

DYK



FINISH LIKE A BOSS

How to Design with
Print Finishings
in Mind

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Photo by Alagra Anderson Photography

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



KARIN KING

Commercial Printing
Brand Manager,
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Notice anything different?

If you've been a *Did You Know?* subscriber for some time, you'll see that we've got a new look and feel for 2024, along with an expanded format. That's right — we're bringing you even more design inspiration, print techniques and tips this year, and what better way to deliver it all than a quarterly print magazine?

Starting with the end

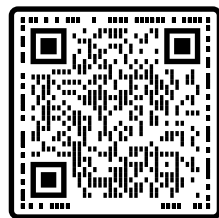
Our inaugural issue is all about **finishing**. We love nothing more than those extra special effects that take a print piece from great to fabulous, and this issue will help you master the art.

In this issue, you'll find:

- An interview with Pamela Howard of Firebrick Design, whose folds and die-cuts have produced several outstanding print invitations
- A featured project that will make you want to design print pieces for a luxury hotel (or maybe just stay in one)
- "Finish Like a Boss: Designing with Finishings In Mind," which covers design choices to consider up front for a smooth process all the way through the finish




Plus, we've got a curated playlist to get your creative juices flowing, along with a mailbag where we answer reader-submitted questions.

What do you think of the new *Did You Know?*? I'd love to hear your comments, questions and suggestions at accentopaque.com/contact-us.



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FOLLOW FOR PRINT INSPIRATION



DESIGNER SPOTLIGHT:

PAM HOWARD FIREBRICK DESIGN

Portrait photos by Allegra Anderson Photography

Firebrick
Design

Pam Howard is a designer, illustrator and painter based in New England. We love the way her print designs feature thoughtful folds and specialty techniques, so we were thrilled to discuss with Pam her approach to print and finishing.

Tell us about you and Firebrick Design.

I'm a designer who is constantly gathering inspiration from the world around me. Firebrick Design is the arena where I get to merge what I know about design forms and techniques with modern technologies and concepts.

Tell us about your relationship to paper. What role does it play in your practice?

I love working with paper! Paper is a near-perfect medium; it can be folded and manipulated to hide, reveal, build, and move. People across cultures have been leveraging paper's flexibility for centuries. Once paired with the invention of the printing press, the power of paper became apparent — for both crucial communications as well as for personal entertainment.

It's important to me that paper, when managed properly, is also a sustainable resource. When working on Firebrick Design projects, I think about both the online and the print components of the visual systems — each of these touchpoints is experiential, but in different ways. The print side emphasizes the haptic perception of touch, and renders a well-crafted printed piece extra memorable.

“

The crucial element is that this piece felt like a gift to the recipient.

“

If you're going to expend resources such as ink and paper, you need to design pieces to be elevated and to have an extended life.

Your print work often involves fun finishings and specialty techniques. What are some of your favorite finishing techniques and why?

I don't think I have a favorite technique — each project demands a certain look and feel. A technique may be perfect for one project, but completely wrong for another. Traditional letterpress, engraving, foil, blind emboss, Riso, die-cut... I'm shameless — I'll incorporate aspects of any of these for my work! And, honestly, you don't have to pour money into fancy finishing work to create something unforgettable. Often my clients are on a tight budget and, especially when I work with non-profit organizations, I'm strategic in how any money is spent. In my Sugar Sugar piece, a few budget-friendly cuts and folds created a panel that swung around to reveal the “hidden” Willy Wonka-style golden ticket. The printed piece was joyful and memorable and completely consistent with the ethos of the magical world of Wonka.

I had a great bit of satisfaction with a recent piece in which all parts of the initial invitation could be reused. Leveraging die-cuts, perforations, scores and folds, the recipient could mail back an RSVP card, keep a reminder card and build a castle that could be displayed. Nothing would go immediately (I'm realistic!) into the garbage. If you're going to expend resources such as ink and paper, you need to design pieces to be elevated and to have an extended life.

You've created several save the dates and invitations that involve some sort of interactive component. Can you tell us about a few of your favorites and how you accomplished the interactive piece? When/why do you think it's important to add interactivity to print work?

