

The Insider's Guide to Flexographic Printing





What is Flexographic Printing?

That smiling box that appears on your porch letting you know your latest online purchase has arrived. The famous logo and fresh tagline repeated dozens of time as you unwrap a delicious sub sandwich you bought for lunch. The tear-off menus your hostess hands you at the door of that funky cafe' around the corner.

All of these are examples of flexographic printing in your daily life.

Flexographic printing uses a flexible rubber plate to create a process that is extremely versatile while maintaining an economic price.

Whether for branding, design or informative purposes, printing has proven itself invaluable to businesses hoping to communicate en masse with customers without spending a fortune. As reported by [BrandWatch](#), studies have shown that printed promotional products (like pens, mugs, and USB drives) influence buying decisions and retain their value from a branding perspective for years after the customer receives them.

Printed paper products and packaging accomplishes a similar purpose: repeated exposure to a brand logo or message that impacts the consumer and anyone who sees the product as it's being used.

One of the leading printing options for packaging and paper is flexographic printing.

Flexographic printing (or just flexo) uses a flexible rubber plate to create a process that is extremely versatile while maintaining an economic price.

It can easily adapt to different materials and can use a wide range of inks from water to oil-based. Because flexographic printing usually uses low viscosity inks, it cuts down on drying and production time, ultimately minimizing costs for paper manufacturers and distributors.

To better understand the versatility and value of flexographic printing, let's discuss how it stacks up against other popular printing methods.

The Differences Between Flexographic, Gravure, Offset, and Inkjet Printing

Flexographic Printing

Uses a rubber or soft plastic relief plate for flexible and adaptable printing. The process was originally patented in 1890 in Liverpool, England, but the materials and inks available at the time didn't coordinate well, leading to a lot of smearing and flexography quickly fell out of favor.

With the advent of new materials and better inks, however, the process was resurrected and found to be optimal for printing on non-porous surfaces such as that required for most food packaging. As a result, flexo now handles a major portion of global printed packaging needs.

Some of the key benefits of using flexographic printing are:

- Fast drying inks (faster print runs are less expensive)
- Flexible and economical (more reasonable for smaller runs)
- Can be used for printing on almost any type of substrate (plastic, metallic films, cellophane, paper)

Gravure Printing

Gravure (or rotogravure) printing utilizes a metal plate mounted on a cylinder to apply an image to a printing surface. Like offset and flexo, gravure is a rotary process, meaning long rolls of paper are fed through a series of rollers to apply and dry the ink, making it effective for large printing runs.

While gravure has been the staple process for newspaper photo printing, much of that work has gone digital today. Gravure is still used extensively for print magazines, postcards, cardboard, and some packaging. It offers a high-quality option for image reproduction.

A few features of gravure printing:

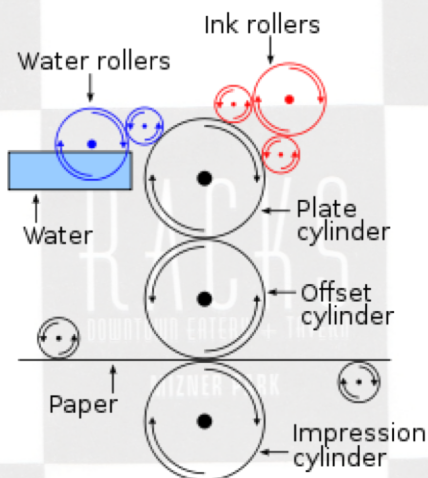
- Historically used for newspaper photo features
- Often used for magazines, postcards, cardboard and other packaging
- Good quality image reproduction

Offset Printing

For the offset printing process, an inked image is transferred (or offset) from a flat plate to a rubber blanket which is wrapped around a cylinder, then to a printing surface. This printing method is currently the standard for high-volume printing for newspapers, stationery, and books.

Its use of metal plates and rubber blankets can increase the cost of printing, making it less suitable for smaller print runs.

- Often used for newspapers, brochures, stationery and books
- Consistent image quality
- Quick production of printing plates



Inkjet Printing

Inkjet printing is a form of computer printing that creates a digital image by propelling droplets of ink onto paper. Most of the printers sold today for use at home and in smaller offices are inkjet printers, although on a much smaller scale than the commercial versions.

Commercial inkjet is limited by the substrates it works best with, and is primarily used for high volume business documents where high quality image reproduction is not necessary. For example, sales letters for a large direct mail campaign will likely be printed via inkjet.

For this kind of project, inkjet is fast and reliable, requiring very little setup.

