Labels & Tags FAQ

What are some of the basics that I need to know when getting a price or placing an order for labels?

Knowing the details is important. When referring to the dimensions of the label, the industry standard is the width of the label first, then the depth. The width of the label is the direction going across the carrier. The depth of the label runs down the length of the carrier. The width and depth of the label does not always correspond with the directions of the printing.

Other helpful information includes:

- The number of colors to be printed on the label.
- How the labels are finished (fanfold, rolls, or sheets).
- Any special packaging requirements.
- What type, if any, secondary printing that will be done.
- Will the label be hand or machine applied? For machine application, timing marks will be involved.

How do I determine the proper face stock?

Answer the following questions:

- What will the label be used for?
- What type of printer, if any, is the label going through, i.e., impact, thermal transfer, etc.?
- How long does the label need to stay on the product?
- Will the label be exposed to any extreme temperatures, exposed to the outdoors or subject to any process that will or could affect the integrity of the label?

What type of adhesive do I need?

Permanent • Removable • Repositionable • Static Cling

- What is the label being applied to?
- What type of surface is the substrate, i.e. smooth, rough, curved, etc.?
- At what temperature will the label be applied?
- What temperature will the product be exposed to after application?
- Will the label be exposed to any extreme temperatures, the outdoors, or subject to any process that will or could affect the integrity of the label?
- If the label is going to be removed, how long will it be on the substrate before it is removed?

What is the difference between Direct Thermal & Thermal Transfer?

Direct Thermal material has a coating that is heat-reactive. The image is produced when the print head dots heat up and fire against the label causing the dyes and solvents to react to the heat and form an image onto the face stock. The material is more expensive than thermal transfer, and does not require the purchase of ribbons. The shelf life is much shorter. It is used primarily for products that have a short shelf-life, such as meat packages, delicatessen, package, etc.

Thermal Transfer printing requires a ribbon. The image is produced when the print head dots fire against the ribbon and transfers the image onto the face of the stock. The material cost is less expensive than Direct Thermal, but does require the purchase of ribbons. Thermal and direct thermal labels are wound on rolls for thermal printers.

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What is an Integrated Label?

An Integrated label is manufactured using a single ply bond material with adhesive and a liner applied to an area of the back-side of the bond stock. That area is then die cut to create a pressure sensitive label. Integrated labels allow the customer to print two items, such as a packing slip and a shipping label, simultaneously. This saves time, money and aides in reducing errors. Integrated labels can be manufactured as both cut sheets to go through a laser or ink jet printer, or as a continuous pin-fed and fan-folded to go through an impact or continuous laser printer.

What is Flexography?

Flexography is the production of labels and tags on rolls using flexible plates. A wide variety of stocks and adhesives can be used. The product can be wound on rolls, sheeted, perfed and die cut into custom shapes. It is a cost effective way to produce labels and tags for product marketing as well as bar coded labels for thermal printers.

How can you tell the difference between Direct Thermal and Thermal Transfer material?

It is next to impossible to tell just by looking at it. The best way is to use a match or a lighter next to the surface. If it instantly turns black it is Direct Thermal, if it turns a light shade of brown it is Thermal Transfer.

What is the difference between a Laser printer and an Inkjet printer?

An inkjet printer sprays dots of ink onto the surface to form the bar codes or characters. A laser printer forms the image on a rotating cylinder or belt. The toner is attracted to the image and then fuses it onto the face stock by using heat or pressure.