Firstly, when my save the dates or invitations include interactive components, those experiences are integral to the project. Secondly, no boring mail! One earlier piece was lushly printed on thick letterpress paper, mailed flat and popped out by the recipient to become an airplane. The event — riffing off of the Broadway show *An American in Paris* — transported the guests to Paris for the evening. The typography, print technique and airplane set the tone for the visual identity and for the experience of the night. Importantly, the plane was fun for the recipient to build; they lingered over the creation of it, building anticipation for the event. They contacted the internal development team and asked for additional invitations. They kept that plane on their desk long after the event, thus creating more memories and reminders of the organization. The crucial element is that this piece felt like a gift to the recipient.

Aside from paper, what are the other tools that are crucial to your personal craft? Who or what do you look to for inspiration?

I look everywhere and at everything. Of course, other designers are inspiring. But so are grocery stores, nature, social media, museums, books, movies, playgrounds, junk stores, kids' toys. Honestly, designers are hoarders. We hoard memories and images. For one recent project, I used elements from a vintage postcard I bought at a barn sale when I was 12. I'm currently working on a project that has me delving into tunnel book forms from the Belle Epoque. When I first started working, I was at a newspaper where we had to be aware of how moiré patterns could inadvertently



Photos by Julie Bidwell Photography

appear in images if we didn't adjust the angle of the photo — and I've been playing with deliberately making these patterns for the past few years. I assume what I learn will show up in the right project at some point!

What advice would you give to emerging designers who want to do high-quality print work?

My advice to any designer who is interested in creating high-quality print work is to collaborate with a great printer. I loop printers into my projects as early as possible to get their input and advice. Respect them and their craft. I'm happily still learning from my printers! These days, anyone can design almost anything (look at all those compelling Midjourney images), but to ensure the success of a piece in the real world, you need to understand the capabilities and the limitations of paper and ink. There are physical properties — like ink dryback or creep on saddle-stitching — that need to be addressed in the design stage. Learn the practical aspects of the craft in order to support even more creativity!



Photo by Julie Bidwell Photography



As the principal and creative director of Firebrick Design, Pam Howard brings creative, thoughtful solutions to branding and marketing challenges. She has been the recipient of various international, national and local awards from HOW Magazine International, PRINT Magazine, Graphic Design USA, the Sunday Magazine Editors Association (SUNMAG), Connecticut Art Directors Club, the Mom's Choice Awards, the Ad Club of Connecticut, American Alliance of Museums, New England Museum Association and the IBPA Book Awards. Learn more about her work at firebrickdesign.com.

FINISH LIKE A BOSS: DESIGNING WITH FINISHINGS IN MIND

The print industry has gone through some pretty big changes during the last decade, in large part due to how press, paper and ink technologies have evolved and the new possibilities these developments present.

This is where finishing has emerged as an important process to not only help designers better protect print pieces to maximize financial investment, but also to help designers differentiate their work in order to truly make a statement in print.

To elevate your design to the next level of quality and visual or artistic appeal, it's critical to design with the right kind of paper in mind relative to your desired finishing technique.

The good news is that finishing print pieces like a real boss doesn't require a mastery of this concept. With a basic roadmap, designers can successfully navigate the world of print finishings and paper pairings, from UV coating to die-cutting and all points in between.

“ Finishing like a boss doesn't require a mastery of this concept. With a basic roadmap, designers will be able to navigate the world of print finishings, from UV coating to die-cutting and all points in between.



DO YOU NEED A COAT?

When thinking about finishing techniques like foils or treatments, one of your primary considerations needs to be the choice between a coated and an uncoated sheet.

Uncoated paper — sometimes referred to as offset paper — does not use any kind of coating or treatment to seal the fibers of the sheet. This makes uncoated paper extremely porous, and the lack of sealant increases the level of ink absorption into the sheet during the printing process. The lack of coating also makes uncoated sheets feel more coarse and textured to the touch because the wood fibers are essentially exposed.

Coated paper, on the other hand, uses any one of a variety of coatings to seal the fibers of the sheet, thus allowing the ink to simply rest on the surface of the sheet as opposed to absorbing into the actual paper fibers. The chemicals used to coat paper often result in a smooth texture and glossy appearance, and this also helps create more crisp, clean image quality.

WHY DOES THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN COATED AND UNCOATED PAPER MATTER IN FINISHING?

