

The Prerequisites to Handling and Avoiding Complaints

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In the production of printed products there are many variables that enter the equation. It goes without saying that trouble will occur from time-to-time, and it is not a matter of how, it's a matter of when.

Sometimes operators can find themselves dealing with a mechanical or digital 'beast', incorporating components such as: ink, chemistry, plates, blankets, supplies...and in many cases under changing environmental conditions.

When desired results are not achieved and the operator has gone through the process of elimination to find the cause, they might find paper is the culprit. Typical problems that can occur when paper has impacted the stoppage in production could include: wavy paper, tight edges, mottling, misregistration, creasing, offsetting, blade scratches, hickies, poor cuts, smashed blankets and more.

The sign of a good paper supplier is the ability to work diligently on behalf of the operator and take charge of the situation. By quickly reporting the issue, a professional representative will help the operator walk through a series of checks and balances to determine whether or not paper could be a factor. If appropriate, arrangements will be made for paper replacement, while the issue is reported to the mill including a case for compensation.

Here are a number of points to keep in mind to ensure a smooth transition from issue to successful resolution. And a few good practices to avoid nasty issues in the first place (specific to offset printing):

- 1 Acquire the toll free numbers for HELP LINES (tech reps) for the major manufacturers
- 1 Keep documentation tools close by (measuring tape, dark cloth, scotch tape, mylar)
- 1 Take digital camera or cell phone pictures - they are very helpful in telling your story
- 1 Secure unprinted samples, printed samples, run numbers, invoices, packaging slips, etc.
- 1 Have a complaint form on hand to provide all the necessary details about the paper specs, the press specs, and printing details describing the problem
- 1 Save all tape pulls, black rag samples, foreign objects, damaged blankets or any other evidence to support a claim

Digital Printing

It is not uncommon to see printers who offer offset and digital services utilizing their "house stock" programs for all components of their business. Although well intended, they typically discover that this can lead to problems if they cut their digital sheet requirements from commercial offset folio sheets. Inconsistent cutting and product sitting exposed to the environment for longer than intended can lead to poor production and stoppages. Today most mills offer the same brand in both an offset and digital version in order to give the operator a better match for the specific process. The surface finishing and also the moisture contents are different to mirror the sensitivity of either toner or offset technology.

Here are a few points to consider for digital printing:

- 1 Purchase mill cut and mill wrapped sizes: 8 ½ x 11, 11 x 17, 12 x 18, 13 x 19 and so on
- 1 Consider proper grain direction options as specified by your OEM
- 1 Order stock in advance to ensure proper acclimatization
- 1 Ensure paper is stocked in an area protected from forklifts/machinery, and stored long enough to come to equilibrium with the environment
- 1 For synthetics 45% RH is a must. Dry conditions work against the ability for toner to set properly on synthetic products
- 1 Be mindful of gsm versus caliper and make sure your equipment is set up to the specs of your make and model relative to density, finish, weight and size of stock
- 1 Establish a good relationship with your OEM technicians

In a perfect world there would be no print or paper issues, however, we must always be prepared for the worst. Whether offset or digital, you now have the know how to address a problem and solve it!

A Maritimer, Barry has worked in the paper and print industry for 31 years with over 26 years at Ariva - Dartmouth Branch. He graduated from Acadia University with a BBA in Management and Marketing, and keeps busy volunteering with the Minor Hockey Association and Hockey Nova Scotia. Barry lives in Cole Harbour with his wife Cindy and 3 children.