

Section 1: Guidelines for Best Business Practices in Digital Asset Management Issues

This document is intended to identify, define and clarify typical industry practices for digital media management issues and questions.

This document is intended to serve all professionals who use any form of digital media by providing a set of guidelines and examples of digital media use and is divided into four primary areas - Industry Definitions; Digital Asset Management Guidelines; Production and Technical Issues; and Operational Issues.

The itemized business practices outlined are not intended to be legal or binding, but are recommended for reference in client/supplier communications and inclusion in the " terms and conditions" of a business agreement. Each of the points or practices highlights known issues that may involve time, costs, or responsibility on the part of clients, suppliers or both. Also identified are a number of technical issues that should be understood by all digital media users.

Industry Definitions

- **What are Digital Files?**

A digital file is any file that is created by a computer and stored by a computer related device. It can be as simple as a text file or as complex as an entire animated video including sound and computer generated visuals.

It can be a small file - stored or saved on a simple floppy disk or a complex graphic and sound file stored on a server, digital tape or other storage media.

Any digital file, no matter how simple, should be named according to an agreed upon standard by all parties in the workflow, and archived on a computer or some removable media if it is intended to be saved or reused.

- **What is a " Digital Asset"**

A digital asset is a digital file or form of digital media that has some commercial value, production value, "intellectual property" value or identification value.

A file with commercial value might be a photograph or illustration.

A file with production value might be a graphics file for an ad or brochure, a text file for a phone directory, a price list, or metadata.

A file with intellectual property value might be a manuscript for a book or play, or a legal brief.

A file with identity value might be a company's logo, trademark or an icon like a flag.

All digital assets have value, however their value may be determined by their ability or inability to be replaced. The value of a digital asset may not emerge until some time after creation and may exist because of a relationship to other values.

A business letter if erased can readily be recreated if a hard copy of the file was saved.

Provided by Printing Industries Association of San Diego, Inc.



A digital photo if stored and lost or erased, may be irreplaceable.

- **Who is a client and who is a supplier?**

A client is the end user of digital assets and buys or receives these digital files or that of the organization they represent. The supplier creates and manipulates, provides, or sells these files to the client. A client may work for the same organization or company as a supplier, may be a purchaser of the supplier's materials, or they may have a "virtual relationship." The client and supplier may have an informal or a formal working relationship. Examples:

If a secretary creates a digital file of a letter and provides it to their superior: The secretary is the supplier and the superior is the client.

If a corporate purchasing manager or production manager provides materials to their marketing department, the marketing dept. is the client and the production manager is the supplier.

If an art director downloads photographs from a stock photography web site: The photographer is the client and the stock agency is the supplier.

If the same art director uses those photos in an ad and supplies them digitally with an ad to the agency's account executive for the agency's use: The account executive and the agency are the clients and the art director is the supplier.

Digital Asset Management Guidelines and Practices

1. Formal purchase agreements, use or rights agreements, or archive agreements should accompany any digital file. A sample of what is requested or hard copy proof of that file should also accompany the file. The agreement should note the costs for the use of the file, the period of time the file should be saved or archived, and the ownership of the file in its original and final form. If a formal written agreement is not customary in your business then some informal understanding of expectations should be communicated.
2. Archiving: Practices for archiving should be contracted or negotiated. Certain files may need to be archived for shorter or longer periods of time.

Any digital file, no matter how simple, should be named according to an agreed upon standard by all parties in the workflow, and archived on a computer or some removable media if it is intended to be saved or reused.

Some suppliers will archive files for a fee as an amendment to their usual business agreements. In those cases the period of time is dictated by the terms of the contract between supplier and client.

3. Versions: All files should be clearly named or clearly dated with relation to their use. All old versions or unnecessary files should be deleted or erased from any storage or transportable media intended for use by a commercial supplier. Properly sized and marked hard copies or laser proofs of those files should accompany the project.

Costs incurred by the mistaken use of improperly outdated files may be the responsibility of the provider of those files.