For starters, the more porous nature of uncoated sheets makes them a less-than-ideal match for finishing techniques like UV treatments, as the increased level of absorption can cause the UV liquid to bleed during application, even with the rapid UV curing process. This can be avoided by using a pretreatment on your sheet, but it does add a step to the printing process.

While uncoated papers and UV treatments are not quite a match made in heaven, the texture of uncoated paper is extremely compatible with pressure-based finishings like foils and embossing or debossing. These types of finishings can offer a unique tactile contrast on the printed sheet and can be used to highlight branding elements or visuals, like logos.

“ When thinking about finishing techniques like foils or treatments, one of your primary considerations needs to be the choice between a coated and an uncoated sheet.



HOW TO PREPARE YOUR FILES FOR PRINT

Nothing is more frustrating than investing design time and effort in a print project only to have the piece not turn out as planned because your design files were not prepared properly. Here's a quick list of things to keep in mind before you send files to the printer to help save you time, money and heartache.

- Make sure your workspace and file colors are set to CMYK, not RGB. If printing with spot colors, be sure to identify them in your color swatches.
- Choose the appropriate resolution for the job. For most print jobs, keep all links at an effective resolution of 300 dpi.
- Double-check your image file types. CMYK TIFF, JPG or PSD file types are ideal.
- Add bleed or crop marks to your design, if applicable.
- Request a printed or digital proof as a final quality assurance check.
- Communicate with your print provider about any finishings or embellishments you plan to include.

Similarly, the glossy feel and appearance of coated sheets makes this kind of paper less ideal for embossing or debossing as the finer textural details and contrast won't be as evident. Plus, the coated surface makes the sheet more susceptible to cracking or other deformities from the pressure-based process of embossing.

As you can see, the choice between uncoated and coated paper plays a major role in the kind of finishing you can incorporate, and communicating with your print provider about your paper choice up front should be part of your design process.

MAKE SURE TO TRACK YOUR WEIGHT

No, we're not talking about adhering to that pesky New Year's resolution of regularly hitting the gym — we're talking about how the weight of your paper can affect the kinds of finishings you can incorporate into your design.

The first thing to know about paper weight and finishing is how well the sheet handles the level of ink saturation and coverage. For example, lighter-weight uncoated paper stocks that carry more ink or are more heavily saturated in one area as opposed to others can curl, and this curling can result in jams or breakdowns when being fed into automated finishing equipment.

This kind of curling is more likely when using a UV treatment on lightweight paper stocks as they lack the durability to handle the additional weight of the UV liquid.

Using lighter-weight paper stocks can also cause complications with finishing techniques like embossing or debossing simply because they lack the heft to support this kind of manipulation, especially if you're printing on both sides of the sheet.

“ And while you can die-cut lighter-weight paper stocks, you won't be able to achieve the detail and wow factor that you would with heavyweight papers.

In addition, finishing techniques like scoring and perforating can compromise the performance and appearance of lightweight paper stocks. And while you can die-cut lighter-weight paper stocks, you won't be able to achieve the detail and wow factor that you would with heavyweight papers.

Things are not all bad when it comes to lightweight paper and finishings. There are several binding options — yes, binding is technically a finishing — that are ideal for lighter paper stocks, including metal spiral binding, plastic comb binding and wire-o binding. Or, for a more high-end look, you can go with perfect binding.

Heavier paper stocks do offer a much wider range of finishing possibilities, particularly when it comes to techniques like foiling, folds and die-cutting. A heftier paper stock lends itself to a more detailed

die-cut and one that increases the functionality of your piece — for example, die-cutting a folder can help create additional space inside to house small print pieces like business cards.

With a heavyweight paper, you can also include metallic foiling to create a more elegant piece that is more suitable for applications like event invitations or high-end direct mail pieces. Plus, heavier papers are more compatible with interesting or unique folds.

Finishing like a boss doesn't have to leave you scratching your head — in fact, it can be as simple as accounting for the type and weight of paper at your disposal. Combine this with an open line of communication with your print provider and you'll have a winning recipe for creating world-class print.

