

Seven Habits for Highly Successful Documents

WHO SHOULD READ THIS BULLETIN:

Any person involved in document creation, production and printing.

Each month, Copresco produces hundreds of jobs. No two are exactly alike. Variables range from the computer platforms and applications used by the authors to graphics techniques, paper stocks and document finishing and binding methods.

Some jobs we get won't even print, due to one problem or another. To assure that your job flows through our shop—or anywhere else—without a glitch, we have developed the following seven preparation habits for highly successful documents.

Preparation Guidelines

1. Plan Your Final Destination...First

Will it be online or print? It makes a big difference. Imagine how your publication, book or manual will look in its final bound format.

Where will your book be used? Remember that metrics are the international standard. Please refer to *TechTopics* No. 11.

Will the pages be two-sided? There are no sides to worry about on the World Wide Web, but a printed document's length will obviously be greatly affected by the way the pages are backed up.

Should you leave room for annotations? Margin space is often required for notes and comments in technical and reference manuals. Some binding styles also require extra margin space.

The binding method may be determined by the thickness of your book and your project deadline. Comb binding can accommodate documents up to two inches thick. However, a saddle stitched book over 60 pages gets unwieldy. While looseleaf binding is available at Copresco overnight, some binding styles may add production time.

2. Use the Right Tools

Choosing the proper software for producing complex documentation for commercial reproduction is vital. To put things bluntly, we've never seen a QuarkXPress document reflow. We've rarely seen a Word document that didn't reflow!

For long, text-heavy publications, you can't beat FrameMaker. Quark, PageMaker and InDesign are popular for graphic-intensive page layout.

Microsoft Word falls seriously short in page layout and design categories. It's a line-by-line, rather than page-by-page program...and has no built-in graphics tools. Microsoft has never made

claims for Word as a layout program, instead offering its own desktop publishing product.

Switching to another word processor will only make things worse. Save your word processor for correspondence and memos and use the proper document management software for layout. Or, use your word processor for writing, then import the text into your layout program.

Likewise, use dedicated graphics programs like Illustrator and Photoshop that offer the proper drawing and image editing tools. Don't use the draw functions of Word—the resulting graphics are often impossible to print. Avoid using Quark or PageMaker to create or size graphic elements.

Although graphics can be edited in page layout software, they don't always print at the best quality. You'll get sharper reproduction by editing in Illustrator and Photoshop and importing the files into your layout program.

3. Don't Go Overboard With Fonts

Normally three type faces (for headlines, body copy and captions or special sections) are enough for most documents. Also:

- Consider serif type for body copy. It's easier to read than sans-serif, particularly for lengthy books. The serifs on the letterforms give the readers' eyes horizontal guidance through the lines of text.

- Don't use large amounts of italics. They're hard to read. But in small amounts italics are fine for contrast and impact.

- Avoid lines over 40 to 60 characters in length.

- Don't underline text. Use **bold** or *italic*.

- Don't double space after periods. Single space.

- Use reverses sparingly.

4. Use A PostScript Driver

Set a PostScript driver as your printer driver before you start the project. If your printer doesn't say "PostScript," it isn't. Don't use an HP (Hewlett-Packard) or other driver. We need to know the driver you used to create the document. This will prevent reflow that may cause page counts to change, the improper wrapping of text around graphics, the movement of headers, etc. The problem is significantly magnified in text-intensive documents.

For publishing purposes, a printer driver created by Adobe, creators of PostScript, is a good choice. You may select the appropriate driver for your operating system and download it from Adobe.

To create PDF files, use the Adobe Acrobat Distiller driver installed with your Adobe software.

To find the printer drivers Adobe has for your operating system, point your web browser to:

www.adobe.com/prodindex/printerdrivers

5. Follow Our Formatting Tips

Don't use spreads in your layout. Use single page format. It will reduce the computer time necessary to prepare your document for printing.

Your page size should be defined as final trim size. For 8 1/2" x 11" pages, crop marks are not required. For smaller page sizes, provide crop marks from your Page Setup or Preferences menu.

The problem of shingling needs to be considered, but you can leave the details to Copresco.

Shingling is an adjustment for the way page images tend to move toward the outer or facing edge of a book. Shingling steadily increases as you move toward the center signatures of the book. This is one reason why there are limitations on the number of pages a saddle stitched book may contain. Years ago, offset negatives had to be physically moved to compensate for the image shifts. Today, we make these adjustments digitally.

6. Pack for the trip

Send us **all the screen and printer fonts** used in the document...plus any fonts used in EPS files.

Copresco maintains an extensive font library. However, other companies have designed or licensed their own fonts and they may not be identical to those you use. Type foundries also regularly change their fonts. Just a simple tweak of kerning or a new dingbat creates a changed font. Any font differences can cause type to reflow, lines to be cut off, hyphenations to change, etc.

Make sure **all files and artwork are furnished**. If you have mixed applications, be sure to send us all the Mac and PC files.

Along with your electronic files, please include graphic files (Tiff, EPS, etc.) and artwork that needs to be scanned. Software version numbers are also helpful to our production department.

Include samples of any preprinted materials to be incorporated in your book and delivery information if you're sending us the copies.

And...please review any special instructions with your Copresco production coordinator.

7. Practice Good Housekeeping

Review your printer proofs before sending us the final version. Remember, if you can't get it to print, we may not be able to either. You may have finished your job, but our work is just beginning.

Please send us a complete copy of the document, including page layouts with artwork, photos and order of printing. We will check our production proof against your original copy.

Final tips:

- Don't change your file after you have given us the final proof copy.
- Have someone else do the final proofreading. It's virtually impossible to effectively proof your own work. Please refer to *TechTopics* No. 12.
- Delete any old digital versions and throw away your old hard copies.

Our Seven Habits will help you with any job, be it destined for print or online output. You'll save yourself considerable time, aggravation and production costs by following these basic rules.

Note: The Seven Habits originally ran as a three-part series in Copresco's monthly newsletter, Overnight Lite.

General Information

Our staff will gladly answer your questions about software applications, digital files preparation and transmission, paper stocks, binding and our digital printing services.

TechTopics is a continuing series of technical bulletins on digital technology, document preparation and on-demand printing.

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