



JEFF PAYNE COMPANY

CHOOSING THE RIGHT PRINTER



FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST

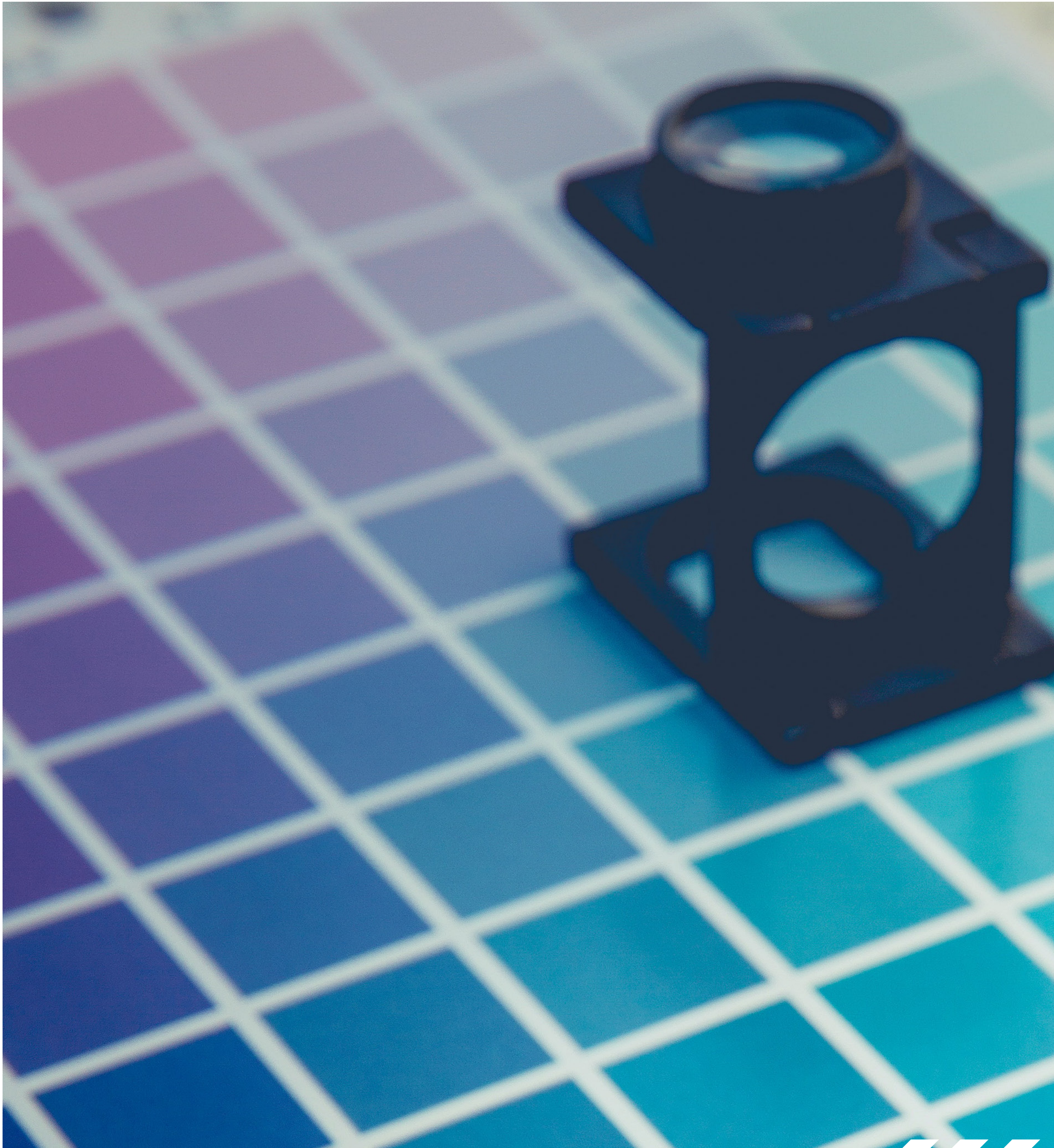
Even in the digitally dominated world in which we do business there is still a very good chance your next client is going to find your name, your number or your URL on a piece of print media. A stunning heavy stock die-cut business card passed on by an existing client, a warm inviting z-fold brochure advertising all your services or a slick comprehensive catalogue of all your products. Your clients are still handling real paper, reading ad flyers and keeping that lovely business card of yours in their wallet. So it's as important as ever to make sure that first impressions last.

