

Printing Plans

Ten Questions to Ask *Before* Deciding to Print

1. What is the purpose of the proposed printed piece? E.g.: what happens if you don't print it?
2. What level of quality is necessary on this piece? E.g.: is it used in-house or seen by clients?
3. How will this printed item save money or make money for your business?
4. Can you print enough to last one year or is it prone to updates and changes?
5. How many, therefore, should you print? E.g.: what's the best method to print?
6. Should this item be revised or consolidated with something else you print or could it be replaced altogether?
7. Who are the end-users and what will they probably do with it? E.g.: will it be filed or included in a loose leaf binder or simply thrown away?
8. How durable, therefore, should it be and must it accept pen ink, typewriter or laser printing? E.g.: what paper will work best for this item.
9. Will this piece be sent by mail? If so, will it fit existing envelopes or do we need new envelopes for it? Can it be a self mailer (is the paper heavy enough)? What are the postal regulations for the final size and should we re-think size? How much will postage cost and should we add a postal indicia or use stamps?
10. How should this piece "look"? E.g.: do we need professional graphics and must it fit our company's "look" on other printed items? If it is sent unsolicited how will we get the recipient to open it? If it is legal or technical how can we show it's importance?

Calling for Bids

Ten Questions to Ask *Before* Requesting a Printing Estimate

1. What are the specifications to print? (the previous answers should help).
2. Which printers are capable of printing this piece?
3. What is the price history of this or similar items? E.g.: do you want to keep the price similar or less expensive? If so, how can you alter the specifications?
4. What are the minimum and maximum quantities you need to last one year?
5. Does this piece have to match or fit in with other existing pieces? (if so, are the specifications the same?).
6. Which design elements or specifications are most and least important? (explain these to your printer and you may get some money saving advice).
7. Who will perform the graphics, typesetting and proofing? How much will this step cost above and beyond the printing?
8. Deadlines : is there a "drop-dead, must-have" date? If so make it clear on your bid request.

9. Does this printing project have any “tricks” involved? E.g.: special fold, strange paper, odd size or special requirements? If so, explain them to your printer and be ready to explain why they are important.
10. Do the printers submitting estimates have any comments, advice or helpful ideas?

Analyzing Estimates

Ten Questions to Ask *After* Receiving Estimates

1. Are all estimates based on identical specifications? If not, how do the differences affect price? E.g.: ask the printer why specs are different.
2. How much of the job will the printer do “in house” and how much will be sent out? (how will this impact quality and deadlines?).
3. What are the chances of under or over-runs? How will that impact what you have budgeted or need?
4. What extra (or hidden) costs are possible? Sales tax, freight and services performed by the printer such as extra sets of proofs, scans etc.
5. Paper brand names may differ but are they comparable stocks? E.g.: a Number 2 gloss sheet is comparable regardless of the brand name.
6. Are final, trimmed sizes comparable? If not, how will that impact your final printed piece?
7. Did all bidders understand the important or complex parts of the bid? Do they feel confident of producing it as needed?
8. Are payment terms comparable amongst bidders?
9. How do delivery dates on the bid compare? Can you live with these turn-around times?
10. Is the bid legally binding? For how many days/months? Did the printer supply you with additional “terms and conditions” and if so, do you agree to them?

Placing an Order

Ten Questions to Ask *Before* Authorizing a Print Order

1. Does your submitted artwork fit the printer’s expectations? If not how will it change the price and how can you get art properly rendered?
2. Is the estimate still valid on the day you submitted artwork and order?
3. Does the printer of choice have any advice on reducing the estimate by switching stocks or any other elements without lowering quality?
4. Will bindery be in-house or sent out? And how might that effect delivery date? Could specifications be altered to achieve in-house bindery and would that decrease price and/or improve delivery dates?

5. What are the printer's proposed dates for showing a proof and delivery?
6. If a deadline is critical can printer guarantee delivery by or before that date?
7. How will the job be packed and how will it be delivered? (Printer's truck or UPS or do you pick up?)
8. What are the chances of over or under-run and how will this impact your quantities needed and price planned? Discuss this matter at time of order, not at time of receiving the invoice!
9. If printer has questions or foresees possible problems with supplied art, how soon will you be informed of delays or added costs?
10. Does the printer have any advice on future orders on what you may do differently to lower cost or improve quality or expedite order?