

Isn't it About Time to Say it in Color?

Now that full color printing is becoming more cost effective, and print speeds are within acceptable production ranges, the pressure to transition to full color is on. Up until now, color printing was reserved exclusively for high profile customer communications—intended only for high net-worth customers. But now, the CMYK flood gates have opened and everyone seems to be saying it in color.

What about you? Are you still trying to decide if you're ready, or capable of transitioning to full color printing? Consider the following fundamentals as you transition to full color:

- » *Discuss and create with document stakeholders an effective color strategy*
- » *Target one or two initial applications for full color integration*
- » *Estimate costs and timelines for the projects*
- » *Consult with a trusted, industry leading color production print specialist about selecting appropriate color production printing solutions*

An Effective Color Strategy

There are a multitude of color research studies available in the marketplace that will quickly convince any document stakeholder, or marketer, that infusing color into monochrome documents is a winning proposition. Based on the objectives of the project or application, color may in fact be the way to go, but let's get some facts on the table so you can decide for yourself.

According to InfoTrends, color can:

- **Improve payment response rates by up to 30% by using color to emphasize amount and date due.**
- **Influence the customer decision making process by up to 80% when colorizing cross-sell offers or promotions.**
- **Improve repeat orders by up to 40% when focusing the reader's eye to a simple re-order process.**
- **Dramatically reduce calls to customer service by highlighting critical data such as payment information or mailing instructions.**

Clearly, the benefits of color are worth considering. However, before spinning the color wheel to decide which shades of red and yellow and pink and green, purple, orange, and blue to add to your outbound customer communications, consider doing the following first:

1. Create a spreadsheet of your customer facing documents / applications.
2. Research each application to compile critical information from departments such as Customer Service, Finance, and Marketing to determine the problems and successes associated with each document. For example, how frequently does Customer Service receive calls to clarify information already found on the document, such as late payment date? Interview Finance and Accounts Receivable departments to determine if late payments are consistently received for specific bills or invoices. Ask Marketing about the results of their cross-sell or promotional offers integrated within documents. This information might indicate where the use of color might influence customer behavior and improve bottom-line results.
3. Contact a sampling of customers within the low, medium, and high net worth client base and talk to them about the communications they receive and share with them your color ideas to receive immediate feedback.

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Isn't it About Time to Say it in Color? (continued)

An Effective Color Strategy

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4. Interview the internal team responsible for creating, producing, and distributing documents to access the potential impact of integrating color into the customer communication document lifecycle.
5. Evaluate with your production department the color capabilities that currently exist, if any, and the metrics required to either migrate to color or bring color in for the first time.
6. Select a simple project and jointly prepare with internal customer communication stakeholders a draft investment pro-forma and timeline.
7. Evaluate the market and competitors to evaluate the importance and leadership position of preparing and communicating in color.
8. Assess all the input from your color research activities to formulate a fact-based, color strategy jointly developed by your company document stakeholders.

Target One or Two Initial Applications

An outcome of developing your color strategy should be a clear prioritization of the applications you want to colorize first, second, third and so on. It would be a mistake, if not a disaster, to colorize more than one or two applications at a time. You will want to carefully test and measure each color change in order to prepare a meticulous cost-benefit analysis, which should guide your continuing color strategy. The road to color can be a long-haul, so let's not make it a bumpy one.

Estimate Costs and Timelines

Another deliverable of your Color Strategy should have been a mock investment pro-forma and timeline. Now its time to number crunch and turn your draft documents into excel spreadsheets on which you can base sound decisions. Carefully review your financial statements with the production team and finance department to ensure you have covered all elements required for the color transition. Additionally, prepare the project timeline with the key players that will actually be doing the work on the color applications. It might seem like a one hour project to select the colors for the four color investment pie chart, but corporate marketing will definitely object when you select the same custom colors used in the corporate logo—a branding NO-NO!

Consult with a trusted, industry color Production Print Specialist

The marketplace is riddled with color production solutions. However, selecting the right color solution is just as important as deciding to embrace a color communication strategy. Consult with a trusted, industry leading color Production Print Specialist to review your color strategy and determine what color system(s) will meet your goals for today and beyond.

Still Thinking About Full Color Documents?

The demand for full color communications is growing exponentially. The demand is dictated by customers, competitors, and savvy companies—just like you. The benefits of full color are dramatic, but remember to establish an effective color strategy, target one or two applications, estimate costs and timelines, and call in an experienced color production partner—and start saying it in full color.

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