

## Premedia: Real or Ruse?

The words *Prepress* and *Premedia* seem to be bandied about these days like they mean the same thing—only with one being a bit hipper than the other. The word *prepress* began to get a bum rap about the same time companies discovered prepress as a business model was a sure-fire way to the poor house. (I'd say October, 2002, but don't hold me to it.) In 2003, I advised we change the name of IPA from the International Prepress Association to the International Premedia Association, but the IPA Board balked. No, they were not stuck in the past; they were so far ahead we still haven't caught up. The Board felt strongly that their futures were not in the hands of *Pre-* anything. Their futures were in creating, managing and delivering high-end color output for their clients. They were graphic solutions providers, which is why you won't find the words International Prepress Association anywhere on our website except under history. But you will find IPA, The Association of Graphic Solutions Providers.

The Board recognized in the advancing days of the digital revolution their prepress competencies were going to come in quite handy. No other business segment in the graphic arts was as poised to capture market share of graphic communications business than those who lived and breathed a prepress workflow. But prepress was only a means to the end—and the end meant clients who were more satisfied and successful than ever before.

The digital revolution continues with a shift from a discussion of *prepress* to *premedia*. But is this shift in name only? Is your *premedia* workflow any different from your *prepress* workflow? Is it established from image capture to output across multiple media? Print materials are indeed media, so it is not incorrect to label the preparatory work applied to a print job *premedia*. But the word implies so much more.

The value of the once proud color trade shop and now thriving graphic solutions providers was—and is—their ability to achieve their clients' communication objectives that leaves them more

satisfied and successful than ever before. Today (or soon to be) that means offering multiple communication options in every way possible—from images on cell phones to e-paper, from building wraps to thumbdrives. They are all media and will require a true cross media workflow for effective communication.

The standards and specifications that will shape this new workflow must be created and implemented from a cross media perspective. The professionals you charge with implementing your cross media workflow will require new skill sets. The sales people charged with selling the value of your cross media capabilities will need new language and a solution-oriented approach.

The value of doing business with a skilled *prepress* service provider is a digital workflow expertise that reduces time to market and increases brand consistency for what the word implies—print communications. When substituting the word *premedia* for *prepress*, a new value proposition is born. The options for clients expand, as do the complexities to workflow and business strategy. But like the color trade shops of yesterday, no other segment in graphic communications is better positioned to capture the real essence of the word *premedia* than those who built new business models around their *prepress* competencies.

IPA is developing resources with these goals in mind. As our members build on a long history of prepress excellence to leverage their digital workflow capabilities beyond the traditional print boundaries, IPA resources are being designed to assure our members have the right people, technologies and processes to build efficient and effective cross media workflows and to make the right strategic choices based on those workflow competencies.



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