangibility, physicality, sensuality, convenience, portability, authenticity, confidence. Indeed, many respondents report that these qualities and characteristics can be more important than ever in the ephemeral world of digital communications because they offer a human connection otherwise missing in our daily lives.

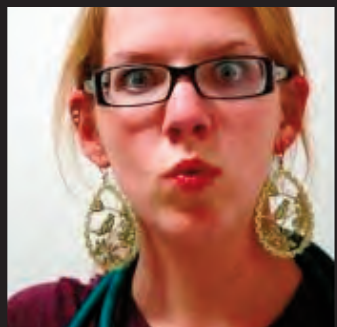
Print and collateral continue to anchor the business of graphic design, much as it has for decades. Some 93% of GDUSA readers work in print as part of their mix, more than 70% of projects involve print, and nearly 85% say they spend the majority of their time working in print, all figures similar to the prior year.

Graphic designers also maintain their pivotal role in the print process, with 87% of readers saying they specify paper in their jobs, 86% buy printing as part of their responsibilities, and the vast majority ranking themselves as the primary “decider” in paper decisions, again figures roughly consistent with the past couple of years.

Sustainability exerts an increasingly powerful impact in print decisions, as exemplified by the record 58% of designers say they spec environmentally-friendly papers, the 57% who are doing more so this year, and the growing number of specifiers who say that third party certifications matter.

A couple of non-traditional print buying options have notable traction, such as the remarkable (and record shattering) 86% of readers who say they are buying or recommending digital short run (on demand) printing, and the 44% (and growing) who are purchasing printing online for certain jobs. Their emphasis on precision, customization and ease of use seem to resonate with today’s designers and the ethos of the moment.

The sheer volume of print is dropping — buyers and specifiers are buying and specifying less — which raises some fundamental questions about the trajectory of print communication: Are we experiencing the cyclical and temporary impact of the economy? Or a watershed cultural and technological change that will finally force graphic designers to abandon their attachment to the printed piece? Or a middle ground in which print lives as a more targeted, rarified and personalized component of integrated branding and marketing?



And, before delving into the statistical results, here are a handful of quotes that capture the flavor the issues raised.

Print will always have a place in communications in all aspects of my life, personal and professional. Print's traditional strengths — tangibility, permanence, convenience, ease of use — are still true and relevant.
— Helen Bruno, Wiley, CA

While printing has certainly taken a backseat to the Internet for many companies with regard to getting the word out, print still plays an important part. Price has become the number one concern for most of my clients, however “bang-for-the-buck” also comes into play. Most clients are taking the stance that if I'm going to spend money on print collateral, I want it to be top notch. While the print runs are getting smaller, the quality of the paper is playing a larger role in the overall appearance and value of the printed piece. — JAMES DEMPSEY, The Graphic Mac, AZ

The notion of everything migrating to the web is silly and shortsighted. Print is a process linked to the important tangible aspect of communication. If the world ever moves to a “monitor-only” option, I am packing up and going to another planet. — NATHAN Y. JARVIS, Jarvis Associates, UT

Paper is a key to great marketing. Combined with excellent design, these elements can turn a good business into a great business. We try to give our clients the best of everything. Even though times are tough at the moment, it does not mean that we are going to slack off on the quality of paper and printing. — ASHLEY KEITH, Arc Design, NC

In this economic environment, it is paramount for companies to do anything they can to increase their brand's awareness. Those who do not will suffer by losing their market share to those who continue to aggressively market. Then, when the economy bounces back, they have to start from scratch while their competition is running at full speed. Unfortunately, most companies cut costs in sales and marketing first, which is like turning out the lights while the customers are in the store. And no one likes shopping in the dark. — SCOTT RASMUSSEN, RAS Graphics, CA

As budgets dwindle, we still try to have the most “wow” for our buck, but that means cheaper versions of “wow”. More affordable techniques such as use of spot color instead of four color, no full bleed, very little varnishing, embossing or non-standard die cuts. — TORY BORNE, PFCLG, NC

