

# Label Printing Technology Selection Factors

## BELOW INFORMATION IS BASED ON WEB (ROLL) DELIVERED LABELS

Comparing Digital (Indigo) and conventional (Offset/Flexo) technologies for optimum cost and aesthetic “best fit” requires the review of multiple factors. Here are key factors:

### Greatest Factors Impacting Cost

#### Label Quantity X Label Size = Total Project Surface Footage

Because Digital run speeds are slower, the larger the project’s surface area the more likely the project is more cost-efficient with Offset or Flexo. Because Digital does not use printing plates and typically consumes less set-up time or material than Offset or Flexo, the smaller the project the more likely Digital is the more cost-efficient option. However, keep in mind, a project’s total footage is not the only variable. The focus is on the average number of feet per Sku (item) change, and on the complexity of the change(s).

#### Number of Colors (Print Stations) Required

Typically, the more colors required, the higher the quantity cross-over point from Digital to Offset or to Flexo. Digital eliminates the making of printing plates, and activities related to print station set-up and clean-up costs. These greater “start-up” costs need to be amortized over more labels when printed via Offset or Flexo. So, the higher the number of plates and/or colors required for a project, the higher the quantity cross-over point from Digital to alternative technologies.

#### Additional Analog Processes (Foiling, Embossing, Screens, etc)

Indigo’s non-print “analog” operations are done on offline presses. Projecting “extra” printed footage required for offline die-cutting and varnishing can be refined to become a minimal cost factor. However, projecting extra footage for added foiling or embossing activities (which may be applied on the die-cutting pass or a third pass) is more challenging and can lead to shortages or overages, translating into higher than preferred waste factors. In general, the more analog (non-Digital printing) processes applied, the lower the cross-over quantity number from Digital to other print processes.

#### Repeat Orders – Frequency of New Plates Needed

The cost of new plates should be considered if there are a high number of repeat orders continually requiring graphics or content changes. This can make a large financial impact depending upon annual plate costs/spend. The higher the number of plates required over time, the higher the cross-over quantity from Digital to other print processes.

#### Production Proofing

Trialing a project on Offset or Flexo print technologies requires print plates, consumption of significant substrate materials, and hours of prep and set-up. This activity is typically linked with a client/designer press check. Via Digital printing, multiple variations of graphics can be printed with less time and substrate waste. Digitally printed labels, once varnished and, or die-cut, can be sent via overnight shipping to all stakeholders for evaluation and discussion – often avoiding the cost and time management related to press checks.

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## Beyond "Cost-per-Unit"

Reducing average order quantities (AOQ), though increasing the cost-per-unit, may reduce a company's total cost. By considering the cost of label obsolescence, storage, cash-flow, mistakes, and the gained marketing flexibility, companies might be better positioned by ordering less, more frequently. Digital printing offers a more compelling solution given this scenario.

## Greatest Factors Impacting Aesthetics

### 1) Clear or Silver Substrates

Because Digital printing delivers virtually perfect dot structure and registration, layering colors onto white ink applied to silver or white substrates is executed more effectively than via Offset or Flexo technologies.

### 2) Large Gradient Areas/Tonal Printing

Again, Digital printing's ability to print a consistent and virtually perfectly registered dot, delivers a far more elegant tonal print result when compared to Flexo, and to a lesser degree when compared to Offset.

### 3) Large Spot Color Areas

Because Digital is achieving spot colors via CMYK (or 6/7 color in special circumstances), there are some spot match colors that are very difficult, if not impossible to match. Additionally, the Digitally produced spot color will display a dot-pattern that may be less aesthetically pleasing than what is achieved via Offset or Flexo printing.

## Other Considerations

### Order Quantity Scaling Projections

The projected quantities need to be considered. For product lines may ramp up quickly, it may be advantageous to select an analog print process for consistency over time.

### Variable Data

Projects with variable data or graphics will be more effective via Digital printing.

For further info [www.collotypedigital.com](http://www.collotypedigital.com)

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