WHAT GOES INTO YOUR PRINT PRODUCTION?

Print production covers many areas of a company's marketing activities. It could encompass brochures, a post card campaign, signage, corporate collateral, any number of elements and of course the designs could be extended to areas such as truck and building graphics, electronic usage for emails and brochures, TV campaigns etc.

So print is just one area where your graphics will be used but mistakes here can be costly and hard to correct. A TV spot can be quickly and relatively efficiently reedited, a radio campaign reconfigured to take out that mispronounced word but ever have 150,000 four color brochures printed with the wrong corporate address or a misprinted phone number? You might as well have a bonfire and start over as correcting them is time consuming, expensive or impossible.

Therefore this brings us to the main point of good print production. As we've stated in other planning pieces here, "there is no substitute for advance planning." Start with the three main considerations we always ask:

- **Who are we trying to reach? (Audience, group, segment, etc.)**
- **What are we trying to do to them? (Educate, motivate, train, inform)**
- **What do we want them to do? (Buy, contact us, be aware, respond)**

Once you have your goals in mind then you start to work toward them. Other elements to consider are:

- Use of your existing or altered campaign logo?
- Are specific colors to be used for this, or are corporate colors to be included?
- What graphic elements, drawings, photographs, illustrations etc are needed?
- Are special fonts to be obtained or created for the message?
- How will be the piece be used? Email? Actual print? Is B&W usage needed?
- (Will this be باشد که ترجمه به زبانهای دیگر و چطور می پاسخگو باشید. translated to other languages and how will they respond?
- How long will this campaign or concept be used and will it be incorporated in a longer term program of marketing?
- Are there changeable concepts to be included or avoided? Seasonality, target group, trends in color or subject, social acceptance?
- Who is writing and submitting the written text which serves as the basis for the piece?

When planning your print piece, try to **plan ahead** as far as reasonably possible. Pieces take time and are not created in a vacuum. Usually there are many people involved. The text is the basis, the blueprint, as it will tell the factual tale. Graphics are meant to convey a message as well but really support what are the facts of the piece are saying.

Usually there are a number of people that need to sign off on each step of the process. **Allow time for their review, approval and certainly changes**.

This brings us to the point of the number of people involved. If at all possible, try to include those that have authority on the project but not their brothers-in-law, neighbors, the delivery truck driver or the guy that repairs your copier. 32 people will have 416 ideas and

suggestions on any 1 subject. Count on it. And while many people might be involved in initial focus group activities, once it gets to a design stage, time is money and if changes are requested of the production company every time someone new enters the room with a new reaction…. It costs time and money.

Limit the "committee" approach to design to a select few. Have one person spearheading the project so the graphic artist, photographer, design firm or whomever is producing it has one person they answer to and are trying to understand and please. As a production provider, we've been in situations where everyone in the room has new "instructions" and we're forced to look at the person who we thought was our contact and shrug and say "what do you want us to do now?" Again, have your goals in mind.

Also, **make sure that you have your materials ready to go**. Does your company have a logo? Have you decided on any special materials such as photographs, detail drawings, illustrations, etc? Usually, design firms (production companies, artists – call them what you like) don't like to start projects till they have what they need. Think of it like starting a jigsaw puzzle with half a box of pieces. It's tough and you rarely have any direction to go! And make sure they are of industry quality. No photos submitted in word docs. No handwritten cocktail napkin notes for text. No 72 dpi photos for that new billboard campaign. Correcting your supplied materials will cost time and money.

Give written instructions. Many times these will be passed on to a variety of people? So just telling someone what you want opens the problem of what they thought you meant and then how do they write it down or pass it on and then how many times does it get changed before the final person actually thinks he understand what you wanted done? The written instructions serve as a record so anyone can go back and make sure they personally understand what is needed.

Some companies go to extreme lengths to template out instruction sheets, copy 43 people in all depts., store the forms in 16 different folders and archive them in gold plated vaults for posterity generations down the line when in fact, a simple email or clearly stated letter will serve to get the point across. If the artist – or others - has a question, they will get back in touch and the process is moving along.

Set reasonable timeline for the work. Don't call your artist, photographer, production company, illustrator at 3:30 on a Tuesday and ask that a 12 page 4/4 color brochure be ready to proof for the finance committee on Wednesday at 9:30 am. Sure, we've all dealt with emergencies and moving targets but some clients make it habit of unloading unreasonable expectations on their creative team and it usually leads to frustrations and bad feelings.

Again, plan ahead as much as possible. **Involve your creative people early on**, get their input to each specific project and they might be able to give you ways to save time and money, make it an easier process for everyone and get you a better end product.

Be sure to respond as quick as possible to requests. This would include requests for materials,

answers to questions, and certainly approvals. We worked on a website for a client once that took a total of two years to complete. It was a relatively simple site but the process for submission of materials and approvals was burdensome.

And when that time comes for approvals? **READ READ READ** and **REREAD** the materials. Get several people to read copy and look over the little things. Don't assume because there's a phone number there that's it yours. We received a mailing from a firm in San Francisco for a new high tech GPS tracking system for delivery trucks. They were quite proud of the piece their ad agency had designed. It had great photos of trucks and details maps and lots of nice graphic elements. The only problem was that when we called them to ask a question about something… the 800 number was wrong and we had to really try to find them.

Look for the following:

- Misspelled words
- Incorrect words
- Proper or improperly used industry terms
- Correct address, phone numbers, emails etc.
- Correctly spelled names and titles
- Correct photos matched with descriptions
- When applicable, correct references to, or quotes from individuals or companies

Read over everything and then your creative team will want someone's "authorized approval" signed on the piece. If the design is actually going to print, they will have provided a mock up for you (or an actual print or "blue line" as they were called from the printer) to review the look, layout, page order, "general color" schemes (a mock up does not have the exact quality your final piece will have) and overall appearance of your final piece. Usually this is signed by the responsible client party and then given to the printer as their guideline. Again, most printers will ask the creative team that the client has seen and signed off on the proof before they begin.

In review, consider the following for your print piece:

- Plan ahead – involved your creative team as early as possible
- Set your goals (Answer the three main questions. What are they?)
- Limit the number of people involved and responsible for decisions.
- Provide all the quality materials when starting the project.
- Give written instructions and allow ample time for the project.
- Respond quickly to requests for answers, materials or approvals.
- Make sure you actually read the final proof before putting your name on the line. Once signed off, the client is responsible for any mistakes missed by the creative team and the client themselves regardless of who missed "the change no one remembers."