I spec FSC, windpower, carbon neutral, soy-based inks and recycled papers alot. We are a very “green-oriented” company. Even if the customer does not specifically request these printing attributes, we offer them as a value-added option.
— Brendan O'Hara,
Grossman Marketing, MA

Environmental issues typically take a back seat to affordability; particularly with more companies watching their bottom line closely during difficult economic times. We recommend “green” products and production whenever possible and, in particular, when enviro-friendly elements fit into the promotional message and can be emphasized.
— CHRIS SCHWEITZER
Creative Design Solutions OH

We have used digital shortrun printing for the past five years and have found it to be less expensive, more efficient and much faster than conventional printing. The color is improving and coverage is very good. We have used the personalization capability on 3D, bulky mailings with response rates averaging 46% to almost 90%. Clients have been astounded at its capabilities.
— STEPHEN LONGO
Stephen Longo & Associates, NJ

I'm finding that as long as a project is standard in format, online printing is a really good way to print affordably. Print quality is usually pretty good and prices are great. If something is more unique in format, it is not as great an option.
— TINA LEWENHAUPT, Lewenhaupt Design, CA

93% Work In Print

First and foremost, the 2009 survey results shows the degree to which print remains vital to the business of graphic design. Our benchmark question each year is how many readers — creative professionals at graphic design firms, advertising agencies, corporations, non-profits and other institutions — design for print. This year, 93% of respondents say they design for print as part of their media mix. This is perfectly consistent with the prior three years, which averaged 92.5%.

We also ask what percentage of projects involve print design either completely or in part. Here, too, the resilience of print is affirmed: 73% of the projects of the average GDUSA reader have a print component to them, up slightly from last year; and 68% of the average reader's time is spent designing for print, down slightly from last year. Moreover, 81% of designers report that the majority of their projects include print and 83% say that the majority of their time is spent working on print designs.

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

In 2009, online has consolidated its hold on second place in the terms of projects: 78% of readers report designing for the web this year, up slightly from last year but almost 20% higher than three years ago. Other traditionally mainstream activities — for example, p-o-p and package design — remain strong and reasonably constant as well.

This suggests a couple of insights 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 have established their centrality in the communications world precisely because responsibility and control over multiple media, and the status and purchasing power that comes with it — has moved emphatically upstream toward designers and other content creators.

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. That may explain why designers report slightly more print projects, but are spending modestly less time on the print component.

What types of media have you designed for in the past year? (In order)

1. **Print** 93%
2. **Internet** 78%
3. **POP/Signs/Display** 65%
4. **Package** 55%
5. **Broadcast/Film/Video** ... 24%

What percentage of your projects involve print?

73%

Designers for whom the majority of their projects involve print

81%

What percentage of your time is spent designing for print?

68%

Designers for whom the majority of their time is spent doing print

83%

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. **Identity/Letterhead**
5. **Cards/Invites/Announcements**
6. **Print Advertising**
7. **Posters**
8. **Packages/POP**
9. **Publications/Periodicals**
10. **Annual & Corporate Reports**
11. **Catalogs**
12. **Calendars**

86% Buy Printing

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. Once again, for the fourth year in a row, more than eight-in-ten respondents say they buy printing, at least sometimes, as part of their jobs.

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. Of course, in this era, price is always an issue and, not surprisingly, it pops up as second on the list.

The newcomer to the list — actually it first made its presence felt in a serious way in the 2008 survey — is sustainability. Environmental practices and policies are among the most important factors cited.

And, interestingly, digital short run printing capabilities rose as an important element in what designers are looking for in a printer — which provides a neat segue into the next topic.



Do you specify, recommend, approve or buy printing?

86% YES 14% NO

Are you buying more or less print this year?

MORE 24%

SAME 42%

LESS 34%

What factors are most important when selecting a commercial printer? (Top 6)

- 1. Quality**
- 2. Price**
- 3. Customer Service**
- 4. Trust/Reputation**
- 5. Digital Short Run Capabilities**
- 6. Environmental Practices**

Short Run Serge

It is not surprising that designers are embracing digital short run printing. As we have long observed, the value proposition for digital short run printing for a range of projects — fast, clean, efficient, precise, customizable and seamless to the digital workflow — reflects the reality of this design era.

