

Batching Artwork

This is how you start to adopt the principles of mass production by grouping single orders together to create larger print runs (mass customisation). Typically you can group orders together in a single print file by the following criteria

- By Product SKU / type
- By Delivery address
- By Delivery service
- By Product Colour
- By Product Sizes

The batching criteria you adopt is usually driven by the type of printing / decoration equipment you have available, the number of different products you are producing and the delivery promises you offer. To enable production batching you will need to set up

- Batch Layout Template - decide the size of batch sheet, whether number of pages relevant, the positioning for the individual print jobs within the batch and whether any crop marks, registration marks or cut lines are needed
- Processing Requirements - such as applying masks to save ink, inverting artwork for sublimation, cropping artwork files to fit templates and auto resizing artwork
- Whether to Mix Batches with similar products or stick to a single product type

Batching does not always need to be used to combine print / artwork files it is also a very useful tool for just routing / sorting orders so a machine operator just gets a list or can download single orders. This is still a big time saver but is just a better fit for some production processes

There are also some other technology enabled options that can be useful in setting up / implementing your batching strategy

- Set cut off times - so artwork is held until you have a full production run then released at the nominated time even if a full batch not ready
- Mixing Products - keeping single product types on the same batch until the above cut off time then mixing batches together after this time as order volumes reduce
- Post processing - adding a colour profile to a batch or adding cut lines / layers
- Scanning batch barcodes - to update batch status, bulk print labels or despatch

The key points to watch out for are

- Making sure your batch sizes are realistic and fit your order output or you could cause a lack of work at certain times on the factory floor - good example is that at peak times you could print mug transfer 96 up on a wide format printer but a quieter times you might wait half a day for 96 mugs so should revert to smaller batch sizes or printers
- That all batched artwork files share the same colour profile / production technique

As with auto artwork generation this is only really relevant for personalised & print on demand products

Potential Time Savings Available

1. Printing a single sheet with multiple print jobs is quicker than printing one at a time
2. Extra auto processing on batches eliminates any additional tweaks needed
3. Automatically routing orders for production saves time organising orders