If a poorly labeled or inadequately named file provided by a client is mistaken for a live file and used by a supplier, the costs to recreate the work may be charged to the client.

**(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)*



The supplier should check the supplied file against any supplied proof for accuracy.

4. If a client has contracted with a supplier to archive their files for a defined period of time, that supplier is responsible to recreate or supply those files if they are lost or damaged.

If the original material is no longer available for use, the supplier may be liable for some form of financial restitution to the client for the value of that work. An advance determination of the value of that work and a commitment for payment should be contracted.

5. The setting and communicating of copyright guidelines and usage guidelines for an original image or a file are the responsibility of a client. An indemnification clause is recommended.
6. The copy of the original file given by a client to a supplier remains the property of the client. All other files created or amended by the supplier are the property of the supplier. It is recommended that the supplier make a copy of the file provided.
7. The amended file created by a supplier to achieve an end result or product remains the property of the supplier.

Production or Technical Issues

1. Some files created on different operating platforms may be mutually incompatible. Some files created by different versions of the same software may be unusable. Resolve compatibility issues before electronic mechanicals are output by an imagesetter.

An Adobe Illustrator file created on a Mac will not be able to be opened on a PC. A MS Word document created in Word 6 will not open on a computer loaded with WORD 5.1 or may not be recognized properly as an e-mail attachment. Macintosh computers can, however save files in PC format.

2. Large image files may take hours to transmit through commercially available access lines.

*A 150 MB image file might take several hours to successfully transmit through an electronic communications line. The time needed to receive and access an unusually large transmitted file may be billable to a project. The time needed to transmit an excessively large file may be billable to a project. *(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)*

3. Some images created by illustrator programs may take an excessive amount of time to output or transmit.

*An illustrator file with many repetitive blends, although appearing to be a small file, may take many hours above the normal processing times to output or to transmit. The time needed to transmit or output an excessively large file may be billable to a project. *(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)*

4. Software: Files used by clients for production work may be created and saved in the latest accepted industry version.

Many clients or suppliers may be using older or outdated working versions of software. Different versions can cause compatibility problems that affect output.

A supplier may only want to use the latest updated version of a working program. If that



supplier uses that version to correct or edit a client supplied older version original, that document may take on the characteristics of the newer version and may only be opened by the latest version of the program. If a client uses a brand new or beta version of a program, it is wise to check with suppliers and clients if they have that latest version before sending them files. Everyone should be working on the same version so that opening the document will not change its integrity.

5. "High end prepress computer equipment" may not be able to improve the quality of low resolution original images.

*Sophisticated image manipulation software and hardware have limited abilities to sharpen, correct, or reasonably correct poor or low resolution images. The time and materials provided by a supplier to correct these images may be billable to a project. *(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)*

6. Corrupt files: A corrupted file, or a file that can't be read or laser printed by a client may not be able to be used or accessed by a supplier.

*Sophisticated image manipulation software and hardware may have limited abilities to correct and utilize corrupted files. The time spent by a supplier and media provided to correct these files may be billable to a client; if they can be corrected. *(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)*

7. Use of photographs or illustrations is dictated by a rights agreement or negotiated ownership agreement. Subtle changes to those images using computer-generated techniques or changes in their final format may infringe on the artist's rights and contractual agreements.

If you scan a photo from a magazine, colorize it, flop it, and use it for a commercial venture you may be liable for infringement of usage rights. If a photo is contracted for use in a publication but is also used for a national ad or on an internet site, you may be liable for infringement of usage rights.

8. An image or file downloaded from the web and used or repurposed for a commercial application, may infringe on the rights of the creator or originator of that image or file.

Several map publishers have legal teams searching print documents and internet sites for illegal copyright infringement of their product for commercial uses.

