Publishing Executive
ONLINE

Master Manufacturer:
Production & Distribution TIPS

By Steven W. Frye   Feb 1, 2008

We live in an information-rich time. Besides professional books, journals, directories and trade magazines, such as Publishing Executive, we have the Internet. But company Web sites and newsletters, both print and electronic, have also added to the list of professional resources. In the past, it was very difficult to gather industry information, especially in a timely manner. But now we have a wealth of timely information available to us.

As many people discovered, "push" services are more desirable than "pull" services. In other words, people prefer to have pertinent information delivered to them, rather than having to search for it.

Magazines are still the ultimate push technology (though for less urgent/time-sensitive information). Magazines can gather relevant information from various sources and deliver it to interested people.

This column consists of tips previously published in various printing company newsletters for their customers. Unfortunately, if you were not a customer of said printer, you would not be privy to that juicy tidbit. But, due to the volume of information submitted to me I was forced to select only a portion of great tips.

Not surprisingly, most of the tips dealt with either premedia or distribution issues.

Most of the best premedia tips can from Lane Press' 'Pixels to Print: Technical Support for Prepress' (LP) and Sheridan Magazine Services' 'Register' (SM). Some of these tips are very specific to InDesign, Quark and PDF workflow issues, while others are quite basic. As one printer pointed out, "they come up over and over again."

Page Specifications
Be sure your files match your stated trim size. Don't tell the printer you are 8 3/8 inches by 10 7/8 inches and then send files that are 8 ½ inches by 11 inches. Also be sure to include a full 1/8-inch for bleed and be careful to allow for live copy to be at least a full 1/4-inch from trim. - OVID BELL, 'The OBP Gazette'

Page File Sizes
When assembling your publication, keep layout files under 20-25 pages each to minimize file crashing and corruption problems. — Lane Press' 'Pixels to Print: Technical Support for Prepress' (LP)

Transfer Sizes
When transferring files to your printer, avoid sending large chunks at once (>150 MB). Smaller files (<50MB) make transfer more reliable and reduce the possibility of transfer error. - LP

Guideline for Creating PDF Files
To facilitate a fast and efficient workflow configure your PDF files as single-page PDFs—that is, one PDF per page. This setup can take longer to configure than multi-page PDFs, but your printer may offer tips on how to speed up this process. – LP

PDF Settings
Make sure you have your printer's preset selected in your applications each time you make a PDF file. Overlooking this verification is the most common cause of headaches for designers. - LP

Diagnosing and fixing PDF errors
If you're having trouble placing a PDF in your document, here's a quick list of symptoms and remedies:

Make sure the PDF has no security enabled.
Load the PDF into Acrobat and look for a padlock icon in the lower left hand corner of the main window. You can disable security by going to File > Document Properties > Security and choosing "No Security." You may or may not need a password. This happens all the time with PDFs generated from PageMaker. - SM

"The PDF file 'kk.pdf' cannot be imported because it is an unrecognized version" — Error message Check the version of the PDF. Quark 6.5 cannot place PDFs created by Acrobat 6 or 7. Either save the PDF as an EPS or use the Advanced > PDF Optimizer command to save the document to an earlier version. - SM

"Array length is out of range" — Message almost always occurs when the PDF was made with OPI enabled, and is the result of an exceedingly long pathname embedded in the file (e.g., "Macintosh HD/Magazine/2005/More/Art/ HugeFileName..."). Either remove OPI information with tools such as PitStop Professional or disable OPI altogether. Go into your Quark XTensions folder and move the file OPI.xnt to your XTensions (disabled) folder. - SM

"The file 'QuarkXPress 6.0' already exists in the specified destination. OK to replace it?" — A cryptic message Quark users may get when exporting PostScript or PDF files, even if their document is not named "QuarkXPress 6.0."