The past few annual surveys have documented the rise of this option, as color and image quality has improved, as designers become educated about specific advantages of the technology, as ROI has become de rigeur, as databases have become more accessible, and as the service has become more available.

Today, we report a new record level of use: more than four-in-five respondents in our survey — 86% to be exact — report having used digital short run printing in the past year. Further, a surprising 81% said they are buying or specing digital printing more often now than in the recent past. This compares to only 24% of print buyers who say that, in general, they are buying more printing this year than last.

Designers who specify, recommend, approve or buy digital short run printing?

2009 86%
2008 77%
2007 72%
2006 62%
2005 52%
2004 35%
2003 24%

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

- 1. Quick Turnaround**
- 2. Price**
- 3. Ease of Digital Workflow**
- 4. Ability To Customize/Personalize**
- 5. More Precise Print Runs**
- 6. Environmental Friendliness**

Are you buying more digital short run printing?

MORE 81%
SAME 10%
LESS 9%

Have you purchased printing online?

44% YES
27% NO
(BUT CONSIDERING)

86% Specify Paper

As a companion figure to the 93% of readers who work in print and the 85% who buy printing, the 2009 survey also establishes that 86% of readers specify, recommend, approve or buy the paper used in print projects. This figure tracks last year's survey, though it lags a few percentage points below the highwater mark reached in the mid-1990s.

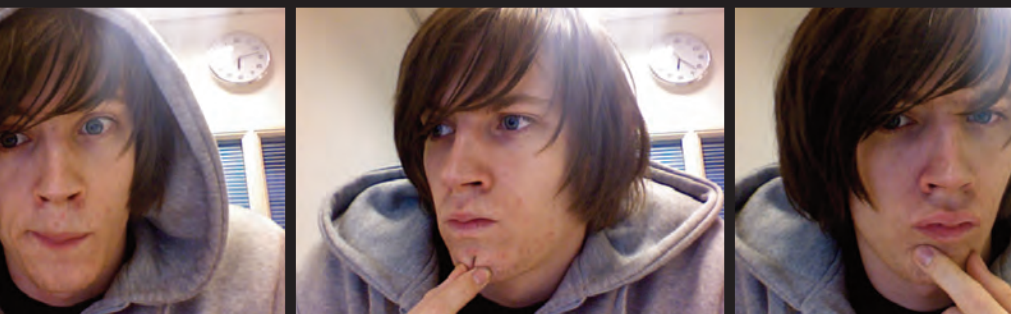
In the broad sweep of graphic arts history, this figure is substantially higher than when GDUSA commenced publication in 1963. At that time, the commercial printer and the paper distributor were largely in control of the final paper decision, paper choices were much more limited, and graphic designers 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, exacerbated by the recession. For example, only 19% of readers say they are specifying more paper this year than last, while 26% say they are specifying less. The remainder (55%) report that levels are stable.

Do you specify, recommend, approve or buy paper?

86% YES 14% NO



Are you specifying paper more or less paper this year?

MORE 19%
SAME 55%
LESS 26%

Types of Paper

What types of papers are graphic designers specifying? The two perennial leaders are Coated Sheetfed and Web, and Uncoated Text and Cover. This year, the coated contingent won out in the polling. Letterheads continue to surprise with a very strong third place performance, counter to the widespread belief that email has killed the printed letter and identity programs.

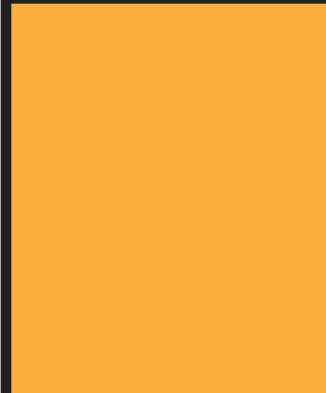
The other perennial top paper categories — Opaques, Transluents, and Synthetics — are joined this year by Papers For Digital Presses. This makes sense given the rise in digital short run print buying and the recent introduction of digital grades by several prominent papermakers.