9. Time or materials used by a supplier to recreate an original file into a usable file for production or for a client's use may be billable. *(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)

*A supplier may recreate art or transfer graphics into other programs in order to use the file. *(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.) This additional time may be billable to a project. If a client needs a "working file" for other uses or projects, the supplier may have to spend additional time or resources to re create it. This time may be billable to a project. *(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)*

10. Storage or archiving of images or files by a supplier may be billable. *(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)

*Any charges for these services should be contracted at the beginning of a project. Some suppliers charge on an hourly basis, a per page or image basis, or on a contracted monthly or yearly fee basis. *(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)*



11. Special digital retouching or image manipulation to photographic or illustrative images may be billable to a client. **(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)*

*The supplier's time and material cost to match the color, as close as commercially possible may be billable. Any time spent, or proofs pulled, to change colors or manipulate the image away from its original form, if not originally negotiated, may be billable to a project. *(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)*

12. There may be a charge from a supplier to a client for uploading or copying a file to transportable or transmittable media. **(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)*

Those costs include the time needed to find the archived file, the time to copy the file, the storage media if any, and a delivery fee, if any.

13. Transmission of some digital files through commercial e-mail or Internet service providers may be limited. Attachments to those files may also be limited in quality to text or to small image files.

An attached and compressed transmission through America Online or other commercial Internet providers oftentimes may be limited in size.

14. Media: Popular storage media can get quickly outdated. Keep track of where files are stored and have them copied to the newer form of media used. Suppliers may be responsible for this if they have been contracted by a client for archiving services.

10 years ago the 51/2" floppy was the common storage media for PC's. Few PC's have capabilities to read those discs today. In 1995 the 44 - 88 MB SyQuest was the preferred storage media for Macintosh. SyQuest is now out of business and few industries are using those formats for storage or archiving. Apple Computer is no longer designing floppy drives in their computers, and the ZIP is slowly being outmoded as the costs for CD writers have come down.

It would be difficult to retrieve an important document such as a will if it was archived in an outdated storage format.

Operational Issues

1. Some transportable media, if dropped or passed through certain magnetic fields, may become corrupted or unusable.

These files may have to be copied or recreated by the client in order to be usable.

2. Some graphic or business software applications should only be used for desktop or low resolution creative or design work. A written specification of the programs intended to be used for a project should be agreed upon.

*Programs such as PowerPoint are difficult to use for high-end creative work. Additional time and resources may be needed to repurpose these programs for other than their specific use. This additional time spent on behalf of the supplier may or may not be billable to a project. *(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)*

Programs such as MS Word, WordPerfect or Excel are essentially word processing or spreadsheet programs and should not be used for sophisticated design or high resolution



*printing or output work. They are not readily able to be used for printing impositions and their font and image management tools are limited. The additional time needed to recreate these files in more sophisticated design software may be billable to a project.
(Parties shall agree whether or not there will be a charge for these services and if so, how much.)

3. Storage Media: Different "storage media" have different cost bases.
4. Resolution: Different image file resolutions are needed for proper use with different media. All participants in the production workflow should be aware of file sizes as delivered and expected with regards to anticipated use.

A 72 dpi photographic image will be acceptable for use on a video monitor or internet uses.

A 150-dpi image will be acceptable for use in a newspaper ad.

A 250-dpi image may be acceptable for a magazine ad.

A 300 - 600 dpi image may be acceptable for use in a traditional printed brochure or outdoor billboard.

5. Enlargements: A "high resolution file" remains high resolution only if it is used at close to the same size in which it was created.

A 600 dpi scanned image at 4" x 5" becomes 300 dpi if used at 8" x 10". That image would "look better" if it had been scanned at 300 dpi for 8" x 10".

6. Some graphic files, if not compressed properly for transmission, may output only as text files. Some graphic files if compressed using the latest version of a compression program may not expand or open if that latest version is not used by the recipient of that file. Some compressions may also lose data.
7. Designs or illustrations created electronically can only be proofed properly by using some form of high resolution output and proof devices.

Illustrations created by Adobe Illustrator and similar programs can only be proved for color accuracy and fidelity by outputting the file and creating a high resolution digital or analog proof Desktop or low resolution proof or laser devices may not show accurate colors and details.

