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Studio and the Offline Creative Process

DIGITAS Inc.

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DIGITAS

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DIGITAS NEW YORK STUDIO

Studio Services

- Electronic mechanical release (pre-press, color separations, color tint, preflight, etc.)
- Design and art direction assistance
- Illustration (conventional and electronic)
- Conventional print and photography
- Traditional pasteup/comp building/packaging
- Signage and point-of-purchase displays
- Large format/plotter color prints
- Color retouching and digital proofs
- Color correction
- Professional video, sound, and rich media
- Optimized graphics, banners, and imagery
- Creative technologies and support

The Studio

DIGITAS operates a full-service, state-of-the-art, innovative, digital Studio. Our capabilities range from pre-press and production-ready Electronic Mechanicals to color retouching and rich media.

Using the Studio

Any capability at DIGITAS can use Studio services. In most cases costs incurred are charged as fee via timesheets. Other fixed-price costs are either pass-through or charged on a fixed-price ratecard (e.g., American Express offline jobs). All jobs require a valid agency activity number. Jobs are booked via the appropriate Studio form and assigned by Studio management to designers on a daily basis. We encourage jobs to be booked and routed via Delivery Management.

Hours of Operation

The Studio is staffed from 9:30am to 6:00pm, Monday through Friday. After/early hours and weekend support is available on an as-needed basis. We also offer the 5300 Studio/Creative Helpline, a 24/7 after-hours and emergency assistance number (212.610.5300) for unexpected urgent needs. Deliverables are for end-of-day or until the last FedEx pickup, unless otherwise arranged.

Booking Jobs

All jobs, with limited exceptions, require advanced booking. In addition to staff, the Studio books freelance talent according to the workload. Jobs that are not booked will be on a first-come, first-served basis. The daily schedule is available in the Studio. Additionally, Delivery Management receives a daily report that indicates jobs for which they are responsible, the current status, and the assigned Designer.

Job Manager

The Studio uses Job Manager, which accurately captures time at the task level. A Job Manager report can be helpful in justifying the Studio level of effort and provide a comprehensive job history from booking through handoff. Since job scopes evolve and change, the Studio philosophy is “it takes what it takes.” Preplanning, even with the best intentions, often sets false expectations. Job Manager can alert you when you come within or exceed the Budget Builder hours allocated for Studio- coded positions. You can also provide a fixed dollar amount for Job Manager to track to.



Work In Progress (WIP)

The Art Director uses the WIP file to present his/her final design to the Client for approval. The purpose of the WIP is to show the photography/illustration elements in the layout with the text from the approved copy deck. Exact alignment of graphic elements and text and consistency from one section to another is not necessarily adhered to. At this point the Art Director uses the computer as a design tool to develop a layout the client can approve for production. The computer is not being used as a production/pre-press tool.

Elements of a Work In Progress:

- Conceptual stock photography is removed and the approved artwork is placed.
- Text from the approved copy deck is put into the file where the “greek” text had been.
- Text is formatted with the correct typeface and size, and is worked into the layout.
- Artwork is sized and placed in approximate positions throughout the layout.
- Art Director is in the process of pulling the design together with all of the newly approved elements, and minor changes to the layout can be expected.

Final Mac Comp (FMC)

The Studio Designer creates a new file called a Final Mac Comp to execute the Client changes to the WIP. This file is created and developed specifically with production and pre-press in mind. This Final Mac Comp is flexible for production and pre-press specs only—not for design changes. This file is the foundation for the Electronic Mechanical and is shown to the Client for proofreading and sign-off.

Elements of a Final Mac Comp:

- Text elements are consolidated into single, manageable blocks providing flexibility for typographic and pre-press controls to be added.
- Final artwork is precisely positioned. If any text is to run around the artwork, the graphics boxes containing the artwork are set to allow precise run-around spacing of the text.
- Document size, bleed, fold marks and perfs are locked into position.
- The color(s) to be used to produce this file (spot or process) are selected. Color separation instructions are created by the Art Director.



Electronic Mechanical (EM)

This is the file that gets released to the print vendor. It is important to note that any changes in copy, graphics, or visuals at this time seriously challenge the ability to release a quality product on schedule. The Studio Designer’s responsibilities cross over into areas once performed by the print shop and engraver. It is imperative that enough time is reserved on the schedule to ensure their completion.

