

Planning—The Key to a Successful Project

Large and small publishing projects require planning before project launch, especially when coordinating text, design, and layout. Taking the time to think through all the steps and requirements of a project will help achieve a finished piece on time and within budget—and one you can be proud of.

1. Define the scope of the project.

Before you can jump in or hire anyone to assist you in executing your project, you must define the scope. Do you have a project plan with a description of the project and an outline? Will you write it yourself or hire a writer, editor, or proofreader? How much design is involved? Do you have a vision of the finished product, or do you want a designer to suggest a design—or several? Is the job black and white or color? Iron out these details to ensure a realistic plan.

2. Determine a schedule.

Decide on a completion date for your project, then work backwards. Determine all of the steps needed and the timeline for each step. Your project may include writing, revising a draft, reviewing design concepts and layout, proofreading, and printing. Be sure to include time for several rounds of revisions. After the initial layout, you're sure to find ways you'll want to tweak the words or nudge the design.

3. Avoid paying rush charges.

If you've worked backwards and your schedule shows that you should have started two weeks ago, reassess your completion date. If you rush any step in the creative process, you risk an inferior result. And if you ask for unreasonable delivery dates, you may be billed extra for rush charges.

4. Determine a budget.

If you don't have a budget, request quotes from professionals you'd like on your project team. If you don't have anyone in mind, ask colleagues for referrals. If you have no leads and must select someone from a directory, ask for references when you request a quote. Consider the rapport you have—or don't have—when evaluating a quote and selecting vendors. If someone is difficult to talk to, or your gut says *Run!* that is a good indicator of the working relationship going forward.

5. Evaluate and re-evaluate.

During creative and content development hold regular status meetings or establish a way to maintain visibility to ensure your project stays on track and on schedule. This can help avoid costly revisions that can impact your completion date and the quality of the final product.

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