The cause is an output file name that is longer than 32 characters, including the extension (".ps" or ".pdf"). Remember that the output name can be created automatically based on the layout or project name (which can be modifed under PDF preferences). If you get this message, no PostScript or PDF file has been created. Using shorter file names is a good idea anyway, since it lets you see more in dialog boxes. - SM

Guidelines for Naming PDF Files
When naming your files, try to use a logical naming convention. Many printers will recommend naming conventions, but if not, a good rule of thumb is to use the following method:

001PubName.pdf, 002PubName.pdf, etc… (page number, title).

For first-stage revises, please add "R1": 001PubNameR1.pdf. Use "R2" for second stage, etc.

Cover pages can be named c1PubName.pdf through c4PubName.pdf.

c1 = front cover; c2 = inside front cover; c3 = inside back cover; c4 = back cover

For pages with colors that are intended to print as an extra color on press, please add "_spot" to the filename: 001PubName_spot.pdf.

You may find it useful to add an issue indicator (001PubNameMay06.pdf), which is fine; however, please use abbreviations as needed to keep the filename under 25 characters. - LP

Avoid Slashes or Colons
Be sure to avoid using slashes or colons in your artwork or PDF file names, as they will not be portable to another platform without changing the name and may keep Distiller from successfully creating a PDF.File - SM

Working With Imported Text
Check your files to be sure 'edit text' is not set to colors such as registration black and RGB black, but rather than to 100% process black as the designer most likely intended. This commonly happens on jobs created in QuarkXPress version 7.x.

We have found that when certain Microsoft Word files containing black text are imported into Quark text boxes, Quark does not assign 'process black' color to the text the way Quark 6 did. Instead, Quark sets random blocks of text to various colors. This problem occurs with text imported from '.rtf' files and '.doc' files saved from Microsoft Word. The only file format option available from Microsoft Word that can be considered safe is '.txt' files, which have no color information and very little text-formatting information embedded in them.

Avoid this problem when you import text from a Microsoft Word '.doc' or '.rtf' file by selecting all the imported text (place your cursor in the text box and select 'Command-A'), then choose Black from your color palette. Alternatively, you can open the text document in TextEdit and copy and paste your text into Quark.

Use a flight-checking program when possible to check for odd-colored text. Most printers have developed 'precheck' profiles that will check for registration and RGB text color in various file formats. - LP

Using Spot Colors Together With Transparency Effects
Recent versions of popular page-layout applications allow the use of transparency effects, such as drop shadows, opacity, and overprinting elements. Designers should be aware that the use of spot colors together with transparency effects can produce unpredictable (and sometimes unpleasant) results. These can include page element dropping out, transparent elements turning opaque, and the occurrence of trapping problems.

If you are using these effects and your job is specified to print 4/c, it's important that you convert all spot colors to 4/c process before making PDFs or submitting natives files to your printer.

To determine if a color is set to spot:

In the InDesign 'Swatches' palette, spot colors will display a circle icon to the right of the color name (right next to a CMYK icon).

In the QuarkXPress 'Colors' palette, spot colors will display a registration (target) icon instead of the CMYK icon. - LP

100 C + 100 M ≠ Blue!
We see this error a lot. In most desktop publishing programs, there is a built-in color named "Blue," which is defined as an RGB color. Converting it to CMYK usually results in a color that is defined as 100% cyan and 100% magenta. Unfortunately, when printed, it doesn't look very blue. The bottom line is that it doesn't take much magenta to turn a color purplish.

A good rule of thumb: If the color you're defining has more magenta than cyan, it will look purple. A true blue is 95 cyan, 80 magenta and 10-35 yellow. A true red is 10-35 cyan, 95 magenta and 80 yellow; a true green is 80 cyan, 10-35 magenta and 95 yellow.

