

Production
Color
Management
Report



It Doesn't Start — or End — with the Printer

Production Color Management Report

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When people think about color quality, many think about how “good” the printer is. If you’ve got a device that handles color well, color should be fine, right? But the fact of the matter is sound color management is an end-to-end process, one that sometimes doesn’t even involve a printer at all. Ultimately, printers only really make up about one-fifth of the color management process. The rest is with photographers, designers, computer monitors, order intake and elsewhere.

The Color Divide

Colors that are just right on your monitor but come out a little — or a lot — off can be extremely frustrating. So what’s happening? Color quality degradation outside of the printer is in the transitions between people, devices and processes. This can occur when a photographer emails a photo during file compression, when computer monitors are calibrated differently or when different departments use different substrates, devices or workflows.

Gap analysis aims to address these issues, identifying the problems and helping to calibrate monitors, devices and workflows to fix them. It’s an approach that neutrally assesses color at every step and compares across them to identify areas where color is inconsistent. Many vendors offer this service for their own devices, but in today’s competitive business climate, which drives many printers to embrace multivendor operations, it can make operation-wide color consistency difficult to achieve, causing inconsistencies.





Many Vendors, Many Color Profiles, One Result: Quality Color

This business climate has encouraged many printers to employ third-party, vendor-neutral consultants who provide gap analysis not only vertically — from step to step — but horizontally, across their entire output fleet. Often, multiple devices from multiple vendors are used to service a client with the same color needs, so a vendor-specific gap analysis can leave the job only half-done.

For example, you may have an offset press you use to print catalogs for Customer A, but Customer A also runs their direct mail, variable data-driven campaign through you. You can be sure Customer A wants their logo to look consistent in the direct mail campaign, the catalog, and their website. If your offset vendor only provides Color Management for the offset press and your digital vendor only provides Color Management for the digital, the opportunity for differing color profiles creeps in. You need to be sure you know exactly what you're getting, from screen to page to envelope. It can make all the difference in ensuring you produce strongly branded, consistent work that keeps customers coming back.





More Than Printers: Controlling Color Throughout the Operation

Sound Color Management involves maintaining color consistency in a lot more than just your output devices. Regularly adjusting monitors and other devices to help ensure accurate color representation throughout your operation continues on long after (or with the continued help of) color experts' calibrations.


How regularly should you check your color consistency? While it's tempting to set a calendar reminder to check your color, say, at 10 a.m. every other Tuesday, the fact is color checkups should work a little differently than that. If one week you have a major, color-intensive job, but your next color checkup isn't for another week, that time in between may produce some lower color quality output as a result. That kind of heavy use puts your color capabilities through their paces, which can degrade them for your next job. Schedule your color analyses and calibrations intelligently, based on workload, to help ensure consistent color.

Become Certified

It's hard to talk quality color without talking about G7 Certification. An industry standard known for its exacting requirements, G7 Certification can be a huge boon, especially for larger print providers. Your sales reps can highlight your recognized capabilities and your website can point visitors to more information on the stringent requirements for certification.

For smaller shops, though, formal G7 Certification may shine an unwelcome light. It opens them up to frequent testing requirements from potential customers, which can strain their limited resources, not only in providing samples but also in the rigorous maintenance of G7 standards. However, meeting G7 requirements is extremely helpful in benchmarking your color capabilities. Small printers want to provide their customers with quality color; they just don't want the hassle of maintaining a formal G7 Certification. As a result, many smaller shops are choosing to take G7 courses without doing the certification paperwork. That way, they get the best of both worlds: having G7-quality color without the additional requirements that, while easy enough to handle for larger operations, can distract smaller ones from their core business.

Regardless of certification, quality color can help your shop secure and grow business. So be sure to calibrate carefully, at every step of the production process. And, if necessary, ask for help from an outside expert — but be sure to enlist someone who can calibrate across your entire operation, not just parts of it, or things won't be as colorful as they should be.



Have more questions about how to attain and maintain quality, consistent color? Reach out to our color experts today.

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