

Tips for keeping your projects *on time and on budget!*

As a printing and graphics company with over 20 years of working with government, private and corporate clients, we realize that most critical aspect of any project or campaign is the planning stage. The procedures and tips we recommend in this Timeline Planner are designed to help you understand the steps involved in producing a final product ...on time and on budget! Please contact us at any time if you need assistance with your Timeline Planner!



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**State contract for printing services
for informational publications:**

**RFP001-A-15-0647-C,
Commodity class/subclass
0083-040 and 0083-042**

Services for printing of materials to include, but not limited to, the following items: booklets, calendars, catalogs, annual reports and newsletters.

**Contract Award # 023-A-15-0563-C
Commodity class/subclass 0075-032
Envelopes, plain and printed**

Helpful hints... *before* you contact a vendor. Check each item completed.

_____ **Have all your copy reviewed and approved by all decision-makers.** Use headlines and sub-headlines to capture the subject and salient points of each section. A copywriter and editor can help you make the text more powerful from a marketing standpoint, but you know your product best in terms of context and message. Remember to include a call to action that directs your audience where to turn for information (telephone, web, etc.) or help.

_____ **Prepare text in MS Word (it's PC & Mac compatible).** Don't worry about tabs and layout since the formatting will be altered when the text is applied to a professional design. If you are submitting previously designed files to be updated, they should be in recent Quark or PageMaker software collected for output with fonts, linked high-resolution graphics & original layered files.

_____ **Create a hard-copy printed mock-up** of how you would like your final product to be assembled and numbered, including sample tabs or special sections as well as headings for the cover, tabs, etc.

_____ **Consult with your communications director** to determine what logos, slogans, etc., must appear in your product.

_____ **Make sure all graphics (photographs, illustrations, logos) you intend to use are in a high-resolution format .eps or .tif** Adobe Photoshop or Illustrator files, so you don't end up with bitmapped and blurred images. Photographic images, grayscale and color at 300 dpi or greater resolution; if reduced 50% of full size resolution, may be 150 dpi. Linework must be scanned between 600–1200 dpi as vector file. Graphics should relate to and enhance the subject matter. Remember that most images taken with a digital camera are low resolution, suitable for web but not for quality printing needs. If you need to purchase images, remember that your designer can purchase royalty-free images that are an option at a fraction of the cost of rights-protected images. For high resolution formats, royalty-free images cost about \$200 each versus thousands of dollars for rights-protected images with limited use.

_____ **Collect sample printed pieces** that you find attractive to give the designers a "direction" of the style or look you prefer, but don't try to be a designer. Most desktop publishing software is limiting and generally not good for professional printing needs. The software probably cannot collect files for output, separate colors, trap, etc. It's good to have an idea of layout to guide the creative process, but let the designers give you suggestions on how to get the greatest impact from your layout.

_____ **Determine who will be involved in the review and approval process** and what their future schedules are like. Make sure that the final sign-off process is not scheduled to take place when decision-makers are out of town or on vacation.

_____ **If you need direct mail, calculate the total number of names on the available mailing lists.** If you need to purchase a mailing list, determine the demographics (ZIP codes, income, etc.) and psychographic (habits, lifestyle, etc.) of your market.

_____ **Assign one well-organized and punctual individual to be the main communications source** for answering questions, distributing materials for review, and forwarding messages between the department(s) and the vendor(s).

Check services needed:

- media buying
- TV/radio commercial
- CD, VHS, DVD, cassette
- direct mail fulfillment, lists
- Yellow Pages ad
- newspaper/magazine print ads
- translation
- logo, letterhead, business card
- custom binder and/or tabs
- annual report, plan, catalogue
- information flier, newsletter
- calendars, postcards
- brochure, pocket folder
- poster, presentation product
- illustrations, photography
- billboards/outdoor advertising
- buswrap or vehicle striping
- trade show display, tags, labels
- promotional gift: pens, magnets
- sign, banner, flag
- telemarketing, focus groups
- custom packaging
- website design
- other: _____

Be prepared with answers to the following questions:

1. Who will be receiving this product (target market)? Be specific as to age, sex, ethnicity, location, etc.
2. What quantities will you need (total printed pieces, videos, CDs, promotional items, etc.)? Please understand that in printing there are fixed costs in film, plates and related materials. This means the price per piece decreases as your volume increases.
3. What logos, images, film footage, etc., must be included?
4. What do you want your product/campaign to accomplish?
5. On what date does your campaign need to be completed?
6. Who will be the contact person for this project (within your organization)? A well-organized individual to supervise project timeline.

PROJECT/CAMPAIGN TITLE: _____

PO/Req #: _____ **Budget \$** _____

Below is a sample timeline to help you understand and plan the steps involved in completing your project on time and on budget. Although most projects traditionally take a few months to complete, there are special "rush" circumstances in which the schedule can be adjusted to help you meet deadlines and funding commitments. Ask your design, production and printing vendors for information and guidance.

To develop your timeline, start with the date your product/campaign must be delivered and work backwards, using the weeks suggested below as a guide to count back the weeks on a calendar. Consider holidays and staff vacations. For bilingual projects that need translation, add extra weeks for design production, proofreading, etc., **AFTER the English version has been completed and approved.** Changes made to the English after the fact are costly and time-consuming. Play it safe: add in extra days for unforeseen delays or problems.

___/___/___ **Delivery.** Date that the final product needs to reach your market or warehouse and/or airing of commercials.

___/___/___ **Assembly.** 1–3 weeks (depending on scope of project).

___/___/___ **Printing.** Overnight to a few weeks, depending on scope of project. Prepress, proofs, film, blueprints, printing, diecuts, drying, bindery.

___/___/___ **Proofreading.** Overnight to 2 weeks. Professional proof-reading after final draft has been reviewed and approved by all decision-makers.

___/___/___ **Client Review.** 1–3 weeks. Review, proofing, revision and approval by decision-makers.

___/___/___ **Production Design.** 4–12 weeks depending on complexity. Initial concept designs, copywriting, editing, second draft with revisions, meetings, image research or scanning, proofing and prepress.

___/___/___ **Research & Quotes.** 1–3 weeks. Give the vendors your specs and answers to all the questions on both sides of this Timeline Planner so they can research quotes and develop a proposal.

___/___/___ **Scheduling.** Contact decision-makers involved in the project in order to plan vacation/schedule conflicts for future vendor meetings, project review and approval process.

___/___/___ **Approved Copy.** Reviewed by all decision-makers and prepared in MS Word with a printed mock-up of project for initial vendor meeting.

___/___/___ **Budget.** Meet with Purchasing to discuss budget and timeline.

DETERMINE START DATE OF OTHER SERVICES AND WORK INTO ABOVE TIMELINE:

___/___/___ **Translations.** 1–10 weeks depending on complexity. Translations and design *after the date the English portion is approved and completed.*

___/___/___ **Custom Promotional Items and Displays.** About 2–6 weeks. Custom screen-printed binders, CDs, banners, gifts, packaging, etc.

___/___/___ **Direct Mail.** 3–8 weeks. Copy, design, mailing list research or list cleaning/formatting, printing, addressing, assembly, metering, mailing.

___/___/___ **Broadcast.** 4–10 weeks. TV/Radio or video pre-production scripts, storyboard, graphics, scouting location, talent search and scheduling, editing, printing custom labels and jackets, media plan.