

Varnish Your Printing and create New Dimensions

Offset Printing- Varnishing techniques

Think for a moment. Is there a particular brochure or printed piece that stands out in your memory? Can you recall what feature or features have kept it with you!

Could it be graphic design? Photo placement? Typography or layout? Unusual format or innovative printing affects?

Learn the many techniques for incorporating varnish into your next printed piece. Varnished continues to be a great way of protecting and enhancing printed matter, but many graphic designers miss this in the element of design.

So you have that special promotion you are working on. It really needs to stand out from the crowd?! One of the easiest and effective ways is to do it with varnish! You don't get a second chance to make of first impression.

What is varnish?

Varnish is a variation of printing ink. It can be clear or tinted, glossy or dull, and it performs on a printing press as normal ink.

>From the production viewpoint, varnish is a sealer that overprints ink and paper helping to protect the finished printed piece from being scratched and scuffed. From a design viewpoint, dull varnish is sometimes used to reduce glare on glossy paper and thus increases readability.

For design effects, gloss and dull varnishes are used independently or in combinations. They can make a sheet glisten or make it appear smooth and shiny. Try spot varnish to add an enhanced appearance to photography, increase vibrancy of colors, or add interest and clarity to charts and diagrams.

Independent varnishes can run in the background and will attract the reader, in a very subtle manner to their presence.

Varnish does not always need to be combined with conventional printing inks. Varnish is interesting and appealing when used on its own. To create a tinted appearance you can add a small percentage of ink to varnish. This will print with a tinted transparent look that cannot be easily duplicated adding a dimension that is simply not achievable and any other way.

What are your options?

Ink, paper type and type of varnish (Matte or gloss, tinted or non-tinted) must all be considered when deciding on the varnish effect you are trying to achieve. Sales, design and production staff should discuss these projects in the estimating/ production planning stage to ensure desired results are printed.

For most printed matter where varnish is being applied coated (glossy) paper is your best choice. Uncoated papers tend to absorb more of the effect and have a rougher surface.

Whether you use gloss varnish, dull varnish, tinted varnish or play one off against the other your viewers will enjoy the uniqueness of the design and print. Your printed piece will be remembered by a higher percentage of you audience and in some cases kept just as a collectors item.

I have been in the printing industry for many years. In 1986 I read many of the varnishing techniques that I employ in catalogue sent by one of our paper suppliers, entitled 'Varnish Techniques' by SD Warren Company. I have kept this catalogue and used it as a tool to help illustrate the finished results of various varnishing techniques. Yes, this catalogue is varnished. It is 2005 now, and I have decided to scan the actual pages that demonstrate and explain varnishing techniques used by commercial printers today.

<http://www.weprintcolors.com/varnish/index.htm>

Enjoy

Short note about the author

Robert is the marketing director of an online print and design firm <http://www.weprintcolor.com>. Robert covers all aspects of graphic development, deployment and digital media design services.

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