FINISHING TECHNIQUE	IDEAL PAPER TYPE	IDEAL PAPER WEIGHT
Foil stamping	Uncoated	100 or 120 lb. Cover
Embossing/debossing	Uncoated	100 or 120 lb. Cover
Binding	Uncoated or coated	60, 70, 80 or 100 lb. Text
Folds	Uncoated or coated	100 or 120 lb. Cover
Scoring	Uncoated or coated	80, 100 or 120 lb. Cover
Perforating	Uncoated or coated	80, 100 or 120 lb. Cover
Die-cuts	Uncoated or coated	110, 120 or 130 lb. Cover
UV coating	Coated	100 lb. Text

PROJECT INSPIRATION

A STYLISH COLLECTION OF LUXURY HOTEL BRAND PRINT COLLATERAL



Creating quality print collateral that accurately captures a high-end brand's sense of style and sophistication can be challenging, especially when deciding on the right paper to represent your branding in a dynamic, fashionable way. And style is definitely the operative word when describing the guest relations sample kit for The Watermark, a fictitious luxury hotel brand.

This application sample designed for the travel and hospitality industry demonstrates how brands can create premium print marketing pieces designed to heighten the customer experience, and the samples also demonstrate how the synergy between different kinds of paper can help communicate the value of a high-end, unique brand.



The combination of Accent® Opaque, Hammermill®, Springhill® and Williamsburg papers offered the print versatility and excellent color and image quality to help create a wide range of print brand materials that encapsulated the upscale, elegant nature of The Watermark.

WELCOME TO THE WATERMARK

Using a common guest relations packet as a model, this sample is housed in a sleek guest experience folder featuring a variety of elegant print pieces designed to make a guest's stay at The Watermark something worth talking about. The versatility of Sylvamo paper and the compatibility with specialty finishings allowed for the ultimate creativity and detail.



Just like how a carpenter has a tool for every job, Sylvamo has a paper for every application. This sample encapsulates the variety of Sylvamo's paper offerings and how they can be used to create a range of branded print components.

— Creative Director Michael Wilson

The outer envelope, which featured Pantone® gold on the logo and a UV finish, included a postcard; a bi-fold pamphlet about The Watermark's business center; a tri-fold restaurant menu; a menu of spa services; branded letterhead and notepad; a valet ticket; a laundry service flyer and a ticket for a movie night event. The interior of the folder was also die-cut to add extra pizzazz and provide additional pockets to house the print materials.

PRINT THAT TELLS A STORY

Pairing the versatility and superior print quality of the Sylvamo family of paper brands with the refined, classic stylings of The Watermark's design and branding concept tells a compelling story about the power of print to resonate with an audience.

The variety of print samples also serves as a point of inspiration for brands in the travel and hospitality industry — and brands in other industries as well — to think more creatively about how designing high-quality print can help them create more meaningful connections with their target audience.

What's more, The Watermark guest relations folder demonstrates how Sylvamo's outstanding printability can help high-end, boutique brands make a statement with their investment in print and communicate with a little extra gravitas.



I think the standout of this sample is the folder. The minimal use of colors and UV finish showcase the quality of the paper and play into the brand's high-end, boutique look and feel.

— Creative Director Michael Wilson



THE WATERMARK SAMPLE PAPER CREDITS

THE FOLDER

Accent Opaque Heavyweights 130 lb. Cover

THE PAPER SAMPLES

Accent Opaque Indigo Treated 3-star Super Smooth 60 lb. Text (spa menu tri-fold)

Accent Opaque 9 pt. Super Smooth with ImageLok® (postcard)

Hammermill Premium Laser Print 32 lb. (room service menu tri-fold)

Hammermill Premium Color Copy Cover 80 lb. (business center brochure)

Hammermill Fore Multi Purpose 24 lb. (letterhead)

Springhill Index Green 100 lb. (valet ticket)

Springhill Canary Vellum Bristol 67 lb. Cover (movie ticket)

Williamsburg 94 Opaque Offset 70 lb. Smooth (laundry service flyer)

Williamsburg 94 Opaque Offset with ImageLok 50 lb. (notepad)

THE DESIGNER

Trekk
trekk.com

THE PRINTER

Envision3
envision-3.com



SCAN THE QR CODE TO VIEW OTHER APPLICATION SAMPLES AND GET INSPIRED TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR PRINT MATERIALS.



PRINTER'S CORNER: ALL ABOUT FINISHING



It's also important to make sure that the printer and the die-maker have the experience in making the dies to match the design. It all starts and ends with the dies. A great die-maker will be able to interpret what the designer is trying to accomplish and make it happen, rather than just make a photo-etched die, which leads to an average result at best.