Pre-Press/Typographic/Preflight issues:

- Assign all tint and screen values (once performed by the print shop).
- Print color separations, which are representations of the actual metal plates that will be used to print the various colors that make up the job.
- Verification of document size for all components.
- Lock in all kerning and line breaks.
- Create a pre-press document report, listing all characteristics of the electronic file, such as spot or process color assignments, list of typefaces used, and a list of graphics.
- Assemble all hard copy documentation for the job and then collect the electronic assets, master file, fonts, and images onto media to be delivered to the print shop.



Knowledge + Process = Speed

Shaun O'Donoghue, VP/Director of Graphic Services
Melanie McDowell, Studio Manager

Offline Creative Process

The offline creative process has been developed to maximize efficiency and ensure profitability in a digital environment. There are four stages of the creative process that benchmark what has been done to the electronic file in terms of design and pre-press specifications. Because the stages are dependent on many non-visible attributes, the hard copies of the job are stamped with the appropriate stage.

Art Director vs. Studio Ownership

Once the client has approved the concept layout, the job will progress from the design stages to the production stages. At this time the Art Director will take a supervisory role and the Studio will begin to incorporate the many time-consuming, pre-press requirements. For this to proceed, the design and copy must be "locked" into place. Only the Studio has the authority to take the job through its final stages in the creative process.

Speed to Market

Often in overzealousness to accelerate a job through the process, we end up with a higher level of effort and considerable rework. Each stage of the creative process relies on the previous stage being fully completed. While the client's need for speed to market is important, moving forward prematurely or skipping steps negatively impacts agency profit — either in creative rework of completed mechanicals or last-minute rejection of flawed electronic files.

Loose Mac Comp (LMC)

The Art Director creates the Loose Mac Comp with place-holder elements (swipe art and "greek" text) to aid in the visualization of a concept. Production specs such as document size, folds, die cuts, and perfs have not been finalized. The file will remain at Loose Mac Comp status until the design is approved.

Elements of a Loose Mac Comp:

- Headlines will usually be readable copy concepts.
- Nonsense type called "greek" type is positioned into anticipated copy areas of the layout. The style of typeface used for "greek" type will usually represent the proposed final product, but the size and amount of type will not be finalized until the copy deck is approved.
- The Art Director uses "swipe" artwork chosen from stock books or magazines. The art represents the mood and intent of the visuals to be used in the final piece and reflects the design direction.
- A folding paper dummy (blank paper) may be created to suggest the type of component to be produced (e.g., brochure, oversized envelope, z-card, box, etc.).



WAIT time

At the time of booking, the Studio must be provided with the required information to proceed with your job. If Studio time has been booked and the work does not route as communicated, the job may incur WAIT time. Clear communication is critical to avoid fees for downtime. This is a challenge for jobs on accelerated schedules that route through the Studio several times daily. In some cases, Studio Designers will be able to defer such WAIT time with other smaller jobs, but that should not be assumed.

5300 Studio/Creative Helpline

The Studio operates a 24/7 Creative Helpline for booking jobs, getting project status, contacting a Studio Manager, and for creative support to graphic workstations. It also provides the option to page the on-call Studio Manager for after-hours and emergency support. This single point of entry into the Studio is designed to get all calls answered immediately.

Studio Quality Control

Your feedback is critical to measuring our effectiveness. With each deliverable, you will receive a *Studio Performance Survey*, which solicits feedback on the quality, timeliness, and professionalism of the Studio services. It can also be completed on the intranet at <http://agency.digitas.com/nystudio/>.



Stay informed @

<http://agency.digitas.com/nystudio>

The Studio has an intranet page to keep you up-to-date on Studio services and availability. You can also find booking forms for all Studio services and important information about the creative process. Soon you will be able to get real-time job status, including job costs, task-level detail, number of rounds, and total number of comps provided.

Questions?

If you have any questions regarding Studio services, creative technologies, or creative support, contact me at x5067 or via the 5300 Helpline.

