

Ten Things You Need Before Printing a Large Mail Campaign

These simple tips will reduce stress and increase the chances that you will survive your next big mailing.

1. **You need a team** that works *with* you to get quality work done on time. How do you find a company that will internalize your urgency? Look for a company that will assign an inside person to your account and not have you working with someone different for each mailing. If you connect with this person and they “get it,” you are well on your way.
2. **You need a printer that knows mailing.** Some printers produce mailing components and some don’t. If your printer doesn’t know weight and thickness requirements, who’s going to tell you those two layers of 70# text aren’t heavy enough for your self-mailer, or that your little booklet will exceed the thickness requirement, or that your artwork doesn’t have an indicia? A good printer/MAILER will help educate you along the way.

Mailing capability is a big plus: with a one stop shop there is no extra freight to the mailer and no finger pointing that the print is late, or counts are short. A good vendor/partner looks at the bottom line on your project; that includes your postage cost. Will they look for a tweak here or there that can save you money? Are they experts in “Postal Optimization” like co-mingling, co-palletizing, or co-mailing to save postage?

3. **You need the right equipment and capacity.** Your printer needs the right stuff to get your job done and not too much of the wrong equipment. You don’t want to be sharing the overhead cost for die cutters, shrink wrappers, and foil stampers that you don’t use. Look for a vendor that has equipment your projects require and not a plethora of machines you will never use.
4. **You need a vendor with plenty of loyal fans.** Ask for references and call them with a list of questions like:
 - Can you tell me about a problem situation and how they handled it?
 - How is their print quality, customer service, turnaround time, pricing?
 - What happens when you are late with artwork or make alterations at the proof stage?
 - Have you ever been surprised by their invoice?
5. **You need a company that is improving.** Ask if the printer has a quality improvement program. What changes have they made because of it? What technology or equipment have they invested in recently? (For some strange reason, printers love talking about their equipment.) Do they improve their processes as well as their presses?
6. **You need a centrally located printer.** Obviously, you need a printer that is near your mailer. And, your mailer needs to be located in the middle of your

audience. For national mailings that means the Midwest. Freight and postal discounts for NDC (Network Distribution Center) formerly BMC and SCF entry are big reasons to mail from a central location.

7. **Occasionally, you will need to have things fixed.** There is no perfect printer. Mistakes will happen and whether the mistake is your fault, your printer's, or the guilt is shared; you need a printer who will bend over backwards to make it right. Will the printer share your sense of urgency or tell you they can't get back on press for a couple of weeks? This is something you can talk about when you call references. And, you can ask your printing sales representative about it.
8. **You need to hear a "Can do!" attitude.** It's not about them and their plant schedule: rather, they know what you want and they want to make you happy. If you want to have low impact on the environment, they offer green options. They "find a way" to keep your job on schedule and they don't whine to you about their problems. "No problem! We will get it done" is what you want to hear.
9. **You need to work with a stable company.** Just because a company has been in business for many years doesn't mean their future is assured. You want a company that is not only experienced, but one with a sound financial balance sheet and strong leadership. How can you find out if a company may be over extended from a combination of major equipment purchases and the down economy? This is a delicate subject to probe. Have they done any lay-offs due to the economy? Do not feel embarrassed about asking your sales representative about a company's stability. If you have concerns about whether a company might not last until your job is done, you can check their credit status or ask for a financial statement. If they act like this is an affront or are unwilling to give it: you may be on to something.
10. **You need a partner.** Your project is not just paper being put through equipment –your work is important because of what it does for your company. A printer/partner takes some time getting to know you and what you are trying to achieve. Sure, it's important to shop around; printers have niches, and where there is a big cost difference there is probably a major equipment or efficiency difference. Work with your partner. Give feedback on quality, pricing and other ways they can improve and they will do their best to meet your needs.

We hope the Fisher Group is the right choice for you. If you would like to find out more about us you can:

- Access our web site www.fishergroup.com
- Call us at 319-393-5405 to talk with a sales person or Bill Godecke
- Email info@fishergroup.com or billg@fishergroup.com.