

DIGITAL VS. OFFSET PRINTING

HOW TO DECIDE WHAT IS RIGHT FOR YOUR PROJECT.

The growth of digital printing technology has brought technical advancements, more options, and exciting new features to today's commercial printing. It's also brought some confusion. Understanding the advantages and disadvantages of digital printing and how those compare to traditional offset printing can help you make the right choice for your job.

An Overview of Offset Printing

Offset printing is the most common high volume commercial printing technology. In offset printing, the desired print image is burned onto a plate and is then transferred from the plate to a rubber blanket, and then to the printing surface. This printing process is based on the repulsion of oil and water. The image to be printed gets ink from ink rollers, while the non printing area attracts a film of water, keeping these areas ink-free.

Advantages of Offset Printing

- High image quality.
- Works on a wide range of printing surfaces including paper, wood, cloth, metal, leather, rough paper and plastic.
- The unit cost goes down as the quantity goes up.
- Quality and cost-effectiveness in high volume jobs. While today's digital presses are close to the cost/benefit ratio of offset for high quality work, they are not yet able to compete with the volume an offset press can produce.

An Overview of Digital Printing

Digital printing eliminates many of the mechanical steps required for conventional printing, including making films and color proofs, manually stripping the pieces together and making plates.

Advantages of Digital Printing

- Shorter turnaround.
- Every print is the same. More accurate counts, less waste and fewer variations, due to not having to balance ink and water during press run.
- Cheaper low volume printing. While the unit cost of each piece may be higher than with offset printing, when setup costs are included digital printing provides lower per unit costs for very small print runs.
- Variable Data Printing is a form of customizable digital printing. Using information from a database or external file, text and graphics can be changed on each piece without stopping or slowing down the press. For example, personalized letters can be printed with a different name and address on each letter. Variable data printing is used primarily for direct marketing, customer relationship development and advertising.

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Still Not Sure Which is Right? Use this checklist to help decide.

	Digital	Offset
Quantity	Small quantity printing (ex. 500)	Large quantity printing (ex. 5,000)
Printing Medium	Text or cover weight. Glossy or uncoated.	Special paper, finish, unusual print surface or custom size.
Color	Four-colour process printing.	1 or 2 colour printing possible to reduce cost
Pantones	Pantone Matching system using four-colour process.	Accurate Pantone printing with Pantone inks.
Turnaround	Quick turn around times.	Longer turn around times due to set up and drying times.
Proofing	Accurate proofs printed using the same machine that the job will be printed on.	Accurate press proofs are possible but can be expensive.
Customization	Direct mail, and personalized items are possible.	Not a viable option.

Summary

Take a look at the checklist above and never hesitate to contact us with questions. Our knowledgeable staff will help you get your job done right.

Source

pinscreative.com/articles/digital_vs_offset.htm