

A short primer for image submission using CDs
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Here's what I've been doing successfully for the past couple of years when it comes to CD submissions. This method has been well received by my editorial and commercial clients and seems to be the way of many of recent requests for editorial and calendar subs.

Edit, edit, edit! Twenty seems to be enough for the calendar companies, not many more for the editorial, unless it is a special request or project when the editor specifically requests more.

Remember, in the days of film, an editor could hold a sheet of 20 slides to the room light or window and pick out the best photo in seconds. No technology required, or electricity, for that matter. Sharpness was determined with a loupe in a few seconds more. As a substitute, I have to be the gate keeper regarding sharpness, and ruthless.

I print 20 color thumbnails (properly color and density corrected) on a sheet with either the caption info or the file number (at the minimum) beneath each image or attached to the "proof sheet" as a printed text page. This is the digital equivalent of a sleeve of 20 35mm transparencies at this state of the industry.

Few editors want to deal with the mechanics of viewing a cd with either thumbnails, a canned slide-show (more software to deal with) or any other time-consuming viewing, thus you need those thumbnails as a fast way for them to screen your submission. A few photographers are even going to the trouble and expense of producing large, high-quality prints to go with their digital submissions. Think of the editor already having in hand a gorgeous, double-page spread already in hand to sell your concept...

Pretend you are the the editor and I have a deadline to meet. You get need to check ten submissions of twenty transparencies for several photos to illustrate the story and one cd with low-res thumbnail (my submission, for example). You take the ten film submissions each one page with twenty trannies and can view each in a matter of seconds by simply taking the sheet out, putting it on the light table, pulling the best out, putting a loupe to a few to check for sharpness, put the sleeve away and go the the next one. All told, ten minutes to view ten submissions.

With my disk, you've got to start the computer (if it isn't already running), put in the disk, mount the it (I did write it in the proper format for your computer, I hope), open the folders, start Photoshop or another browsing program, preview each, blow one up from the slow CD drive my company has supplied me if it tickles my fancy, and check the sharpness/detail, search for captions, if any. Call you for higher resolution, if I have time. One submission has taken the same time as the other ten combined! If I am under the gun, your submission is last in line. Better have a good thumbnail page ready to catch my eye!

As for file quality, most of my clients want it ready to go, not just low-res needing another shipment after tracking you down. It needs to be either color-managed high-res rgb, or, for calendar companies, high-res cmyk. High-res for calendars is 11-12 inches in the short dimension at 300-350 ppi (about 3300 x 5000 pixels is typical). Editorial clients seem to want an image that can be used up to a full page at a minimum, 300 ppi. Double pages need even more. Each image is handled in a color-managed environment and is tagged to the Adobe RGB (1998) color space. My monitors are calibrated regularly.

Never assume that an editor has the latest souped-up 10 GHz machine with a 500x CD, Photoshop 25 and a 50 inch plasma display like you have;-) Assume for the oldest, slowest, trickle-down machine his company has penny-pinched together!

Each image should be cleaned of dust, etc, fairly sharp (but not sharpened in your image processing routine, unless you are instructed in how by the client wants it done), have no burned-out highlights or blocked shadows. Dodging and burning are ok as is color balance, other manipulation **MUST BE CLEARLY LABELED!** Each image is tagged with copyright, caption, etc., and embedded in the IPCT data of the file.

The disk should only have one subject burned to it. A separate caption file (text) is included with the image number and caption info, etc. as a text file. A hard-copy is printed of the caption info which is attached to the color proof sheet. I'll also copy the proof sheet and a pdf of the delivery memo or estimate/invoice with my terms.

The packaging should be as simple as a film submission: disk with my contact info written on it, assignment name (calendar subject), clearly written on the disk and a color proof sheet with caption sheet, in addition to the normal terms and conditions consignment memo on paper. The whole submission easily fits in a Fed-X envelope. Make sure the CD is well protected, in a sleeve and surrounded by adequate padding.

Make it easy and quick for the editor! Now, in addition to the title "Photographer" you can now call your self "Digital Prepress Technician" with great honor and no commensurate increase in pay! ;-)

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