

PRINT & MEDIA  
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# Nice price

## Accurate information and careful planning deliver savings

By Tom Kubinski

**A**ny cost savings discussion must start with the bidding process—where most of the costs are incurred. Unfortunately, given the competitive U.S. print market, some vendors cut corners on their bids to bring down their price. If they're lucky enough to win the job, they'll tack on upcharges or alterations to make up the difference.

How many of your projects actually came in within budget? Do your upcharges or alterations seem reasonable? The only additional charges you should incur are from alterations you have made. If you're seeing a lot of deviation from the original budget, get a more detailed estimate.

What is the desired impact, look and feel of your piece? How is the end recipient expected to react when handling it? Is it something that will be looked at once or a high-profile project with a long shelf life?

As the buyer, what is your goal during the bidding process? Are you simply seeking a variety of "apples to apples" comparisons to guide your decision? Are you looking for the cheapest provider? Or, are you concerned about ensuring that everyone involved understands the piece's design, its intended use and the desired results?

At Sexton Printing, we provide a consultative partnership. We encourage our customers to ask a lot of questions up front, and we do the same. We want to understand our clients' goals for a particular piece.

Realistically, jobs in the planning stages are changing constantly. It isn't always possible to finalize the specs before you contact your printer. But the more precise you are up front, the better your chances are that the bids are, indeed, apples to apples. This is especially important if you haven't yet finalized your creative or total budgets, or obtained purchase orders.

Providing detailed information and a 100-percent-to-size, color-broken dummy will ensure a bid has been estimated correctly.

### The basics

Here are some typically furnished line items:

- >> Name of project and format of piece.
- >> Estimated date and time needed back.
- >> Quantity.
- >> Size (flat and finished/folded).
- >> Stock (weight, brand and finish).
- >> Ink (number of colors, 4-color process, PMS spot colors, bleeds).
- >> Coating (varnish or aqueous, or whichever is cheaper).
- >> Artwork (in disk form and date to be ready).
- >> Proofs (dylux or Matchprint needed).
- >> Press check (or not).
- >> Separations (number and sizes of each).
- >> Line screen.
- >> Diecut or perforate.
- >> Embossing (register to print or blind).
- >> Foil Stamping (register to print or blind).
- >> Lamination (one sided or two, flush or sealed edge, and thickness).
- >> Binding (saddlestitch, perfect bind, wire-o, spiral, plastic coil, GBC).
- >> Mailing (inkjetting, cheshire labeling, post office drop).
- >> Delivery (date, location and contact person).

### Don't forget

Here are some items that often are overlooked. Typically, this is where most of the upcharges will be encountered.

**Folding** | Will the piece use roll, letter, gate, accordion, double parallel or some other fold?. If you're using a roll fold, have the panels been adjusted for the fold? Are there any critical crossover hookups? If so, on what pages? Has the art been adjusted for crossovers?

**Stock** | Is it acceptable to use comparable stock? (Not all papers are created equal.) Even a grade marked No. 1 can differ from another mill's No. 1. Domestic to foreign paper ratings also are very different. A family member piece



## About Sexton Printing

Sexton Printing is a St. Paul-based printer of multicolor marketing materials and publications for some of the leading corporations and non-profit organizations in the Twin Cities area. The company features one of the industry's strongest customer education and technical support programs complemented by knowledgeable sales consultants like Tom Kubinski. See [www.sextonprinting.com](http://www.sextonprinting.com).



See Tom Kubinski's file preparation tips online at <http://americanprinter.com/pmbuyer/mag/fileprep-spring-08>.

## More good advice online

Looking for more print tips? We have a wealth of great articles online.

- >> **Premier Issue (Spring 2007)** In our Premier issue, we featured "It's all good," a look at the pros and cons of offset and digital printing. Another article, "Strong to the Finish," reviews some creative binding techniques, including eyeletting, miniature folding, peel-and-stick and more.
- >> **Doing some digital printing?** See Summer 2007's "12 Tips for Customized Print Projects."
- >> **Need some mailing tips?** See "Fluster-free mailing" in Fall 2007.
- >> **Are you a press check novice?** Read Winter 2007's "In the Loupe."

See <http://americanprinter.com/pmbuyer/print-media-buyer-archive/>

printed with a substitute paper could result in colors and images not matching.

**Ink** | Indicate PMS, any metallics and their colors as well as the percentage of coverage for each. Does ink run across folds? Is a score necessary? If scoring is required, what kind (press, folder or letterpress) is acceptable?

**Coatings** | Are they wet or dry trap, contaminated or clean? Are drawdowns needed? Varnish, aqueous and UV provide varying levels of protection (and costs). Aqueous allows you to seal the sheet and move onto the next step faster than a varnish, which could nullify the savings of the coating itself. (Finger printing is more apparent with UV, especially with darker background colors.)

**Artwork** | Indicate format or software used. (Some software isn't printing friendly.)

**Proofs** | Do you know the difference between a dylux and Matchproof? Sexton's dylux is a CMYK backed up (not laminated together) and is ideal for projects that require many people to review and, if necessary, indicate changes. Our Digital Match Proof is for color-critical projects and is a more expensive proof.

**Press check** | Do you want to see all forms or just one to set the color?

**Separations** | Do you want the printer to match transparency or is pleasing color acceptable? Are any rounds of color alterations to be included?

**Diecutting, embossing and foil stamping** | Can you furnish an existing die or does one need to be manufactured?

**Die size** | If the job has perforations, is it on folds only or L-shaped?

**Die height** | Is it single-level, multilevel or sculptured?

**Lamination** | Indicate the desired style: lay flat, satin, gloss or dull film, sealed or flush edge.

**Binding** | Otabind, a lay-flat adhesive binding process, might be cheaper than perfect binding.

**Paper grain direction** | This can be a significant postpress consideration especially when folding some heavier weight stocks. If this issue isn't addressed up front in the bid, your end pricing could reflect additional costs.

**Mailing** | How many lists will the printer be working with? Will the printer merge/purge and dedupe? Whose indicia be used? Will the piece mail First Class, First Class Presort or Presorted Standard?

**Quantity** | What specific number of pieces will be mailed? Is this job for a non-profit? Is there a business reply card (BRC) and what is the size? Is the BRC the correct size for postal automation discounts?

### More points to ponder

In addition to the preceding points, here are some additional considerations.

**Bleed** | Where is the bleed on the piece? Sometimes going with no bleed allows you to go to a smaller paper and/or press sheet size.

**Size** | Consider downsizing the piece so it will fit onto a smaller paper or press sheet size. (This also might allow you to keep a bleed for no additional cost.)

**Stock** | Choosing a similar grade of a different brand name, or ordering a special sheet size cuts down on waste. (This usually takes time to get from the mills but can give you huge savings. If you need only a partial quantity, you might choose to put that small amount onto a standard sheet size while waiting on the balance of the special sheet size and savings.)

**Scoring** | Using a press or folder score vs. a letterpress score can save money. (A letterpress score might reduce—but not eliminate—the threat of cracking.)

**Tint stripping** | A PMS color can save money, but it might create color consistency issues on heavy coverage areas or if the piece incorporates a lot of process images. Discuss this with your printer early on to determine the best option.

**Crossover hookups** | These might require several extra procedures that will incur additional costs. Typically, text-weight stocks require these extra steps but cover stocks don't.

**Foiling repeat patterns** | Try to avoid them within your run or live work. They require extra material to be purchased as well as slower press speeds.

**Prepress** | Monthly publications or repeat jobs can reduce production time by supplying a press-optimized PDF file.

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