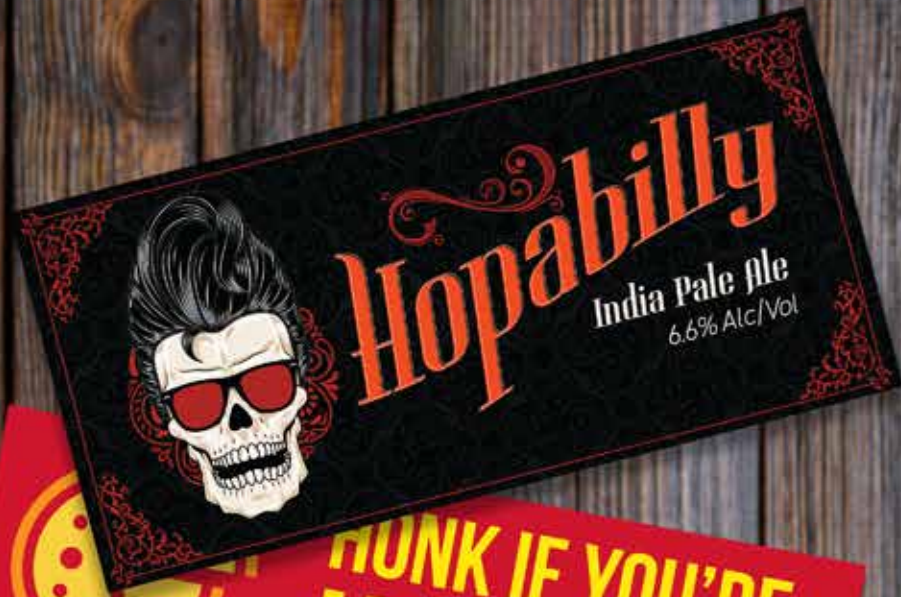





## FONT, COLOR, FORMAT, AND DESIGN TIPS FOR MAXIMIZING CUSTOMER HAPPINESS

As America's largest trade-only supplier of labels to virtually every industry, Discount Labels processes as many as 1,500 new label jobs per day. This makes for one very busy Electronic Art department. It also makes for one very experienced team.





Literally, our Electronic Art and prepress specialists have seen every kind of label project, and know hundreds of ways to help you make your customers' label projects easier, faster, and altogether better. Which means "easy-peasy" printing, happy customers and repeat or new referral business for you.

So let's look at some ways to make your clients say "Great!" not just sometimes, but every time.

## EXPERTS IN THE FIELD

Today, we'll hear from Discount Labels' Electronic Art experts Lisa Masse and Lori Richie. These two specialists are among the very best in the industry, and we are proud to have them on our team.

A self-proclaimed "label nerd," Masse has spent more than 20 years designing, producing, and preparing label art for printing. She likes to say she spent the first portion of her career doing "flexo forensics" - working to dissect and reconstruct design elements in search of a smarter, more streamlined production process. So she really has seen it all - the good, the bad, and the downright ugly. One of the most amazing things Masse recalls is a product label on eye drops that featured dosing information in one-point type. (Read as "completely unreadable!")

Art Technician Lori Richie has worked in our industry, and our company, for her entire career. She began in Order Processing, and since then, "I've worked pretty much everywhere except the Manual Department." Now a color expert, Richie also has significant experience in spot visual work and other aspects of "prepress" (setting up files before they go to press).

So with credentials established, we're proud to bring you the top tips from these topnotch experts in the label field.

## WHEN IN DOUBT, CALL US!

Got some art from a client in a file format you don't recognize? Wondering whether an online banner will work as a label (answer: not really)? Or just need

help translating a client's request? Call us! Someone is always available to talk to you, and a short phone conversation can make all the difference.

## OUTLINE THOSE FONTS!

There are hundreds of thousands of fonts, also called typefaces, out there. And while Discount Labels has thousands of fonts in our archives (as our IT department reminds us very frequently), there's a chance a font may not exist in our system. Trying to find a font, or trying to find an analogous font, or manipulating a font to make a copy change/make a label more readable: all this increases turnaround time.

The simple solution: it's called "outlining" fonts, and it's a feature in most graphic design software. Basically, outlining a font converts it from a mathematical construction to a scalable series of lines and curves. When fonts are outlined, the font file associated with its respective font (.ttf, .otf, etc.) is not needed for type to display properly.


(Richie adds that sometimes a client isn't particularly picky about which font to use. If that's the case, just let us know. We'll find the perfect one for the job!)

## SIZE (AND KIND) MATTERS

If a font is a "serif" font, you'll notice little "flourishes" on it. If it's a "sans-serif" font, it doesn't have those embellishments. Most block-type fonts are sans-serif fonts, and VASTLY superior for readability, especially in small print. Masse recommends using sans-serif fonts whenever possible for label work, especially for any small print that has a lot of type. Otherwise, the type will be difficult, or even impossible, to read.

Common examples of serif fonts include Times Roman, Palatino, Book Antiqua, and New Century. Common sans-serif fonts include Helvetica, Arial, Futura, and Franklin Gothic.

As Masse reminded us, "There's a lot that goes into a label! Your package design is your last salesperson contact ... it does that final end-to-end sale to the



customer. A typical product on a shelf has about two seconds to gain a customer's attention."

"So think pictures first, then big bold letters, and then tackle the fine details. What are you getting across in those few seconds of 'first glance' is everything."

"I will watch consumers shop ... yes, I'm that much of a label nerd ... and I see that when people go and dig and get their reading glasses out, there's a good chance they'll end up choosing a product they can read. If you don't design a label with your audience in mind ... if the label is unreadable ... the most valuable sales opportunity could be missed."

