PREPRESS TWO CENTS: CHANGING CHANNELS
Fixing that Pesky 4-Color Black Text in Photoshop
OR: I hope this is still about printing because I don't have a tv at work

Relax, this has nothing to do with tvs or channel surfing. We're still talking about printing. Specifically, black text that's made up of two or more process colors instead of just the standard black swatch.

What's the big deal? you ask, *colored text is made up of 2 or more process colors*. True enough, but unless you're printing with actual spot color inks, you *have* to create colored text that way. Black text can be, and *should be*, colored with standard black whenever possible.

No one wants their black text to look muddy, fuzzy, or worse yet, *not-black*. So what do you do when someone gives you an ad built in Photoshop that has a bunch of black copy sitting on the white portion of the background? You could shrug your shoulders and say, "Not my ad, not my problem." *Or*, you could take less than 5 minutes and fix it. Seriously.

Open the ad in Photoshop. Make sure it's CMYK mode. Flatten it if necessary. Using the lasso or marquee, select the sections of black text, holding down the shift key to select more than one area if necessary. Open the channels palette under the "Window" pull-down.

The first channel is the combined CMYK channel. Cyan, magenta, yellow and black appear below. First click on the cyan channel and take a look at the way the selected text looks. Then click magenta, yellow and black and check out the appearance of the text. You might assume the black channel on its own would be ideal, but very often that's not the case. Let's assume that the copy looks pretty good in the cyan channel and okay in the black channel. What we want to do is *combine* the way the text looks in those two channels and then turn that into the black channel.

Under the "Image" pull-down at the top, go to "Calculations." Under Source 1 select the cyan channel. Under Source 2 select the black channel. Under Blending choose "multiply." Click OK.

In the channels palette, there will now be an Alpha 1 channel at the bottom of the list. There should still be marching ants around all of your black text.

With the Alpha 1 channel highlighted, do a *copy*. Now highlight the black channel and do a *paste*. Highlight the cyan channel and hit delete. Your background color should be set to white, so choose background. The selected areas will now be blank in the cyan channel. Do the same with magenta and yellow.

Now click on the Alpha 1 channel and hit the little garbage can at the bottom of the palette to delete it.

If necessary, go back to the black channel and use levels or curves to darken the black channel so that your text does not look weak. This last step may or may not be necessary.

There you have it! Black text that's no longer made up of 2 or more process colors. Your new black-only text will look cleaner and sharper this way, making everyone happy and creating world peace. Okay, I made up that very last part. But you get the idea. It's a *good* thing!

If you have questions about fixing your black text or other questions about your project, please contact us!