Paper selection is also crucial to make sure the paper will accept the technique being used. When embossing or debossing, the maximum depth is about 40-50% of the thickness of the paper, which means text-weight paper limits how deep you can emboss or deboss and can look like a mistake.

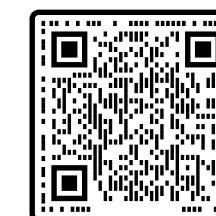
When foil stamping, the smaller the type the more critical the selection of the paper becomes. A 7 pt. serif lowercase "e" is difficult to keep clean and fill in, and cylinder letterpress will have much better results than a flat letterpress. Matching the right equipment is critical.

Most importantly, ask your printer if your design will work on the paper selected and the technique you have chosen. Listen to their advice and if none is given, beware — that may be a sign that they don't know or understand your expectations. Your lowercase "e"s may be filled in.

What's one finishing option you wish designers would use more or take better advantage of?

Blind embossing and blind debossing. It can show off the paper and the art in an extremely elegant way with high impact.

For more about Envision3, head to envision-3.com.



“ We want to create print where, the moment someone touches it, they know it's something special. ”

To get a printer's point of view on finishing, we spoke with George Hayes, Senior Advisor at Envision3 in Bloomington, Illinois.

“We want to create print where, the moment someone touches it, they know it's something special,” George told us. He also shared that, when it comes to finishing, there's a lot of room between what's possible and what's most often done. Here is his guidance for designers looking to push the limits of print.

Which finishing options are you most excited about right now?

There's so much to be excited about.

- The use of spot UV on uncoated papers using silk screening allows us to achieve results that you cannot achieve on a UV offset press.



- Embossing and debossing to create textures and patterns brings a new dimension to an image and is not used nearly enough.
- Holographic foils can be used for high impact and can create a striking effect.
- The use of laser die cutting is getting much more affordable, and the amount of edge burn has been greatly reduced, but this technique is mostly only used in greeting cards and should be considered more in the future.

For designers who know they want to incorporate finishing techniques into a project, what should they keep in mind when working with their printer?

The first rule to remember is that the art must be supplied as line art. You cannot make dies from images. This is the biggest mistake I see made by designers.

THE DYK MAILBAG

Have a paper or print question? We have the answer.

Q: I'M A SMALL ETSY SELLER THAT MOSTLY OFFERS BOOKMARKS, GREETING CARDS AND OTHER SMALL PRINT PIECES. I'M LOOKING TO SHAKE UP MY CHOICE OF PAPER FOR THESE TYPES OF PROJECTS, AND I'M WONDERING WHAT I SHOULD BE LOOKING FOR IN A PAPER STOCK TO PRINT A PIECE WITH SOME POLISH AND PIZAZZ. WHAT PAPER SPECS ARE IMPORTANT TO PAY ATTENTION TO?

— Yolanda from Spokane, Washington

A: When deciding on the right paper for these types of applications, you want to prioritize a heavier paper stock that has a smooth, level printing surface and can accommodate any number of folds. In the case of bookmarks, you also want to choose an acid-free paper to help extend the life of the piece, and you also want to use a heartier paper stock that is ideal for scoring or die-cutting.

For example, Accent® Opaque Heavyweights 120 lb. is available in two finishes (Smooth and Super Smooth) and comes in enhanced White with 97 brightness and Warm White to help you create pieces with vibrant, crisp images and outstanding color quality.



Plus, finishings like die-cutting, scoring and perforation can help connect and engage with your audience in a deeper, more meaningful way.



Q: WHAT EXACTLY IS 3D MAIL?

— Charlie from New York City

A: 3D mail, also known as dimensional mail, is mailed flat like more traditional direct mail pieces such as a standard letter or self-mailer, but, upon opening, 3D mail pops up to create a more dynamic, three-dimensional experience. The interactive nature of 3D mail makes it a powerful tool for lead nurturing campaigns or for positioning high-value offers to a very specific audience that has already demonstrated interest in who you are or what you do.