Also of note, when we included “Recycled Papers” in the question — What Types of Papers Do You Specify? — it placed second in the rankings. Obviously, this designation cut across the main paper groupings, e.g., recycled can be coated or uncoated or letterheads or digital, but the high frequency with which they are mentioned is telling.

And, once again, we find a perfect segue into the next category.

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

- 1. Uncoated Text/Cover**
- 2. Coated Web/Sheetfed**
- 3. Writing/Letterheads**
- 4. Opaques**
- 5. Papers For Digital Printing**
- 6. Transluents**
- 7. Synthetics/Tear Resistant**
- 8. Holographics/Metallics**



Sustainability and Stewardship

Concern about the environment is being taken to heart by paper specifiers, papermakers, printers and end users. Somewhere along the way, the conversation about environmentally friendly print and paper has broadened emphatically from recycled content to issues of sustainability and stewardship writ large.

The 2009 survey finds that more than half of all respondents — 58% to be exact — specify recycled papers sometimes. Interestingly, 57% say they are specifying more recycled papers now than in the past, which compares quite favorably with the 48% reported in 2008 and 32% in 2007, and with the 19% of designers this year who say they are specifying more papers in general.

Moreover, a growing number of designers are taking third party certifications — covering forest management, sourcing, renewable energy, carbon neutrality and the like — into account. Nearly half of the designers reported specifying third party certified papers more often now than in the past. That is up from 21% a mere year ago.

Finally, as noted above, designers, in their role as print buyers, also report making print decisions based on the eco-friendly practices of commercial printers, with “Environmentally Friendly Practices” placing in the top half dozen factors for the second year in a row. This was true for general commercial print buying as well as the digital short run print decision.

Do you specify, recommend, approve or buy recycled paper

58% YES

42% NO

Are you specifying recycled papers more or less often?

MORE 57%

SAME 38%

LESS 5%

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

MORE 48%

SAME 43%

LESS 9%

Sustainability as a design factor in your projects is . . .

INCREASING 41%

SAME 53%

DECREASING 6%



Designers Assert Control

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

For the the 30th year in a row, designers rank themselves as the most highly influential in the paper decision process. Even taking into account that human beings have a tendency to see themselves as more central than they are, this results appears to be quite definitive.

Runner up is “The Client.” In the sweep of history, this is a relatively new phenomenon; the paper merchants and printers have held sway, ahead of the designer in the 1960s and 70s, and behind them in the 80s, 90s, and today.

But over the past five years clients have increasingly charged into the decisionmaking process — either as partners or as meddlers — depending upon one’s perspective. Why are clients increasingly assertive, as either partners or meddlers, depending upon the perspective? Economic conditions and subsequent budgets constraints, are surely one reason. Others may include broader knowledge about graphic design and its elements than past generations; greater competition among multiple media for scarce resources; concerns about “green” printing and corporate social responsibility; and a general spirit of collaboration between designer and client. Whatever the reason, this is a compelling example of why the exact locus of a paper specification can be elusive.

Who is the most influential in the final paper selection? (Top 5)

1. **Creative/Designer**
2. **Client/Customer**
3. **Production Manager/Buyer**
4. **Paper Sales or Spec Rep**
5. **Printer Sales or Spec Rep**



SELECT COMMENTS

The Present and Future of Print?

Even though media and technology is evolving to allow us to communicate in more “non-paper” ways, I believe it is simply creating more and more opportunities to communicate. Though print may be less practical at times, it allows us as designers to be more creative.

— Nicolette Crowton, Nico Graphics LLC, ID

Print still has an important place and right now is being somewhat overlooked. Print has the advantage of staying around longer than other media. It is physical, and you can read and re-read it, refer to it as needed. Email is fleeting and disappears into the vast amount we get everyday. I still prefer a printed catalog for many products. As things settle out in the future, the permanence of printed materials will be valued. Print needs to be part of the whole media picture.

— FELICE CROUL, Felice Croul Associates, PA

Print will always have a place in communications in all aspects of my life, personal and professional. Print’s traditional strengths — tangibility, permanence, convenience, ease of use — are still true and relevant.