- Practically no warm-up time needed
- Mainly used for paper, but can be used on some plastics and other substrates
- Printers range from small consumer models to large commercial models

How is Flexographic Printing Used?



Flexographic printing is used in a variety of industries to enhance a company's brand, promote an event or to share updates and news about the organization.

For example, [restaurants](#) can benefit from flexo printing to provide branded paper products in small enough runs to allow for flexibility in changing menus, special offers, and branding messages. [Retailers](#), too, have been able to benefit from flexography to create inexpensive branded packaging that stretches their marketing dollar and creates lasting impressions on customers.

Industries that benefit from custom flexographic printing:

- Food service (restaurants, grocery stores, catering companies)
- Hospitality (hotels, resorts)
- Manufacturing
- Packaging and Labeling
- Tube and core
- Construction

Because flexographic printing offers fast drying time and can adapt to lightweight and heavy paper grades, **it works well with a range of paper:**

- Newsprint
- Kraft paper
- Butcher paper
- Freezer paper
- Offset paper
- Bleached board (SBS)
- Chipboard
- Other coated boards



Whether wrapping a pallet, lining a food basket, or promoting a special event, flexographic printing offers a flexible and swift way to bring everyday paper to life.

The Scoop on Video Inspection

With a real-time video inspection system to monitor print jobs, quality control and results are more accurate than ever.

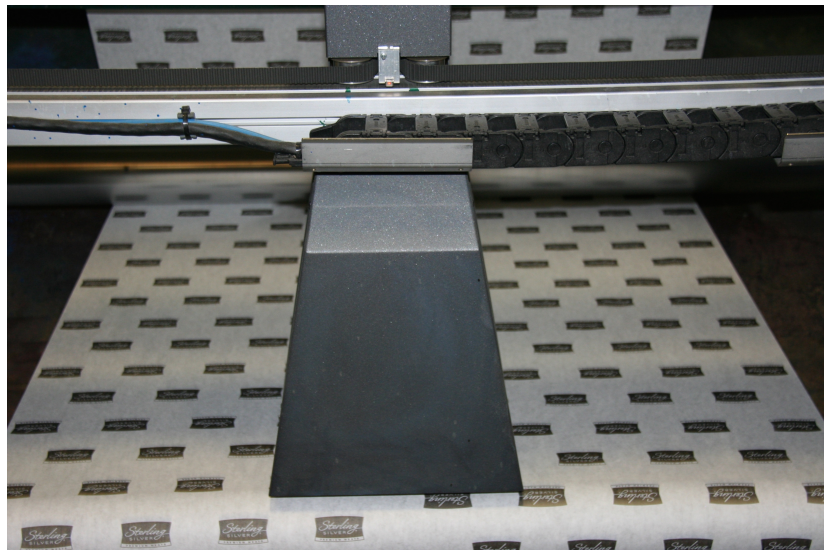
One of the worst things that can happen during a print job is for it to finish and be inspected only to find a tiny error that's been reproduced 10,000 times. Even with a high-speed, economical process like flexography, that's a costly and frustrating situation.

Digital video inspection helps eliminate that issue by providing flexographic presses with real-time, automated video monitoring of the printing process even as it progresses. Even the smallest errors can be easily spotted and rectified very early on to ensure that money and time are not wasted reworking projects that failed to raise red flags during the setup process.

With a real-time video inspection system to monitor print jobs, quality control and results are more accurate than ever.

When comparing potential flexographic printing partners, look for a company that offer technology that tracks registration and automatic color monitoring with high-resolution digital cameras to make it possible to review printing runs.

Video monitoring takes flexographic printing to the next level and offers quality assurance for each print job to reduce waste, increase productivity and lower costs for customers.



Choosing the Right Company

There are several things to keep in mind when choosing the right flexographic company. These include turnaround time and printing capabilities to ensure the best results. Here are some of the most important questions to ask your flexographic printing company:

- Can your company handle large-scale projects?
- Is your flexographic printing press also capable of slitting and rewinding paper?
- What is the expected turnaround time?
- Does your company source your own paper for printing?
- Can your printing press print multiple colors?
- Do you offer custom color matching as well as traditional PMS color options?
- Will your company work with small orders?
- Does your company have a quality control process in place?

Ultimately, it's important to select a print manufacturer with the experience and availability to help you with all of your printing needs from achieving your marketing vision to working with your desired budget.

For more information on flexographic printing, contact our [paper converting company](#) to find out how we can help with your next printing project.



675 South Pace Blvd, Pensacola, FL 32502
850-433-9080 | info@oren-intl.com | www.oren-intl.com