



International Reprographic Association
■ Built on Blueprints ■ Focused on Service ■ Powered by Technology

Best Practices Statement

Charging for Digital Services

Background

In 2006, the International Reprographic Association (IRgA) conducted a survey of reprographers to determine their opinions, usage and charging practices with respect to providing digital services within the reprographics industry. With a 24% response rate to its reprographer universe, 88.6% of the respondents indicated that charging customers for digital services is necessary. Of those indicating that they do not currently charge for digital services, the most common response was, “because the competition doesn’t charge,” followed by “software” and “machines do the work.” Overwhelmingly, however, reprographers feel it is necessary to charge for performing digital services for customers.

In addition to surveying reprographers, the IRgA spoke with several leading companies to determine their practices with respect to communicating, performing and charging for digital reprographics services. The outcome was the same: Charging for digital services is normal and customary.

Definition of Digital Services

Based on feedback from the survey participants, as well as reprographers attending the IRgA’s 2006 Annual Convention and Trade Show, the IRgA Digital Services Committee has defined digital services for the reprographics industry as:

“The creation, preparation, manipulation and management of all digital files – both black & white and color – created for the purpose of conveying information for electronic distribution, print output or archival purposes.”

IRgA Policy Statement

Based on the survey data received as well as additional input from several industry members, the International Reprographic Association (IRgA) believes that it customary and acceptable for reprographics shops to provide digital services and charge customers fees for the digital services to be performed. Reprographics shops have a responsibility first to their long-term viability and therefore may charge a fair market price to perform digital services for customers.

Minimum Guidelines: Why Charging is Necessary

Technology is changing how reprographers do business and is resulting in opportunities for reprographers to provide additional value to customers. The art and science of organizing and distributing high fidelity, project-critical content from digital files grows more and more complex every day. Additional expertise is required to handle jobs, and more communication is required – from the digital operator, to the salesperson, to the customer – to get the job right.

As a reprographer accepts digital files, he or she must look for missing fonts and graphics, software limitations, corrupt files, file conversion problems and other unexpected digital anomalies. At the same time, hundreds of new digital output devices are introduced to the marketplace each year, in addition to millions of new designers. Therefore, it should be no surprise that 50-70% of jobs submitted in a digital format are incomplete!

When considering these and other factors, one must conclude that providing digital services is a highly complex undertaking that requires the time and expertise of a trained professional.

Communication is Critical

Instructions are vital to the success of a job. Incomplete instructions are the most common mistake when files are submitted. If expectations are not communicated clearly upfront, unnecessary tension can occur between the reprographer, sales representative and customer. Lack of information often results in re-dos, deadline delays and miscommunication, all of which impact the productivity and profitability of a reprographics business.

Types of Services that Typically Incur a Charge

There is a long list of types of digital services performed within a reprographics shop. While the following list is not exhaustive, some of the more common services which incur a charge include:

- File conversion
- File creation
- File distribution/transfer
- File management
- File preparation
- File retrieval
- File RIP
- File storage/archiving
- Online plan rooms
- Raster to vector compression
- Remote job submission

Best Practices for Reprographers

- Regularly and clearly communicate to customers the reasons why it is necessary for your company to charge for digital services.
- Promptly disclose any additional fees that will be incurred while providing digital services.
- Treat all customers in a fair and consistent manner, free of favoritism and prejudice.
- Conduct all transactions for the benefit of the reprographics shop and the customers it serves, without regard for personal gain.
- Keep confidential all privileged and sensitive information that is obtained by virtue of performing digital services.
- Institute a policy within your shop that mandates the highest standards of personal conduct and ethical behavior for all employees at every level when charging for digital services.
- The IRgA endorses all copyright laws which are considered the standard for the industry.
- When quoting a digital job:
 - Know your product, its value and available services.
 - Use your price and service guide as a starting point.
 - When the job changes, the price should change accordingly.
 - Understand that digital color printing is complex.

Best Practices for Reprographics Customers

When providing digital files, customers should:

- Include all support graphics and links.
- Include graphics in a proper resolution (for the equipment to be used).
- Include all screen and filter fonts.
- Include complete instructions with day/night contact numbers (based on your store's hours of operation).
- Contact the store sales representative or owner if the job is complicated, or if it will require special attention.

- Include a color go-by for matching color or color samples. Color matching cannot be guaranteed without a go-by (aka: mock-up or comp). Colors on a monitor or local printer may not match the output device selected.

Reference List

For additional information on this topic, the following information is available in the IRgA Publication Library, publication archives, or for purchase at www.irga.com.

- May, Andrea. “Charging for Digital Services: How you charge may reveal where you think the industry is headed.” March/April 2005 *REPRO REPORT*
- May, Andrea. “Digital Services: An International Perspective, A sampling of how repro shops around the world are dealing – and charging for – scanning, archiving, indexing and other data management services.” September/October 2005 *REPRO REPORT*
- Cullen, Scott. “Color Coordinated: Successfully selling digital color services is a company-wide effort.” March/April 2006 *REPRO REPORT*
- Shaw, Michael. “Becoming Digital Services Savvy.” July/August 2006 *REPRO REPORT*
- McChristy, Neal. “How Much? Charging for digital services critical to industry.” February 2005 *Wide Format Imaging*
- Gremillion, Charles; Hayes, Chuck; Kahn, Betsy; et. al. “Best Practices in Charging for Digital Services.” Audio Recording. 2006 IRgA Annual Convention

Thank you to the Digital Services Committee

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Disclaimer

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