Some Prepress Tips

Application Tips:

Do not embed EPS files inside other EPS files. For example, do not place a Photoshop EPS inside an Illustrator EPS, and then place the combined file into QuarkXPress. Instead, combine the two separate EPS files in a QuarkXPress document.

Using Illustrator EPS – Embed (no linked) files; all fonts converted to outlines and all transparencies flattened. The use of unflattened Illustrator transparencies can create unintended screening or other problems during the proofing process. Also, avoid using pattern fills as they may not print as you had intended.

Using Corel Draw – All text converted to outlines and exported to .ai format (do not use "patterns") Then open in Illustrator and resave as EPS format.

InDesign – Embed (no linked) files; all fonts converted to outlines and all transparencies flattened.

QuarkXpress - Print your file as Postscript and the use Acrobat Distiller, with the proper settings, to create a PDF/X-1a compatible PDF file for printing.

Creating PDFs for High Resolution Printing

Simply using the proper design-oriented software doesn't guarantee print-perfect PDF files. Bad PDF files have been created from every application that can write PostScript or export PDF.

Although there is no such thing as a "typical" print project, there are characteristics common to a print-viable PDF file. These include:

* All fonts used are fully embedded.
* All bitmap images are of sufficient resolution for the final print method.
* If compression is used for images, it is lossless (zip) or highest-quality JPEG.
* Illustrations are encoded as vector data: No erroneous conversion to bitmaps.
* Colors are specified in the correct color space (as intended to print).
* Physical dimensions of page size are correct and include bleed if needed.
* Transparent objects should be flattened.

Recommendations from Adobe for InDesign

Before creating a PDF for a service provider, make sure that your document meets your service provider's specifications. The following list offers some recommendations:

* Use the InDesign Preflight feature to ensure that image resolution and color spaces are correct; that fonts are available and can be embedded; that graphics are up-to-date, and so on.
* View your Adobe PDF export settings prior to exporting, and then adjust them as necessary.
* If your artwork contains transparency including overprints and drop shadows, and you require high-resolution output, it's a good idea to preview the effects of flattening using the *Flattener Preview* panel before saving the file.
* Ask your prepress service provider if they want to receive flattened or unflattened PDF files. Flattening should be done as late in the work flow as possible, preferably by the service provider. However, if your service provider wants you to flatten the transparency, **submit a PDF/X1a** compliant file.
* If your document will be separated, you can preview the separations and ink coverage limits using the Separations Preview panel.
* Use only high-resolution images in your document.
* For best results, use only CMYK images in a four-color-process job. Alternatively, you can choose to convert RGB images to CMYK in the Export Adobe PDF dialog box.
* You can exclude hidden or nonprinting layers from the exported PDF document.

For more detailed information about preparing InDesign documents for high-resolution PDF output, go to the Adobe website. Be sure to check our their Tutorial section.

Using the Print Production Toolbar Panels to Review your files

Reviewing color separations: You can preview color separations, ink coverage limits, and over-printing using the Separations Preview panel. Previewing separations on your monitor lets you check the following:

Varnishes and other coatings: Since varnishes are transparent, they can be difficult to preview on screen. When you preview a varnish separation by itself, the varnished areas appear in black.

Rich Black: Previewing separations lets you identify areas that will print as rich black, or process black (K) ink mixed with color inks for increased opacity and richer color.

Ink coverage: Too much ink on the paper can cause drying problems. Ask your commercial printer for the maximum ink coverage of the press you will be printing on. You can then preview the document to identify areas where ink coverage exceeds the press's limit.

Overprinting: You can preview how blending, transparency, and overprinting will appear in color-

separated output.

Note: You can also see overprinting effects when you output to a composite printing device. This is useful for proofing color separations. While previewing separations on your monitor can help you detect problems without the expense of printing separations, it does not let you preview trapping, emulsion options, printer's marks, and halftone screens and resolution. Also, objects on hidden layers are not included in an on screen preview.

Adobe PDF Presets

Press Quality: Creates PDF files for high-quality print production (for example, digital printing or for separations to an imagesetter or plate setter), but ***does not*** create files that are PDF/X-compliant. In this case, the quality of the content is the highest consideration. The objective is to maintain all the information in a PDF file that a commercial printer or print service provider needs in order to print the document correctly. This set of options uses Acrobat 5 – PDF 1.4, converts all colors to CMYK or Spot, down samples color and grayscale images to 300 ppi and monochrome images to 1200 ppi, embed/subsets of all fonts, and preserves transparency (for file types capable of transparency). These PDF files can be opened in Acrobat 5.0 and Acrobat Reader 5.0 and later.

Dealing with Transparency in InDesign PDF files:

Question: When I export an InDesign file to Acrobat 6 (High Quality Print) the PDF looks great, but when I print it the transparent backgrounds print as a visible box?

Answer: Export to PDF/X-1a. This PDF format flattens all transparency - Press Quality alone does no flatten your file. If you are still having problems after flattening to PDF/X-1a then you have some problems with the way that you are applying transparency. To be on the safe side, you should only be using transparency effects with CMYK art. Mixing spot inks and RGB can cause problems.

When you export to PDF select Press Quality and them make sure it's compatible with Acrobat 5 or higher. Acrobat 4 does not support transparency. If you're using Distiller, make sure that the setting is also for Acrobat 5 or above compatability.

If you are exporting from InDesign, click on the Advanced section and look at color, making sure that it matches what you're using in your document or that you have selected Unchanged.
Then select High Resolution in the transparency flattener setting window.

Remember, flattening live transparency effects does not mean that you are destroying the effect: You are simply flattening the artwork (like you would with layers in Photoshop). The output should look the same as if you were still working with live transparency. If it does not look the same then you have not used the transparency effects properly within InDesign.