

## white space

Through our experience we've learned that if you want to do something well, you have to know something about it. We would like to share some of what we have learned with you. Our newsletter is where you'll find marketing and visual communications topics related to retaining, communicating with and growing your organization's

### Working Inside a Brand

#### Part 1 of 3: Consistent Brand Colors

*This is the first of a 3 part series devoted to working inside a brand and the common issues that arise after the development of a brand. Each part will give detailed descriptions of problems that occur as well as offering solutions to ensure that your brand is working for you. It is a common misconception that once you have gone through the process of creating a strategic brand the work is done. The birth of the brand is just the beginning of its life cycle. Managing your brand is when the real work begins. An experienced design firm can make sure you're using your brand to its full potential.*

#### Specific Can Be Horrific

If anyone knew Peter McGrady, they knew he was a perfectionist. His staff called him Peter Mc-O.C.D. His coffee had to have exactly a 1/4 cup of cream and two tablespoons of sugar, his computer had to be turned at an exact 45 degree angle on the corner of his desk, his secretary had to write him emails in strictly Arial Black bold, size 14 font, and his meetings had to start exactly 35 seconds after the scheduled time. Whenever anyone in the office made light of it, he always stiffened his jaw, looked you straight in the eyes, and replied, "when you're specific, things go your way."

Well, today was no ordinary day. Peter, the Communications Director, anxiously awaited a package of new brochures labeled with his company's brilliant new brand. It was expected to arrive at precisely 1:25 p.m. Once he got the call from the front desk, Peter sprinted to the front of the department, and beamed with excitement. He carefully cut through the wrapping tape, snatched a brochure and thrust it towards the sky!

**"At last!" he cried. It was a triumphant moment! And the office shook with awe.**

He took a closer look at his new brochure. Then he peered at a few more. Wait a minute. Something wasn't right. It was the color of the new brand on the brochures. Each one was a little different. Emails, phone calls, and faxes started flowing out of the office headlining, **ATTN: EMERGENCY!! IT'S NOT THE SAME RED**, and in a matter of seconds, the entire department was in total chaos.

#### But what happened?

Peter summoned his memory to bring him back to the beginning of the process of getting a brand. He remembered researching to find the best strategic branding firm in his area and hiring them. He remembered all of the research and the focus groups and the meetings that were conducted by the firm before the brand could be created. Then he remembered waiting. And finally, the phone rang and they told him the brand was done. He went to a meeting, the firm handed him his new brand with very specific printing specifications and Peter thought that was it. From that moment on he wouldn't have to worry about a brand anymore. It was taken care of.





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Peter was told by the branding firm to use their specific color schemes when printing the brand, so that is exactly what he sent to the printers when he ordered his new brochure. The process and results should have been seamless. For the life of him, Peter could not comprehend what went wrong.

Unfortunately, Peter's experience is not altogether unique. To their dismay, many companies who have invested in a new brand have had to address color matching issues similar to Peter's. This is due to an array of complexities that can often be overlooked when building consistent brand colors. Below is a list comprised of four fundamental components that should always be considered in order to gain consistent color matches.

### Building Consistent Brand Colors

1. Color Builds
2. Dot Gain
3. Surface
4. Designer Implementation

**1. Color builds are how graphic designers break down colors for printing and electronic usage so colors display correctly and consistently.** Brand colors are typically used from the Pantone Matching System. However, in order to print these colors, they need to be converted to the CMYK formula. (more information on the Pantone Matching System and the CMYK formula can be found in the "What you see is not what you get" newsletter) This conversion information is typically found in a Pantone bridge guide. Bridge guides are based on intricate mathematical formulas that extrapolate colors from the pantone system (which is a 9 color build) and convert them to the CMYK formula (a 4 color build, typically used by printers) so they can be printed.

### Color builds essentially look like this:

**P.M.S. 7413**

**CMYK: 1C 62M 95Y 2K**

So, first of all, this is telling us that we are building color number 7413 from the Pantone Matching System. Now, in order to print this color we need a percentage amount of each individual CMYK color in order to replicate the PMS color. And that is what the bottom set of numbers are telling us:

**1% of Cyan,  
62% of Magenta,  
95% of Yellow and  
2% of Black.**





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However, there is a problem with this particular build that isn't distinguishable to the layman's eye and is a major contributing factor to inconsistent color matches. The problem is that this build is not printer friendly. The printing process is not made to hold (or print) a 1 to 2% dot. Therefore, when you have a build like the example above with a 1% cyan and 2% black, the colors will not print consistently. It is better to round these numbers up or down. So, for PMS color 7413, a **Printer Friendly Build (PFB)** would look something like this.

**CMYK: 0C 60M 95Y 0K**

**Even a build like...P.M.S. 180**

**CMYK: 3C 43M 81Y 13K** which contains builds that a printer can hold, should be rounded in order to build consistent brand colors, like this: **CMYK: 0C 45M 80Y 15K**

**Do not fear:** By rounding these numbers you will not lose the integrity of your brand colors. You will, however, gain consistency in your brand colors.

**2. Dot gain is a commonly used term among graphic designers and printers.** In color builds, each percentage point represents a dot of that specific color. All of the dots together make up that particular color. And that's exactly how colors are printed; dot by dot. When dots are printed and perceived, they are actually printed larger than intended. This causes a darkening of the screened images or textures. Therefore, dot gain means that the image printed (for example, your new brand) is darker. One could also say the image has gained intensity. Dot gain occurs 100% of the time and should be considered whenever building brand colors.

**3. The surface on which an image is printed is another contributing factor to the presence of dot gain.** For example, uncoated paper stock typically shows the most dot gain because the ink is easily absorbed. In contrast, coated paper or gloss paper typically has less dot gain. This **MUST** be taken into consideration to maintain consistent color matches in your brand.

**4. An essential component to building consistent brand colors is a competent and seasoned designer.** A seasoned print designer needs to take into account all that has been discussed above and also have specific knowledge when interpreting the Pantone Bridge guide and computer programs such as Adobe Illustrator, along with the idiosyncrasies that come with them. If a designer has performed his job well, you should have a brand that not only has consistent color matches, but a brand that constantly works for you.

These are a few key elements to bear in mind when building consistent brand colors. If they are considered and executed properly you will eliminate the possibility of inconsistent color matches and you won't have to worry about having a day like Peter McGrady's. And just to let you know, after Peter received some outside assistance working inside his brand, he is back to his old self and the office has retained it's order.