Shaun O'Donoghue
VP/Director of Graphic Services



>OFFLINE CREATIVE PROCESS GUIDELINES

	DTP PHASE	AGENCY DELIVERABLES	WHAT TO LOOK FOR	WHAT NOT TO LOOK FOR	WORKFLOW/PROCESS	COMMON PITFALLS	RATECARD/BUDGET TASKS
DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT (DESIGN FILES)	Loose Mac Comp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actual size folded paper dummy First draft of copy Samples of artwork Pantone color chips Paper stock samples Typeface samples Preliminary agency schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The overall “feeling” that the piece projects Suggested artwork Headlines and subheads Does design meet the marketing strategy? Space available for artwork, charts, copy, and legal copy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actual artwork in the layout Text in the layout Type style and size Final colors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery Management creates schedules. A schedule must be approved by all team members before it is given to the client Account Manager (AM), Art Director (AD), and Production Manager (PM) need to meet to develop a spec sheet once concepts are approved Send client copy decks. Always send through Editorial before releasing to client AD and Copywriter (CW) should be present when AM receives client feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since the comp can look like the finished piece, there is sometimes a misperception that the package is practically ready for print production Flowing copy into the layout prematurely. It takes more time to make changes to the layout Committing to deliverables without team involvement/approval Not sending copy decks through Editorial 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AMEX <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure concept is in STAMP standards compliance or exempt Is concept within client budget expectations? Submit Fee Ratecard Direct Fee Ratecard questions to Financial Analyst FEE-BASED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed Budget Builder budget should have sign-off by all department heads
	Work-in-Progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comp with copy and artwork in place Original artwork Final Production specifications (specs) Updated agency schedule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance of elements Natural flow of information Overall design Type styles and sizes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finessed typography (spacing between letters and words) The crispness and exact color of the photographs or illustrations How the copy “rags” or fits around illustrations and photos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Client comments must be documented with Action Needed If there are extensive changes to copy, the copy deck needs to be updated by the CW and then reflowed into the layout Client supplied backup must be included with the job when it goes through proofing All proofing queries must be answered 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Looking at typographic considerations, such as line breaks while the copy is still changing Criticizing the appearance of “For Placement Only” low-resolution artwork Expecting Studio to have the ability to make client changes that address major artwork and copy issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AMEX <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Submit job for Preproduction Estimate to Studio Enter Preproduction Estimate into Ratecard system FEE-BASED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If scope of work has changed, amended Budget Builder budget must be signed off by all department heads
PRODUCTION & EXECUTION (PRODUCTION-QUALITY FILES)	Final Mac Comp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actual size final folded comp Original artwork to be released to Production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proofread the text for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal and other revisions and corrections Trademarks and service marks Spelling Codes Versions Crop marks, fold marks, postal specs, final artwork in position 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High resolution art placed in file 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Verify and, if needed, revise spec sheet. Spec sheet must be signed by AD, PM, and AM AD must supply completed colorbreak to Studio All final artwork must be approved by the PM and the AD. If digital artwork is created in-house, an Iris print will be supplied for sign-off. If artwork is vendor supplied on disk, they must provide a color contract proof for sign-off FMC must route to the entire team (Editorial, CW, AD, AM, PM), and signatures must be obtained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creative changes at this stage A job cannot proceed to FMC if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copy is still to be written Artwork is not approved Design elements need to change There is no signed spec sheet Edited/proofed backup does not exist Assuming artwork that is placed in the layout is “live” and useable. In most cases, art needs to be released to Production for separation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AMEX <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advise client if job scope goes outside initial Preproduction Ratecard estimate Post-FMC changes are billed according to a blended hourly rate. Post-FMC rounds can be costly Live artwork/retouching completed by the Studio is billed FEE-BASED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Watch actual hours reports or Job Manager reports to ensure proper budget allocations were made by department
	Electronic Mechanical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Folder containing the following materials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disk per Electronic Mechanical Final Production specs Folded paper comps One preflight report per disk Colorbreak Black and white separations of each color plate Disk directory printout containing all files on each disk Matchprints or Iris prints of all electronic artwork Carefully packaged original artwork if no digital artwork has been created 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check to make sure all proofreading comments were incorporated Review output as if reviewing bluelines 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final client approval should be obtained before the Studio begins preparing EM. If changes are received, another round of FMC is required EM must be routed to Editorial, CW, AD, and PM for their final approval Visually, the FMC and EM layouts should be identical. The differences are contained within the electronic files. The Studio needs time to prepare production-quality files 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any revisions that occur as a result of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new set of eyes seeing the component for the first time Human error when reviewing the Final Mac Comp Human error while creating the production-quality file (Final Mac Comp or Electronic Mechanical) Bypassing Production for final review Asking client to approve an EM — final client approval is given at FMC stage Changes cannot be accommodated at the EM stage without affecting the EM release date/timeline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> AMEX <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconcile the Preproduction Ratecard with actuals within 4 to 6 weeks Submit incremental Fee Ratecards as necessary Review Lotus Notes database for Ratecard status Discuss further situations Absorptions should be identified and justified FEE-BASED <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check actual hours vs. Budget Builder Identify absorptions and justify as necessary Debrief meeting for shared learning