# proofing color

## Color Contract Proofing

The first thing we need to do is distinguish between a content proof, which is not color-accurate, and a contract proof, which is. A contract proof is just what it says — a contract between the print buyer and the printer, so it is vital that it demonstrates as accurately as possible how an image will look when printed. If you make a nice print on your personal ink-jet printer that expresses your creative intent but doesn't show how the press will print, you haven't made a contract proof. At best, you've made a color guide that a retoucher or color corrector can follow when altering your file so it prints as closely as possible to your vision. Remember the cost of those alterations is not included in a normal printing quote.

## Certified Proofing Systems

Most of today's offset presses are optimized to simulate the appearance of a predefined CMYK color space such as SWOP® or GRACoL® or other regional specifications. GRACoL and SWOP certified proofing systems are tested by IDEAlliance to fall within close visual tolerances of each other.

## Measuring Proof Quality

Just because a proofing system is certified doesn't mean it's operating correctly. Even a certified proofing system can drift out of tolerance. To verify a proofing system, measurements are taken with a spectrophotometer on a standard IT8.7/4 CMYK target and compared to a reference specification such as GRACoL or SWOP. Proofing accuracy is expressed in average and peak Delta E – a number that represents the "distance" between two colors.

To verify your proof, we print and measure the IDEAlliance ISO 12647-7 Color Control Wedge 2009. You will see this Wedge on every color contract Printing Concepts delivers. It is verified with a "Pass" label when the colors of the Wedge are within tolerance: average Delta E of 4, maximum peak Delta E of 6.



*IDEAlliance ISO 12647-7 Color Control Wedge 2009 printed on every Printing Concepts contract proof to ensure consistency.*

## Proofing Right

- The only purpose of a contract proof is to simulate how the job will appear on press. There are many factors that influence this appearance. (See our other helpful guides: *"How Lighting Affects Color"* and *"Paper: The Fifth Color."*)

- Proofing systems should be calibrated to simulate GRACoL, SWOP, or an agreed custom print condition.

- Proofs and press sheets should only be viewed under ISO 3664:2009 D50 viewing conditions. Non-standard illumination (for example, office or supermarket lighting) can cause a good product to look bad.

*Information taken from the 2012 DEER Foundation Poster Series*

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