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Looking to reduce the overall cost of your decal or graphics programs? The following are some of the best areas on which to focus. These can help you to discover significant cost savings while improving the value of your print graphics:

### **1. Consider Alternate Materials**

For many print jobs, the material can account for more than 60% of the overall cost so this is the best place to start. Many jobs can be successfully completed with an alternate material, perhaps using a more “generic” brand or cheaper material that still meets the needs of your particular application. This is especially effective if long term durability is not a top requirement (for example, temporary POP applications).

Ask questions such as:

- Do I care about long-term durability? If so, how long?
- What’s involved in approving a material change if a good, cheaper alternative can be found (will it require an extensive approval process?)
- Is name brand with a solid material warrantee important?
- Is there a relationship or other significant reason that would bar a material change?

If you’re flexible, then it’s likely that an alternative material can be found that still meets your requirements while saving you money. Cost reductions in the range of 3 – 5% are typical with material changes; however, in some cases this can yield cost reductions of more than 25%. If the application warrants, consider even different materials altogether, like switching from a more expensive styrene material to a foam board, or from a Lexan to a less expensive PETG clear material.

### **2. Size Matters**

The next area to focus on is the size of the part. Again, since the materials used to produce your parts are usually the highest cost factor, with everything else being equal, a larger part cost more. Size may dictate what kind of print method or press is used. It’s now always the total size that dictates cost, it can also be dimensional. To better understand this, think of plywood which is available in standard sheets of 4 x 8 ft? If you had a part that was 25 x 33 in., this would yield only 3 pieces with excess scrap leftover from one standard sheet. However, if you made a 1” adjustment to your length and width (to 24 x 32 ft.), you could get 6 usable parts with less scrap (a 100% increase!). Similarly, there are standard sheet sizes in printing and you can get the same type of potential savings with a minor size change. Before finalizing your product size or if you are open to making a slight change to an existing part, check to see if a seemingly insignificant change can save you significant dollars.

### **3. Quantity (More IS Sometimes Less)**

Along with basic consumables (like ink and material cost), all print jobs consist of “setup”, “tear down/cleanup”, and “run-time.” This cost has to be spread across the total number of parts. So if you have more parts, the cost per part is lower. Consider your return on investment in additional

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inventory and look for ways to standardize similar parts so larger volumes can be run. It can make a significant difference in price.

#### **4. Match the Best Print Type to the Job**

There are many different types of printer technologies, including Screen Printing, Flexography, Lithography, and most recently, the emergence of Digital Printing. They each have their own unique advantages and disadvantages. Be sure that your supplier is equipped to provide multiple print processes so that you get your job matched to the best print process. Having a print supplier who can offer a full range of options gives you the best chance of getting the perfect match for your needs. Single technology printers will normally do the best they can with what they have, but it isn't always the most efficient or least expensive option for you.

In general, volume and quality requirements will dictate which print process is best. For example, high volume printed parts can run flexo or screen; however, if there are stringent durability requirements, then screen printing is usually the best option. For shorter runs, initial prototype runs, or highly custom jobs, Digital printing is ideal as there are lower setup fees and no need for costly printing plates. However, digital presses are not yet as fast, so the higher the volume the less cost competitive it becomes.

At Prime Source we utilize various screen, digital, and flexo technology to ensure that we best match a customer's unique job requirements to the best print method. Many times if it is not immediately evident, we will price a particular job on all three technologies to ensure we are offering the best value to our customer. Make sure you don't have a printer that is simply matching you to his print technology, which could end up costing you a lot of extra money.

#### **5. Consider Reducing Use of Colors**

In just about all cases except digital printing, more colors means more costs. In order to reduce these costs if possible, consider reducing the number of colors. Try to avoid using two or more different versions of the same basic colors. For instance, if you have a red & blue logo which requires specific PMS match colors and you want to incorporate a U.S. flag on the same graphic, try to use the same red & blue for the flag. If this isn't feasible, then consider a halftone effect or consider using 4-color process printing to at least limit your number of printed colors to four.

#### **6. Complexity & Finishing**

Unique configurations and additional finishing operations like laminating, applying clear coats, scoring a liner increase cost. When considering finishing, the benefits and cost have to be weighed carefully and the end use clearly understood. For example, many inks will last outside for reasonable durations without a special clear coat. Do you really need that extra protection and cost? It depends on what the part is being used for and where it is being used.

Some of these features while increasing print costs may actually reduce your overall total cost associated to the printing and application of the decal. For instance, adding a tab or a liner score to a decal or label might save a penny or two, but it could save as much as 5 to 10 times that cost in reduced application time. Typically, a print supplier who is fully-equipped to completely handle all of your finishing requirements in-house will be your most economical source. Talk to your print supplier about the finishing options available and their recommendations.

#### **7. Consider Consolidating Decals**

Look at the possibility of grouping decals together into a single consolidated decal. This reduces the total number of decals and thus decreases the number of setups, reduces scrap, along with reducing the number of individual part numbers that have to be managed. Also, placing all the decals that are going to be used for a particular application onto a common liner can simplify handling and increase installation efficiencies (known as “kitting”). Another option is to combine all the decals into customized packaging for each unit that the decals are being applied (“kit packaging.” The goal is to have all the decals you need readily available which saves time and money.

### **What Next?**

One of the best ways to quickly identify areas that can lead to significant cost savings in your particular graphics program is to complete a Product Needs Analysis. A Product Needs Analysis is conducted by a graphics imaging professional who analyzes all or part of your various graphics to identify key recommendations customized to your particular operation that can result in significant cost savings. Having an independent analysis like this done is a great way to “think outside the box” at options you may not have otherwise considered. Prime Source welcomes the opportunity to conduct this initial consultation free of charge and discuss how we can best assist you improve all aspects of your graphics. Call us today to schedule your Product Needs Analysis with Prime Source.