## **TINY SERIF TYPE DOES NOT 'REVERSE OUT' WELL**

Masse says, "If you do decide to use a serif font and you reverse it extremely small (i.e., "reverse" the type to make it white or light on a dark background), you're going to lose detail. If you're going to do it, I wouldn't go any smaller than a six-point font. If you have a sans-serif font ... that is, a block letter ... it's a lot easier on the eye and can get a lot smaller and read much more cleanly as a smaller, reversed-out font than a serif font."

## **CMYK, ALL THE WAY**

Labels are, obviously, printed. But what some people don't realize is that printing with ink is entirely different from displaying an image on a computer with pixels. Unlike digital or online art, which is usually rendered in RGB (Red-Green-Blue) color, quality printed materials often rely on a color system called "CMYK" (Cyan-Magenta-Yellow-Black). CMYK is much more sophisticated, and thus capable of producing a much wider range of color. Even though a CMYK color may look close to an RGB color onscreen, it translates very differently on press. Richie says it best: "RGB colors are not going to print nicely in CMYK, which is our world. Colors will be dull."

If your clients can "spec" CMYK colors, they will be

happier. Even better than CMYK, however, is spot-color printing when it's available.

## **... AND PANTONE, PLEASE**

As for how to "spec" that color, Richie says, "We use the Solid-Coated Pantone Color Matching (PMS) system. Textile colors or cloth colors or even PMS Uncoated colors aren't in our standard color processing. (FYI: PMS Uncoated colors are lighter than PMS Coated colors.) It's wise to look up the Pantone Colors using their official online color picker to choose the Solid-Coated PMS color that best matches your desired outcome."

## **VECTOR SPELLS "VICTORY" FOR LINE ART**

There are many kinds of art, but we'll deal with the two most common: "Raster" images and "Vector" images. For many label-art purposes, vector images are by far the best way to go. Raster images, which are often used to render photographs on a computer, have a set number of pixels in an image. So trying to enlarge a raster image will often result in a blurry result ... all you're doing is making the pixels bigger, until eventually they just look like squares of color.

Vector images, which have been drawn or converted to mathematical calculations between each point in an image, are completely scalable. Simply put, vector images are much easier to enlarge, shrink, or edit than raster images, and will produce a sharp, "non-jaggy" result every time.

## **GOT LOGOS? GET VECTOR VERSIONS HERE**

Why suffer through the disappointment of fuzzy, blurry, rasterized screen images of brand logos when they're easily accessible online? If your client's artwork includes a brand logo, especially one from a major brand like McDonald's or Pepsi, Richie suggests a quick trip to [BrandsOfTheWorld.com](http://BrandsOfTheWorld.com) to make your client's major brand association look appropriately major-league.

## MAKE SURE ARTWORK ALLOWS FOR A 1/8" MARGIN

Richie says, "Here, we have a 1/8" printing area, meaning we have to leave 1/16" on all sides of your artwork ... any imprint has to be inside that 1/16" margin" Bottom line: plan your design to allow for a sixteenth of an inch around all edges.

## RESOLUTION: AT LEAST 300 DPI

Masse and Richie both say that the digital revolution has completely blurred peoples' understanding of resolution. Plain and simple, there's a huge difference between how something looks onscreen and how it looks printed on label stock. While online materials are rendered at resolutions of 72-150 dpi (dots per inch) for fast uploading and display, print materials suffer terribly at 150 dpi. If you want crisp, clear art, text that's easy to read, and images that truly pop, check your supplied art's document settings to make sure its resolution is at least 300 dpi at actual print size. If the art is enlarged, the dpi reduces. Example: if a customer sends a 1"x1" art file at 300 dpi and enlarges it to 3 x3" the dpi plummets with the enlargement.

## SOFTWARE AND FILE FORMATS

Discount Labels primarily works with Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop software, which are incredibly powerful image editing tools. However, even these can only do so much. And we understand that customers create artwork in all kinds of programs, even Microsoft Word. Still, your best-case scenario for label art is an Adobe Illustrator (.ai) file. Masse and Richie say they can also work with JPEG or PNG file formats, but an Illustrator file is by far the fastest, smoothest, and best.

PDF images can also work – but only sometimes. Richie says, "We advise caution when saving out of programs that aren't compatible with Illustrator. If a file is saved as a PDF file that is not compatible with Illustrator it will sometimes convert images to "non-native" elements in the file when opened in Illustrator. We suggest if you have a link or placed image in your art, and have saved out of a different program (not Illustrator or PhotoShop), send the image with your PDF file. We can relink the file."

## MORE IS BETTER! (A.K.A., WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN FRANKENSTEIN.)

Yes, "Frankensteining" is a professional graphics term. And you'd be surprised at how often it happens. So if you have artwork in several file formats, send all the files! We can often assemble a beautiful thing from various pieces and parts.

## OWN IT!

Make sure your customer has purchased any stock art or images that have been downloaded from the Internet. You'd be surprised at how many low-resolution images we receive complete with a stock image company's watermark. Those watermarks exist to protect copyrighted material, and we cannot legally (let alone neatly) remove them. Remember: Rights and royalties matter!

## SEE #1

Have questions? Not sure what your customer has just sent you? Give us a call. Our very first job is to help you succeed – on every job!



800.995.9500 | [DiscountLabels.com](http://DiscountLabels.com)

*Located in New Albany, IN, Discount Labels has been in business since 1965. With more than 70 presses, 500 employees, and continuous investment in technology, sales, and support for its trade-only partners, Discount Labels has the capacity to meet any label demand and leads the label industry, producing 2.3 billion labels annually. For more information, contact [art@discountlabels.com](mailto:art@discountlabels.com).*