



# Ten ways to keep your design costs down

We all know what it's like to have champagne dreams and beer budgets. So does that mean we have to choose between our business' image and our pocketbooks?

Not necessarily. It's very possible to have both. A good graphic designer and print house can show you lots of ways to trim corners without sacrificing quality. Here are ten ways to get you started:

## 1. Develop a good relationship with your graphic designer and printer.

They can often recommend cost-cutting tips on your specific project, especially if you discuss your project in detail with them. Don't forget to include goals and target market with them.

## 2. Print everything at once.

Plan your whole campaign in advance and print all the elements at one time. This can save money on both film and set-up costs.

## 3. Use print "waste" wisely.

Depending on your project and how it's laid out on the press, you may be able to print an additional project on the waste. This is also known as ganging your print job.

You can gang business cards with folders and get your cards on great, heavy stock, or gang postcards with another giveaway, such as bookmarks. Because you gang the project, the print costs stay the same (paper, ink, labor) and the only extra charge is any additional film, so you end up with a "freebie."

One caveat though: This isn't always possible, depending on the print job. Your project may not have any extra room to print an additional item, or the paper weight may be inappropriate. For instance you wouldn't want to add a postcard to a job that's being printed on a thin, light paper.

## 4. Use standard sizes and standard ink colors.

Not only will this keep your print costs down, but using standard sizes could also lower your mailing costs.

## 5. Add pizzazz with cool paper.

Jazz up a one- or two-color piece by printing on textured or color paper. This is a great way to add interest without adding much expense (depending on the paper).

## 6. Less is more part 1 - colors.

In many cases, two-color projects can be equally as effective as full color. A skilled graphic designer can make a two-color piece pop. And, two-color pieces are much cheaper to print.

## 7. Less is more part 2 - photos.

Photos and other images can really add life to a piece, but they can also rack up the cost. For instance, a royalty-free photo (royalty-free means you pay only once for a photo that can be used for multiple projects over an unlimited time) can cost as little as \$150. But if you want two, three, four or even more photos, that \$150 can quickly add up. A talented graphic designer, however, can take one photo and use it in a variety of ways throughout a piece, giving you the feel of multiple photos without the cost.

## 8. Maintain a consistent look.

Even if you're only designing one piece now, will you be printing more like it? Coming up with the initial design takes the most time for a graphic designer. Once a look has been established, most graphic designers can whip up additional pieces at a fraction of the time the original took.

## 9. Plan it all out in advance.

Think about how you're going to use the piece before you design it. For instance, square envelopes are more expensive to mail. If you're mailing a folded piece, make

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sure the fold is on the bottom or it will cost more to process. A self-mailer can save you the cost of the stamp, but is it sending the right message to your customers? Your graphic designer can provide you with more ideas depending on your individual project.

### **10. Add impact with low-cost folds and cuts.**

Make your piece stand out with unusual folds or straight cuts that don't add much to the cost to the piece. Try a gate fold or a "Z" fold (one page folded so it becomes a one-sided brochure). Die cuts can be quite expensive depending on how complicated or custom the die is. But a straight cut is very affordable, and if you use straight cuts right, you can give the impression of a more expensive piece. Stepped pages, for instance, use straight cuts – each page is cut shorter than the next so you can see the top of each page when placed in the folder. They'll make the piece look more expensive than it is.

Above all, remember your graphic designer is a resource who can help you make the most of your design pieces. Don't be afraid to ask questions or gather information about your specific situation.

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