What's really cool about 3D mail is the opportunity to incorporate a variety of fun, innovative treatments and finishings to communicate ideas in ways that surprise your target audience. Spot UV treatment, foil stamping and embossing or debossing can increase the tactile nature of your 3D mail. Plus, finishings like die-cutting, scoring and perforation can help connect and engage with your audience in a deeper, more meaningful way.

Q: I'VE ALWAYS LIKED WORKING WITH GOLD FOIL, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE IT CAN MAKE PRINT MATERIALS LOOK A LITTLE MORE ELEGANT OR SOPHISTICATED. WHAT ARE SOME OTHER TYPES OF FOILS I COULD EXPERIMENT WITH?

— Billy from Little Rock, Arkansas

A: If you like working with gold foil, try copper foil; it has the same high-caliber look and feel, but the color difference makes copper foil ideal for applications like wedding invitations, corporate business cards and other more prestigious print pieces. Iridescent foil or holographic foil might also be fun, depending on your application! Scratch-off foiling is also an interesting finishing technique as it lends itself to a more interactive user experience, and, in the case of direct mail, it can be an effective way to build suspense around a call-to-action that positions a special offer or unique promotion.



Q: I NEED HELP WITH USING QR CODES IN PRINT. YES, WE'VE ALL SEEN THEM USED IN DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGNS, BUT WHAT ABOUT IDEAS TO USE QR CODES IN PRINT MARKETING COLLATERAL THAT'S NOT DIRECT MAIL? I NEED SOME INSPIRATION — PLEASE SEND HELP!

— Randy from Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin

A: Have you thought about designing brochures, sell sheets or catalogs with QR codes that launch how-to videos, PDFs with more detailed technical specs about your products or interactive landing pages that allow your target audience to explore your product or service in a more hands-on way? Not only does this make your print collateral more dynamic and interesting for customers, but it can also help reduce the amount of copy you need to effectively communicate with your audience. Plus, the analytics from the QR code integration can help you better understand which products are of most interest to your customers.

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Scratch-off foiling is also an interesting finishing technique as it lends itself to a more interactive user experience, and, in the case of direct mail, it can be an effective way to build suspense around a call-to-action.

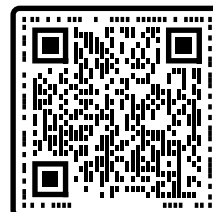
Q: AS A DESIGNER, I CONSTANTLY USE THE TERM UV COATING, BUT I'M NOT 100% SURE HOW UV COATING ACTUALLY WORKS. CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE SCIENCE BEHIND HOW UV COATINGS LIKE GRIT OR GLITTER WORK?

— Evelyn from Mt. Pleasant, South Carolina

A: UV coatings are a liquid-based treatment that are applied wet to a printed sheet and cured using UV lamps. These coatings dry very quickly with a high gloss and hard finish, and, as a result, they help with chemical and abrasion resistance to better protect the sheet and increase its durability. And, depending on the type of coating, they add a different visual or sensory dimension to print.

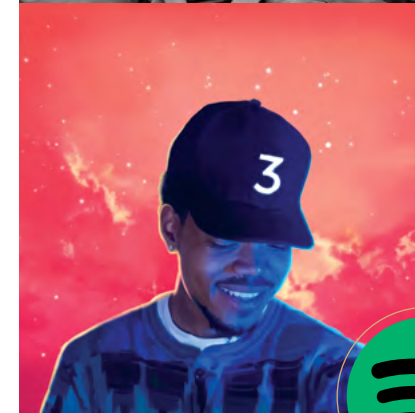
As you probably know, you can UV coat an entire sheet, or you can use a spot UV treatment on certain areas of the sheet to highlight specific design elements like logos or key branding components. While just about any substrate can be UV coated, heavier paper stocks do hold up better to this kind of treatment. For the best results, we recommend using cover stocks or those paper weights of 80 lb. or greater.

DID THIS INSTALLMENT OF THE DYK MAILBAG GET YOUR WHEELS TURNING? SCAN THE QR CODE TO SEND US YOUR QUESTIONS, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO ANSWERING THEM IN AN UPCOMING ISSUE.



SOUND UP

FINISH IT!
 A CURATED PLAYLIST
 FOR WORK OR PLAY



SCAN TO LISTEN

An eclectic mix designed to inspire you to add a little something extra to your next print piece.





Sylvamo

For comments or inquiries, please contact us
at DYK@Sylvamo.com.

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