— HELEN BRUNO, Wiley, CA

I find it difficult to envision a time when there won’t be traditional print media. Mostly because there is always going to be a human desire for contact and touch. Economically and environmentally, the balance has to shift, but I do not imagine we will ever leave behind the tactile pleasure of print. — HEATHER TCHIR, Javabeen Studio, NJ

Print has a place in the present and will always have one in the future. The internet is nice, but nothing compares to holding the real piece in front of you and experiencing the magic of it in front of your eyes. For direct mail, I feel print is more effective than email blasts; I don’t bother reading most emails anymore. As for magazines, I like to page through them and feel the texture of the pages; digital magazines are just not the same. — YELIZAVETA SEMERIK, YSS Design, PA

While printing has certainly taken a back-seat to the Internet for many companies with regard to getting the word out, print still plays an important part. Price has become the number one concern for most of my clients, however “bang-for-the-buck” also comes into play. Most clients are taking the stance that if I’m going to spend money on print collateral, I want it to be top notch. While the print-runs are getting smaller, the quality of the paper is playing a larger role in the overall appearance and value of the printed piece. — JAMES DEMPSEY, The Graphic Mac, AZ

The notion of everything migrating to the web is silly and shortsighted. Print is a process linked to the important tangible aspect of communication. If the world ever moves to a “monitor-only” option, I am packing up and going to another planet.

— Nathan Y. Jarvis, Jarvis Associates, UT

Print will remain relevant in the future, but the techniques and technology will change. As we move into a digital age, people will want more instant results from print. The ability to manipulate and change data and imagery on the fly, and have a tangible result, will be in great demand. No matter how digital we may become, people want the gratification that a tangible print gives them.

— DIANA HUSTEDT, Luxottica Retail, OH

Print still has a place in communications. Most of my design work is for recruitment and retention pieces regarding clinical drug trials. It is essential to have printed materials — posters, brochures, cards — to inform potential participants and give them something to take with them for later reference, to show others, to share with their doctor. The printed pieces direct people to websites for additional information and interaction.

— KATHY NEWCOMB, KV Graphic Design, PA

Nothing compares to an actual piece being held, felt and viewed. New media is definitely growing, especially in this economy, but print is still relevant, especially among certain demographics.

— JASON SCHAEFFER

Big Brothers and Big Sisters, PA

The Impact Of The Economy On Your Print Work And Decisions?

Paper is a key to great marketing. Combined with excellent design, these elements can turn a good business into a great business. We try to give our clients the best of everything. Even though times are tough at the moment, it does not mean that we are going to slack off on the quality of paper and printing.

— Ashley Keith, Arc Design, NC

In this economic environment, it is paramount for companies to do anything they can to increase their brand's awareness. Those who do not will suffer by losing their marketshare to those who continue to aggressively market. Then, when the economy bounces back, they have to start from scratch while their competition is running at full speed. Unfortunately, most companies cut costs in sales and marketing first, which is like turning out the lights while the customers are in the store. And no one likes shopping in the dark.

— SCOTT RASMUSSEN, RAS Graphics, CA

Our business is doing better than before the downturn. We are a small "boutique" agency because we present a cost-effective means for companies as an alternative to the bigger, more expensive agencies. The downturn will end when confidence returns, and confidence will not return until the press starts talking positive instead of hitting the panic button. Perception is reality. Let's change the perception.

— DEBRA STROUT, Velasco & Associates, IL

We are doing more inhouse printing projects to save on costs, and turning to more electronic communications methods — emails, blogs, etc. — to get our message out. The economy will get better and, hopefully, these "greener" and more affordable methods will stick with us.

— DAVID LAWRENCE, American 1 Federal Credit Union, MI

We have definitely been cutting down on printing and doing more electronic delivery. I am very hopeful this downturn will end soon.

— TARA O'NEILL, SAP America, PA

Briefly, I find clients are interested more in web delivery of PDFs rather than having every item printed. I do find clients concerned with eco-based decisions for paper buying. But lately they have been leaning toward economy-based decisions rather than eco-based ones. I'm optimistic that things will improve. But for my larger clients, this year's budgets and next year's have already been affected so much that it won't help until at least 2012 or 2013 given their product cycles.