Print media can be expensive and needs to work hard to justify the cost. It is not instantly adjustable in the same way as a web banner. But unlike a web banner or landing page the real feel of a high quality card or weight of a catalogue can never be replicated in a digital world. Picking up a good piece of printed media is much more than just about optics, there is a cacophony of senses at play. There is nothing like the smell of fresh ink on paper. Nothing compares to the feel of fine paper stock under your finger tips, the fun of turning a card to the light to see the effects of raised spot varnish or reflective foil.

Choosing the right printer to deliver media that takes advantage of this combination of senses is as important as choosing the right marketing partner or accounting firm. Get it wrong and it not only costs you money but also potential customers. Your print media can make a great first impression or it can do the exact opposite and leave a potential client with a negative view of you and your company.

So what do you need to know before sending off a set of print ready artwork files?

Let us walk you through the basics.



THE RIGHT PRINTER FOR THE JOB

A printer is not a printer is not a printer...
As you start your search for a printer you will soon find out that not all printers are created equal. The challenge you face is not just finding the right printer for you - but finding the right printer for the job at hand. Each print job has its own unique challenges and you'll need the right company to address them.

Define your needs

Do you need a quick run of standard one side two color business cards or do you require 5.6 million copies of your 300 page product catalogue, web printed, perfect bound, trimmed and shipped to a postal distribution centre. Those are diametrically opposed jobs requiring very different print companies. It is important that you define your needs before you start searching for a print company. And depending on your needs throughout the year you might find that you need two or even three different print companies to deal with your varied needs. One company that can deal with all of your urgent corporate identity needs and another to print your catalogs, self published book or speciality magazine and a third to print highly specialized business cards.

The print company that has years of experience printing flyers, brochures and annual reports may not be the best option for that three-layer, glued, recycled stock, PMS color, spot varnished, embossed business card with the special metal foil. Yes - that's a real business card - we create them all the time. The company that prints that card is a specialist and the perfect printer for such a complicated job.

Make sure you know the strengths and weaknesses of a print company and find out how long they have been in business. Longevity can be an indication of quality and reliability. That corner pop-up shop might be a great cheap option for turning your killer PowerPoint presentation into color printed handouts - but they do not have the skill or experience to maintain or elevate your company's first impression.



YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR

When choosing the right print company, cost should never be your main concern. Consider the fact that your print media, along with your digital media, is the face of your company. Are the few dollars you saved on printing really worth it when a potential customer drops your poorly trimmed business card or misregistered catalog in the recycle bin. Sure, your discarded print media will gain a second life as egg cartons but your business has lost money and, more importantly, a potential new customer. With printing, as with so many other important things in business, you get what you pay for.

Having multiple companies bid for your business is a great way to attract cowboys and alienate a future partner in business. You might even find that a quality experienced print company will decline to bid against other companies for a print project. Building a working relationship with your printer is far more valuable than the money you saved on the cowboy outfit that printed four pages of your annual report upside down.

Quality costs. So does experience, skill and talent. A good printer is a true craftsman. Part paper whisperer, part ink wizard, part engineer. But mistakes cost a lot more than quality does. Between the consumables, labour, time and shipping, any mistakes add up to big losses and we're not even mentioning the loss of a valuable first or lasting impression here. Choose quality over cost and your print media will always be a source of pride for your company.



SHOW ME WHAT YOU CAN DO

Request print samples. A quality printer will be more than willing to send you print samples to show off their skills and expertise. But don't just accept the standard print sample pack they might have at hand. Ask for print samples that match the projects you have in mind. There's no great benefit to receiving beautiful samples of z-fold brochures when you need embossed cards with special inks and gold foil. Specify the types of print samples you need to see. You'll be in a much better position to compare apples to apples and make an informed decision.

SHOW ME YOUR TOYS

Ask for a tour of the printing facilities. This is not something you will ask for if you're looking to print some business cards or a one sided flyer. But if you are investing big money in a large print project you want to take a tour of the facilities. You might not know a Flexograph from a Lithograph but you will get a sense of the knowledge and expertise in-house when you get a guided tour of the print shop. Ask questions, point at large scary looking machines and find out what they do. It's a fascinating experience and the place smells of ink and solvents - so that's a bonus.

PASSION FOR PRINT

Whether it is during the tour, on the phone or in person, you should always get a sense that your potential print company has a passion for print. They should not only be knowledgeable and talented but they need to be invested in their craft and enthusiastic about having you as a client. That would of course eliminate that surly teenager at the 24hr copy hut on the corner, printing those nasty clip-art business cards.

