Printing Process on USB Drives by Nyle Reme

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Due to the different materials USB drives are manufactured from, choosing a printing process is a very important decision when placing an order. USB drives are usually encased in a plastic or metal shell. Some uncommon materials USB drives can be housed in are rubber, PVC, leather or even wood. This coupled with the different printing methods can yield a large number of possible combinations. The most common printing methods are as follows:

Screen Printing

Pad Printing

4 Color Process Printing

Laser Etching

Hot Stamping

Foil Stamping

Screen Printing is a technique that yields very crisp edges and vibrant colors. The screen ink used bonds very well with all housing materials. A photosensitive screen is exposed to light with the logo design masked off, which allows the use of a squeegee to stencil the design on the USB drive. The screen ink when dry is opaque; this method of printing works well with any colored drive. However, if your logo or design has ANY gradients or halftones, you cannot use this method of printing unless you remove all shading. Screen printing USB drives is a very cost effective way of branding an otherwise generic USB drive.

Pad Printing is a technique similar to screen printing. A custom pad with an inverted instance of the logo / design is created. This pad is then used to â€˜stampâ€™ the USB drive after having the ink applied. Again this method is very well suited to all housing materials. And just like screen printing, this method is incompatible with gradients or halftones.

4 Color Process Printing is a printing method which lends itself well to any complex images / designs. This printing method is very much akin to an inkjet printer. The USB drives are placed on the print stage, and a precision print head prints directly on the drives. Unlike Screen Printing or Pad Printing, 4 Color Process Printing is only accurate when printed on white USB drives. This printing process is able to capture gradients and halftones, as the ink isnâ€™t opaque. This printing method works on plastic and metal drives that are coated white.

Laser Etching is technically not a printing method. The metal specific procedure vaporizes the surface layer of the USB drive, leaving a raw metal finish to the applied surface. This procedure works very well on anodized aluminum, as the anodized color contrasts well with the raw aluminum. It should be noted that since Laser Etching is a treatment rather than a print process, any laser etched images / designs are very permanent, and will not scratch off easily.

Hot Stamping is a leather specific procedure. An aluminum block is machined with the image / graphic â€˜embossedâ€™ on the stamp. It is then heated and applied with pressure to the USB drive. This procedure alters the USB drive housing and is also very permanent.

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