— JEREMY BECHTOLD, OBD Creative, PA

We have seen our clients trying to spread their marketing dollars further, and this often means doing digital promotions instead of print.

— LIZ SCHWARTZ

Launch Creative Marketing, IL

As budgets dwindle, we still try to have the most "wow" for our buck, but that means cheaper versions of "wow". More affordable techniques such as use of spot color instead of four color, no full bleed, very little varnishing, embossing or non-standard die cuts.

— TORY BORNE, PFCLG, NC

Quality, character and brand of paper matter to me. I do see a lot of companies cutting corners. For now I can blame it on the economic downturn... For me, quality of paper and overall feel is immensely important... Paper is huge, paper matters.

— CARISSA ADAMS, DBCC, FL

I have found over the last 18 months that clients are caring less about brand of paper, and more about paper type and what is cheaper.

— TIM ANDERSON

Timothy Anderson Design, CT

SELECT COMMENTS

The Impact Of Environment Matters On Your Design and Purchasing Decisions?

I spec FSC, windpower, carbon neutral, soy-based inks and recycled papers alot. We are a very "green-oriented" company. Even if the customer does not specifically request these printing attributes, we offer them as a value-added option.

— Brendan O'Hara, Grossman Marketing, MA

Environmental issues are very important. I tend to focus on the broader issues of designing for sustainability, but also make sure to order specific products for my design projects. Fortunately, many of my clients share my views on environmental responsibility. However, sometimes it is difficult to get them to part with a little extra money to stay as "green" as possible.

— DAVID GALLO, Weapons of Mass Design, Seattle WA

Our university has made a commitment to reducing our impact on the environment. Our department reflects on each project to determine our role in the green movement. When we hosted the Town Hall Presidential Debate between Barack Obama and John McCain, we made an effort to use all recycled materials and even used seed paper. Our printed press kits were replaced by interactive kits provided on flash drives. After the debate, our Commemorative piece was printed on FSC paper with FSC-certified inks.

— APRIL LYONS, Belmont University, TN

Environmental issues typically take a back seat to affordability; particularly with more companies watching their bottom line closely during difficult economic times. We recommend "green" products and production whenever possible and, in particular, when enviro-friendly elements fit into the promotional message and can be emphasized.

— CHRIS SCHWEITZER, Creative Design Solutions OH

As long as the quality of the final product is not affected or compromised, I always like to go the environmentally-friendly route.

— Jeremie Ourlin, MN

The decisionmaking process to "go green" with a project is primarily driven by my personal beliefs, and then the appropriateness of the effort to the product or brand. The opinion of my boss and our sense of whether there is consumer demand for it are also factors in the decision.

— CAROL MCLUCKIE

Justrite Manufacturing, Des Plaines IL

SELECT COMMENTS

What Do You Look For In A Commercial Printer?

Service, price, quality.

Response times have shrunk as well as budgets. A good printer has changed with the times.

— Alan Zwiebel, Eldorado Creative, NY

For projects I work on, I look for a printer who is thorough in explaining costs and setup, and sticks closely to pricing. Keeping the deadline or even delivering ahead of time is important. Quality is extraordinarily important as well. It is best to see great examples of past client work with explanations as to how the results were achieved. For budget projects, cost-effective shortcuts should be explained and offered.

— INGRID ZUNK, Izi Designs, CA

I look for a quality color team, as well as high end capabilities such as die-cutting, foil stamping and embosses. I also look for competitive pricing.

— SHANNON STULL, Rasmussen College, FL

The size of the shop and their print runs are a crucial element in determining the right fit. Does the pressman pay attention? Do they use an effective proofing system? Cost, quality and, of course, turnaround times are critical. You simply learn after years of experience to spec where the best fit is.

— CHRISTINA RENSHAW, Text Design Incorporated, MD

I value pricing and service. I have been with the same printer for more than five years because of amazing and timely service, and pricing that is always fair.

— Philip De Rita, La Salle School, NY

SELECT COMMENTS

Do You Buy Digital Printing/ On Demand Printing?

