
Overview

This standard covers the use of variable data with digital printing machines.

It applies to you if you work in a digital printing environment and are responsible for preparing and using variable data to produce 'personalised' printed products.

Of all the printing processes, digital printing is unique because of its ability to process and print variable data at high speed, combining it with artwork in a single 'pass' to produce a personalised product such as a letter, magazine cover or a piece of direct mail.

The advantages of personalised printing are well known to advertising and marketing specialists. Data must be handled correctly so that it ends up in the right place on the printed page and is correctly matched with other data for example, names and addresses.

Performance criteria

You must be able to:

Prepare variable data for use in digital printing

1. confirm that your organisation has complied with the requirements of the legislation covering data protection when processing personal data
2. confirm that variable data files supplied comply with the legislation covering data protection when they contain personal information
3. check that files are supplied in a format that can be used by your organisation
4. export or import in a suitable format, the records that are required for processing, into the software used by your organisation
5. carry out de-duping, data verification, incomplete record checks or postal sorting operations to meet job requirements
6. identify the fields required for use in printing and relate them to primary documents, creating relationships between primary files and variable data files when required
7. run mail merge operations and verify that files for output are correct when a single 'mail merged' file is to be created prior to printing
8. verify that any variable data files for print are in the format required by printers

Produce 'personalised' printed products using variable data

9. download primary files to the printer's memory or disk at the right time for jobs to start
10. set print parameters so that primary files and variable data files are merged as required, or so that the pre-merged output files will print correctly
11. run jobs at the required speed, ensuring that variable data is printed in the correct place on each page and that data sequence is maintained from page to page
12. take immediate action in the event that variable data appears in the wrong place or in the wrong sequence
13. deal with any stoppages so that they don't cause any records to be missed or printed twice
14. pack and label completed jobs so that the sequence of data output can be identified
15. complete quality and any other documentation required by your organisation
16. check that personal data is protected from misuse on completion of the job and is dealt with in accordance with the legislation covering data protection

Knowledge and understanding

You need to know and understand:

The law as it affects printing

1. data protection
2. the printers imprint

Ethical and employment issues relevant to printing

3. confidentiality

Health and safety

4. your duties and responsibilities for health and safety as defined by any specific legislation covering your job role
5. the relevant health and safety regulations including those covering display screen equipment

Security and storage

6. methods for the safe handling of customer material
7. computer system security and virus protection
8. the print with time-sensitive or restricted release dates
9. how to securely archive digital and conventional artwork

Communication requirements and processes

10. how to communicate with colleagues
11. how to communicate with customers
12. how to communicate with suppliers

Workplace policy and practice

13. workplace objectives, priorities, standards and procedures
14. the working practices existing in the workplace
15. the operation of equipment

Typography and design

16. typefaces and fonts
17. how to check and proof documents
18. document layout

Printing

19. the principles of digital printing

Digital files

- 20. file management procedures
- 21. file conversion techniques
- 22. file compression and decompression systems
- 23. how to transmit digital files

Variable data

- 24. the principles, benefits and uses of personalised printing
- 25. the content of primary and secondary files and how to create relationships between them
- 26. how to manage variable data and run mail merge operations
- 27. procedures for dealing with incomplete or mismatched variable data

The causes and treatment of common faults

- 28. processing faults
- 29. machine faults

Administrative procedures

- 30. planning and scheduling
- 31. recording and reporting
- 32. product labelling

Quality assurance and control

- 33. the main features of quality assurance and quality control systems
techniques for controlling quality

Problem solving

- 34. types of problems that may need to be solved
- 35. sources of relevant information
- 36. techniques for solving complex problems
- 37. techniques for assessing machine faults

Proofing

- 38. the principal types of proof and their role in the printing process

Scope/range

This standard is about handling variable data files correctly to achieve the correct result. The operator:

- understands data protection law fully so that personal data is handled lawfully
- understands the construction and common formats of databases and spreadsheets
- prepares data from a supplied spreadsheet or database for use in personalised digital printing
- makes sure that the variable data will appear in the correct format in the correct place on digitally printed documents
- runs jobs on digital printing machines that include variable data, ensuring that the output is correct and any required sequence is maintained

Control the use of variable data with digital printing machines

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Suite Pre Press

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