

# UNUSUALLY CREATIVE

Don't get scared of working with unusual papers – they are worth the effort.

If you are designing for print, then I guess you get to use some beautiful papers. But do you ever shy away from the really unusual ones because you know that there will be limitations, or that your printer of choice will tell you he can't run them on press? Is it murder working with difficult substrates, or are you up for the challenge?

Well, we are here to tell you to look again at what is on offer, because there are often simple ways that you can get round the objections and create truly unusual projects using unusually creative papers. After all, isn't design about getting noticed and adding appeal? Isn't it about pushing the boundaries and making your creation stand out from the crowd?

So, how do you make life simple whilst still being creative?

Well, here we are talking about unusual surfaces, different kinds of inclusions, surfaces that are made to imitate other things and have a different tactile experience to normal papers. Here we are looking at translucents, parchments, thick embossings, rough and toothy surfaces or ultra smooth cast coateds.

## LESS IS MORE

When you have beautiful papers to work with, less is often more, and the design itself can be very subtle and minimalistic. You can overcome your printer's cry of 'we can't run that on press' by not adding ink to the surface, but rather looking at ways to enhance the paper with different finish-

ing techniques such as over laminating, embossing, debossing, foil blocking and even adding hologramatic effects.

This works especially well if you are designing with very heavy textures or with those that have very rough surfaces due to the inclusion of fibres which protrude from the paper surface. These can often be difficult to get through a press successfully, so are better used with just a small amount of print.

Printers will often complain of designs that have transparent or vellum papers in them too, this is because the very unique surface can cause problems on-press. The paper is not very absorbent either, which means that normal inks will not adhere properly as they don't sink into the fibres, they smudge too, so the printer will have to use specialist inks and leave lots of time for drying. However, you can use transparent brilliantly, by leaving them plain and using them as an overleaf to the more heavily printed design underneath, and again you can get successful effects using various finishing techniques. However, be warned, certain transparents do not fold or crease cleanly, so take this into consideration too.

## FULL FRONTAL

If you are going for a full print job, then make sure that you choose the right print company to work with. Yes, it can be difficult to print on unusual papers, but a decent print company will always try to accommodate you and not try and

sway you away to their house stock. A good partner will also be able to advise on things like the need for special inks, if this will cause them extra time and work on press. This is worth taking into consideration if your turnaround or costs are very tight.

Do get your chosen printer to make you a simple dummy though, just to make sure everything works.

Proofing is also essential, and if the proof isn't included in the quote, then ask up front for one. Many print companies will include a digital proof, but will an on-screen shot show you how your unusual paper will print? Check too if there is a cost for making changes to the proof. If necessary, ask the printer to allow you to visit at the time of the print run, and proof on-press. A digital proof will show you how it will look in terms of content, but what about look?

So always, but always, ask for a dummy. Paper merchants and paper suppliers will always give you the option to have a dummy made, but this is usually unprinted, so won't show you how the project will print. They do however, often have brochures or swatches where the papers have been printed which will give you some idea of end quality.

Make sure also that any quote you get includes the specific paper you have asked for, rather than a standard coverall term – you might find that you get charged more when the printer realises that he has to change the inks on press, or change the

way it's finished, or he has to wait longer between printing and finishing. Make sure he has all the correct relevant details at the start as different papers differ greatly in performance and price – vague estimates are no good if your printer is then faced with printing on something obscure.

## DON'T GET FREAKED OUT

Also, make sure your chosen printer is happy for you to visit before you commit. Ask to see the pressroom and the production set up. Talk to the people who will be handling your project – essential when using unusual materials.

This is a perfectly reasonable request and any good printer who hopes to form a relationship with you and get work from you on an on-going basis will welcome you with open arms.

You can tell an awful lot by just wandering round the printroom/factory. Is it clean and well organised? Do the staff look like they know what they are doing and are getting on with the job? Now this may not seem like something you should worry about when using unusual papers, but it is. The state of the printer will give you a good idea of the quality of its output. The state of the employees will tell you a lot about how the company treats its staff – and a company that treats its staff well, will undoubtedly do the same for its customers.

And, if the paper you have chosen is so unusual that it strikes terror into the heart of every printer you speak to, a good partner will talk to you about similar alternatives, which may be easier to run and work with.

So, I guess if you are going to be adventurous, the best thing to do is find a brilliant printer partner to work with – it will make your life much easier! **PS**

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