An abstract, high-contrast image of blue ink splashing and swirling against a white background, creating a dynamic, fluid pattern that occupies the left half of the page.

COMPLETE SOLUTION

An important, often overlooked, aspect of choosing the right printer is whether or not your printer outsources any part of the print process. Ideally you want your printer to keep every aspect of the print process in-house. From printer plates to delivered product and every step in-between. Often times smaller printers will outsource certain processes like embossing or hot foil printing. Some printers will send the printed pages of a catalog to a third party for trimming and perfect binding.

Ask your potential printers if they outsource any part of the process. You really want a printer that has the capability and expertise to handle every single aspect without sending any part out to a third party.

STATE OF THE ART

Some printers will go out of their way to tell you about their newest shiniest bestest new printing machine. But any tech-savvy person knows that just because you have the very latest, most expensive toy does not mean you are the best at what you do. Many companies hide their deficiencies behind a shiny facade of new technology.

Staying on top of technological advancements is important - in any industry. But be cautious of companies that flaunt their toys over their achievements. Just as you need to be cautious of a company that shows an obvious lack of advancement. If they are not willing to invest in themselves, are they willing to invest in your project?



DIGITAL VS TRADITIONAL

At times clients will take that beautifully designed project down to the ‘print shop’ in the Mall for a quick solution and more often than not they leave with a box full of freshly printed disappointment. What is the difference between the corner print shop and a traditional print shop? Equipment.

The Fancy Photocopier

That small 24-hour Mall printer uses nothing more than a big fancy photocopier. The difference between the one in your office and their printer is minimal. Larger paper trays, slightly higher resolution, collation trays, etc. Not to say there is anything wrong with this solution but you cannot expect the same kind of quality that a traditional printer offers.

PROS

- Fast
- Convenient
- Cheap

CONS

- Limited Quality
- Color Matching Issues
- Limited Stock Capability
- Size & Format Limitations

The Real Printer

The equipment used in proper print shops are a breed apart. Large format CMYK+ print systems fed off paper rolls or large sheets of heavy stock. Digital input and colour management systems controlling large steel rollers that lay down ink, one color at a time. Highly specialized machines that require years of hands-on experience to master. No ‘Copy’ buttons here.

PROS

- High Quality
- Colour Accuracy
- Format & Size Options
- Special Colors
- Special Inks
- Special Processes
- Large Quantity Print

CONS

- Higher Cost
- Turnaround Time



GET THE BEST FROM YOUR PRINT

Now that you've made the final decision it's time to get your project printed. Here are a few tips for getting the most out of your print.

Check, check and check again

A project can, at times, get tedious and repetitive. But it is absolutely imperative that you check and double check every detail, number, bullet point and spelling. And never rely on one person to check any project. Tired and familiar eyes no longer see the glaring mistake on the page. A fresh set (or two) of eyes are of vital importance. You can have any number of people have a 'cold' look at your final proof and chances are they will find that one small but important spelling error that you missed. Check, check and check again. There's no point in getting your mistakes perfectly printed.

Pay for good design

If you insist on getting good quality printing, you really need to start with great design. And the obvious truth is - Good Design is Not Cheap Design. Your perfectly printed business card has no great value if it looks like it dropped out of a 1987 velcro surf wallet. Good design is invaluable. Too many companies are reluctant to pay for a logo that will visually define it for the next 5-10 years. Perception is everything and a tired cheap design is going to weigh down your dynamic company with it's fresh outlook and effectual ideas. Plus it will make your quality print obsolete.

Avoid ridiculous deadlines

Rome wasn't built in a day - and neither was your detailed, complicated precise print job. Give your printer the time they need to complete the job. Do not lump the job in their lap at the very last minute and expect miracles. You will force errors that can easily be avoided. Ink needs time to dry. Cutting a perfect line requires set-up and packing and shipping takes patience. Value your printer's time as you value your own and you will proudly place your freshly printed media in the hands of suitably impressed new clients.



CHOOSING THE RIGHT PRINTER

Choose the right printer for your job

Define your needs

Do allow cost to be your guiding principle

Ask for relevant print samples

Tour the printing facilities

Find a printer with a passion for print

Choose a printer with a proven track record

Avoid printers that outsource

Choose a printer with state-of-the-art equipment



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