

## Offset vs Digital

What's right for your printing needs? By Anne Chiapetta

Like every industry, the print industry has changed dramatically. What was once considered to be an art has now become a mechanical process. While some will argue you still need a great craftsman to print, the new printing presses and prepress equipment has taken much of the art out of the process. Having been in this business for twenty-five years, I have seen many changes take place. Many of them are for the better. We have eliminated many of the environmental factors from the printing process. The consistency and repeatability of a job has improved. We can reproduce a better quality piece for less cost. However, a good press person with an eye for color is still needed to make small adjustments to the press to get the best print job, bringing the human element into the process. But the lines have started to blur between traditional offset printing and digital printing.

Digital printing allows for a very quick turn around time as there are no plates or ink involved. It produces a good-looking image on different papers and can fit the need for many printed pieces. It also allows for one-to-one personalization. It does, however, have limitations. Size is one. Most digital printers can only print a sheet size up to 13" x 19". This means if you are printing a pocket folder, poster or some other larger piece, this is not an option for you. Quantity is also a concern. Once your print run hits two or three thousand, depending on the size, offset printing may become the most efficient way to print. Ink color is also a factor. If you are looking for a metallic ink or Pantone® colors, offset printing is the only option. Lastly, there are certain paper limitations to digital. If there is heavy ink coverage and the piece needs to be folded, a digitally printed piece may

crack or chip off on the fold. Heavy paper weights and some finishes do not print on a digital machine. So, how do you decide which way to go?

I think the key to a great piece starts at the beginning of the project, long before the decision to print is ever made. Buyers and consumers have changed. Our economy has changed. The real question is what is the purpose of the piece. Printed pieces still have their place in the overall marketing mix and research shows people still respond to it. More small businesses are using direct mail to attract new clients. Almost half (47 percent) consider mail important to finding new customers or members\*. People still respond to something tangible that is in their hands, delivered in the way you want them to see it; not printed off their laser printer where you lose control of the quality of the final output.

Here are some points you should be discussing with your marketing services provider:

- Who is the intended recipient of this piece?
- What is the purpose of this piece?
- What is the budget for this piece?
- What is the deadline?
- What is the quantity?
- How will this piece reach the end user?
- How much personalization is required?

Once these questions are answered you can then determine what printing method is right for your project. If needed, a good marketing person will know the advantages and limitations of each process and will help you make the best decision.

\* As quoted in *Deliver*®, July 2010

### Pros vs Cons

#### A quick glance to help you decide

	OFFSET	DIGITAL
Paper Size (larger than 13 x 19")	✓	
Personalization		✓
Special/Metallic Inks	✓	
Large Quantities (greater than 5,000)	✓	
Specialty Papers	✓	✓
Fast Turnaround		✓

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## Think Inside the Box

By Anne Chiapetta

### How do you get your direct mail piece to stand out from the crowd?

People love to receive gifts. It's just human nature. There is always a hint of excitement and surprise when we receive a box in the mail or delivered via an express service, addressed to us when we aren't expecting it. It brings out the inner child in all of us. Who could resist opening that package? Now, imagine that package was from your business, and you had the opportunity to send a targeted audience



something that would almost guarantee to be opened? Most of us would jump at that chance. So, what if you were to create a direct mail package that is sent to a selected group of potential customers that would allow you to tell them about your services or product? These packages don't have to be expensive, especially when you consider the cost of gaining a new customer. They just need to be creative and move the recipient to the next step in the sales process, or beyond. It could be a sample product, it could be a recorded message, or it could be something that evokes an emotion. It is tactile and allows the recipient to interact with the contents. What's really exciting about this type of direct mail is it lets your company stand out from the competition and shows your commitment level to your product or service and to the customer from the start.

For a client who wanted travelers to vacation at their resort, we developed a package that had items needed for a warm weather stay. The package contained suntan lotion, a beach

towel, a camera and flip flops. The personalized card said, "wish you were here" with a phone number to call and some information about the resort. We even ordered custom mailing cartons that looked like a suitcase. The promotion was so well received that the company continued with the theme for future mailings.

This direct mail approach can develop into a campaign that can be used to show different levels of services you offer or even a wide array of products and services. It also translates well into other forms of marketing. Radio or TV spots, email and social media can all work to build excitement and reinforce the message. As with all marketing efforts, even if your prospect isn't ready to act immediately, your company will stay top-of-mind when they are ready. So, sometimes thinking about what can be inside the box can be the most out-of-the-box thinking you can do.

## Fall Marketing

### Make the most of the last quarter

What do you have planned for the last quarter of 2010? It's not too late to add or update your online marketing presence or design and mail a direct mail piece. Of course, it needs to fit into your overall marketing plan, but if it makes sense, it can be done. We can modify something you may have used earlier this year or use this time as an opportunity to preview something that will be introduced in 2011. A teaser can be a very effective way to build excitement for a new product or service for the coming year. Some of our clients end up with unspent marketing budgets and don't want to lose the budget for next year. This is a great time to start a project that will roll out in 2011. And for those clients who have spent their current budget, we can start your projects now and bill in 2011.

The creative process can move quickly without compromising the results. We can work within very tight turnaround times, especially in this changing market. If you have an idea you would like to discuss, give us a call. We can make it happen.

# 2010