Of course you can always pick out your favorite tint from a Pantone solid-to-process guide. Avoid using your screen to decide on a color. - SM

Palette Cleansing
It is a good practice to regularly delete unused colors from the color palette in your page-layout application. This will help you to maintain color consistency and avoid undesirable spot-to-process transitions. - LP

Managing Ink Density
It's true, there's nothing like a healthy mix of CMY colors added to 'process black' to add richness and intensity to a graphic. Rich blacks are fine as long as the total ink density is not too heavy. Most of the industry uses 300% as a maximum allowable density for magazine publications, although we may suggest a lower threshold for certain projects based on paper stock and other considerations. There are no commercial flightcheck applications that reliably flag ink density problems in images, so the best practice is to check areas of black color on your images (using Adobe Photoshop) as you assemble each print job. - LP

Upgrading Your Software Applications
We know--as soon as a new version of your favorite software comes out, the urge to install it right away can be overpowering. We urge you, though, to stay calm and proceed with caution. The problem is that software companies will often release upgrades that haven't yet been fully tested and can have significant bugs. This is particularly important in the age of press-ready files, because problems may not show up until the 'plating' stage. In order to avoid problems with your mission-critical hardware and printing projects, research new releases thoroughly, and/or consult with your printer's Technical Support, before performing a software application upgrade. – LP

Including Color Bars on Customer-Supplied Proofs
Many printers require color bars to be printed on customer-supplied contract proofs. This ensures that the color on your printed page will match your color proofs. There are various ways to include color bars.

InDesign has a built-in function that places the bars off the edge of the trim. Verify your printer's PDF export settings for InDesign have this function turned on.

For QuarkXPress users, a workaround is necessary. Please contact your printer forassistance with this workaround. - LP

Troubleshooting InDesign
If you have a corrupt InDesign file, it's sometimes possible to fix it by exporting it as an InDesign Interchange file (File > Export > Format: InDesign Interchange) and then loading it back via FIle > Open.

If the program continues to crash, it might be time to delete InDesign's preferences file. Do this by quitting the program, then holding down Command-Option-Shift-Control (Control-Alt-Shift for Windows users) while re-launching. A dialog box will prompt you before it clears itself. Of course, your preferences will be reset to the default settings, but if this solves your problems it's a pretty small price to pay. - SM

Troubleshooting OS X
Crashes happen. And once they start, I know you'll do anything to keep them from happening again. Here are a few ideas to help once you start getting the dreaded message: "The application X has unexpectedly quit."

Repair disk permissions
This is an easy and safe step that will cure many OS X ills. Quit the programs you have running, go into your Applications > Utilities folder and find the program named Disk Utility. Run it, choose the drive you boot from in the list of volumes on the left, and then click on the button labeled "Repair Disk Permissions." It may take a few minutes, but if OS X finds a file or folder with an incorrect setting, it'll fix that situation immediately. - SM

Clean out your cache
OS X uses caching extensively to keep things running smoothly and as fast as possible. Caches are files on your hard drive that hold frequently accessed information. Occasionally these files may get corrupt from application crashes, power spikes or hard-drive anomalies, and can cause crashes as a result. Unfortunately, there's no built-in way to detect the corruption; the best way to fix it is to delete the cache and start over.

The good news is that there is a freeware program that will do this for you. Visit www.nonamescriptware.com, click on "downloads" and choose Cache Out X. Installing and running this program will let you selectively and safely remove the various caches from your computer. This process can fix a variety of crashing issues, including font trouble. – SM

Delete preferences files
This tip helped a coworker recover her Quark 6, which was unexpectedly quitting seconds after it was launched. If this happens to you, a possible solution is to delete Quark's preferences file. Navigate to your user home > Library > Preferences folder. Select the folder named Quark, drag it to the trash and empty the trash. Of course, you will lose your preferences, including any customized settings such as print styles and hyphenations, but will you complain if you get your Quark back? Launching Quark will rebuild your Quark preferences folder with clean files. - SM

Create a user
If you think more than one preference file may be bad, creating a new user in OS X may be in order. This is done within the Accounts System Preference by clicking on the plus (+) sign and entering a name and password. Reboot, and see which problems go away. Then, switch back to your old account and delete the preferences of the programs that failed. - SM

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