What You Need to Know About Graphics Files

You, yes, you… Pay Attention!!

It's about time that someone explained graphics files to non-graphics people (like yourself). We keep asking you for your electronic photos and logos and the like. And, while some of you have managed to climb to the top of the learning curve, there are a whole lot more gathered in the learning valley, strumming guitars and wondering whatever happened to those clip art books they used to have.

So here's a very basic guide so that at least you sound like you know what's going on:

- BMP – Can be created with Windows Paintbrush and should be used for on-screen display only. Colors may shift when BMP files are imported into Windows applications. Good choice for computer wallpaper.

- EPS – This format is supported by most illustration and page layout programs and, in most cases, is the preferred format for these applications. You should always make sure you have a copy of your logo in EPS format. It's industry standard for work that will be professionally printed.

- GIF – Rarely used except in web art. Not appropriate for printing.

- JPG (or JPEG) – Compressed files that are smaller and easy to e-mail. JPG files are often saved at a resolution of 72 dots per inch (dpi) – perfect for viewing photos on-screen. For quality print reproduction, a JPG should be saved at 300 dpi or higher. This is why a picture that looks excellent on your Website may not print well.

- PDF – This is an Adobe Acrobat file. The Acrobat Reader software is available free from the Adobe Website. The Distiller software, used to create the file, is separate. A PDF format is a great way to save your documents, especially ads, and can work for graphic files if they are saved at a high enough resolution.

- TIF (or TIFF) – Designed to become the standard format, TIF was created to handle just about any possibility. These files will be larger than JPGs, though.

- WMF – A Windows-only format. Generally not a good choice if other computer users need access to your files.

One more thing to know – When you make a large graphic smaller, you maintain the quality. When you enlarge a small graphic, you lose quality. So, when saving graphic images, bigger is better!