Creating files for letterpress

Creating Die Files

Both of these processes require a die, the difference being that one cuts and one stamps. Additional time will be needed once your final proofs have been approved in order to have a die created.

Die Cutting

Depending on what you are cutting the die can be slightly different. When you cut you can also score the paper so that it folds correctly. When you create your die, solid lines are used to indicate cut marks and dotted lines are used to indicate folds. If you are replicating a pocket folder, sometimes it helps to take an old one apart so you have an example to go by. Generally, you will create the die in a drawing program such as illustrator or Freehand. But it can also be created in Quark or InDesign.

Creating the cutting die

Depending on the company you are sending the die to they have different requirements. Some companies create the die by pounding metal strips into wood, this process is done by hand and generally is done from a printout of the file you create. Some companies use a laser system to create the die and they work from an electronic file.

Glue Tabs

These are important to getting a good finished product. The tab should be at least 3/4 of an inch to allow for good glue coverage. Generally you also do not want ink on the tab, 1/8 of an inch for color bleed is acceptable. Glue may not stick to some inks so as a general rule ink is not printed on the tabs.

Embossing / Debossing / Foil Stamping Dies

These dies are created from black and white artwork. Grey values are not allowed. The black area of the die is the part that will make contact with the paper. So if it is a foil die that is the area that will have foil. In embossing / debossing it is the area to be raised or lowered. Typically they are created from electronic files.

Mock up

Die cutting can be an intricate process and mistakes can get expensive. It is best to mock up what you have created once the file for the die is complete, print it out at 100%, even if it requires tiling the document. Once it is printed out, cut and fold the die along the lines you have made. Check to see if the folded piece is correct. If not, you will need to fix your die. Once it is correct, send us a copy of the finished mock up so we understand what you are trying to accomplish. This way we can make sure everyone is communicating correctly.