I have a number of marketing campaigns using on demand digital color and variable data. The quality is excellent and the customized piece does boost response rates. Because it is on demand and I can run a short number of pieces, the client is very pleased with the cost-effective nature of the printing component.

— Michael David, Michael David Associates, CT

We have used digital shortrun printing for the past five years and have found it to be less expensive, more efficient and much faster than conventional printing. The color is improving and coverage is very good. We have used the personalization capability on 3D, bulky mailings with response rates averaging 46% to almost 90%. Clients have been astounded at its capabilities.

— STEPHEN LONGO, Stephen Longo & Associates, NJ

Digital printing somewhat less expensive and, yes, the turnaround is quicker. However, I attribute that to the fact that the print run is short. The color has been surprisingly good. I still believe offset is of much better quality.

— ANGELA MASSARO FAIN, Grapevine Communications, FL

Do You Buy Printing Online And What Have Your Experiences Been?

I'm finding that as long as a project is standard in format, online printing is a really good way to print affordably. Print quality is usually pretty good and prices are great. If something is more unique in format, it is not as great an option.

—TINA LEWENHAUPT, Lewenhaupt Design, CA

Good for small quantities at an affordable price. Many vendors are not very knowledgeable or as skilled in customer service as we would like.

— JENNIFER BOURN, Bourn Creative, CA

Totally great and wonderful. The look is awesome.

— Jamie Dishman, Comp Health Beauty, TX

Online printing buying with established trade printers works well for uncomplicated jobs. They are easy to estimate; takes less time than a series of phone calls. The online companies which are totally geared for consumers are not great for design jobs.

— ANN STRINGER, Ann Stringer Design Group, CA

My experience has been positive. It is low cost for decent quality and reasonable turnaround. Communication through the website and customer service representative is often lacking. Once a job arrived unfolded when it should have been. Mostly, online purchases are driven by price.

— DAVID JONES, Advertising Design, Lynchburg VA

I love online printing, but the turnaround takes a while. Plus the shipping fee costs extra if you want a rush. I wish there were no extra shipping charges for rush projects.

— LINDA HU, Hu Design, CA

With regard to online print buying, the strengths are price and convenience. The biggest weakness is a lack of one-on-one communication.

— J.R. ALANIS, VO Specialty Services, Bakersfield CA

Greener Printing Made Easy

Creating a powerful message while keeping the job on budget is a graphic designer's greatest challenge! Add environmental considerations to the equation and it's enough to make your head spin. So we've created a short checklist of things to consider before starting your next project.

Should I Print?

Print is still a very effective and powerful medium. When done properly, it can also be done in an environmentally responsible manner.

Size Matters

Selecting the appropriate size for your printed piece up front can help you avoid waste. Consult your printer early to determine the best size of paper that should be used for your project.

Recycled or 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 environment is important, consider FSC or SFI paper products.

GOING GREEN

Five Questions to Ask Your Printer

1. Does your printer have any environmental certifications or eco-friendly seals of approval?

Environmental certifications demonstrate a commitment to the environment and promote sustainability without sacrificing quality or value.

2. Has the printer won any environmental awards?

Today printers are being recognized for environmentally responsible business practices. Agfa Graphics, a leading supplier of prepress solutions, launched GreenWorks™ a customer recognition program to honor printers who are taking extra steps to decrease their environmental footprint. Visit www.gdusa.com/agfa to find a GreenWorks printer.

3. Is the printer using eco-friendlier printing technology?

Many printers have converted to computer-to-plate technology. As a result many have reduced their use of harsh chemicals, solvents, and developers. Today, printers are also choosing to use other eco-friendly printing products, like Agfa's :Azura TS chemistry free plates, which eliminate the need to develop the plate after it is imaged. This process eliminates even more chemicals.

4. Is the printer using renewable energy?

Renewable energy is generated from natural resource (hydro power, wind mills, etc.) which naturally replenishes and can significantly reduce a printers impact on the environment.

5. Is your printer using soy or vegetable-based inks (vs. petroleum)?

Soy- or vegetable-based inks are made from renewable resources. They emit dramatically fewer VOCs (volatile organic compounds), which are linked to greenhouse gases.