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Your Color is My Color

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How the heck do I match a color with sublimation? If we heard it once, we've heard it a million times. Almost everyone has trouble matching color with sublimation… at first. But once they get the process down, it really becomes pretty easy. Most people want to look at their computer screen, and then print out the graphic and have it look exactly the same. Sorry, that is not going to happen, but we will explain to you how to easily match colors with sublimation.

We do want to emphasize that, for this article, we are talking about a vector graphic or text. Image files that are photos such as JPEGS should sublimate pretty close to the original, although you should never promise an exact photo reproduction, as that promise with any technology will only get you into trouble, because with any technology, an exact photo match is very difficult.

For the purpose of this article, we will also assume that you have the proper color management setup for your sublimation printer, and are using the correct time and temperatures in your sublimation process.

BACKWARD THINKING IS THE WAY TO GO
What do we mean when we say backward thinking? We mean that you need to skip right to the end of the actual sublimation process and sublimate a color palette. A color palette is a bunch of color squares with their corresponding RGB color values listed below them. The color palette has all the colors of the rainbow so you will be able to find the colors you need. When you sublimate a chart of colors and know the RGB value that created those colors, you know that you can recreate those same colors time after time.

WHY CAN'T YOU JUST START AT THE BEGINNING?
The basic reason you can't just look at the color on the computer screen to find your color, is that every

computer screen, for the most part, looks different. This is due to color profiles that tell the computer screen how to create the color, and varies between the different brands of computers and monitors. Look at an image on two different computer monitors, and you will see that they vary just a little bit.

Have you ever gone to one of the big box stores to the electronics department, specifically the TV section? If you look at the line of TV's that are playing the same movie, they all look a bit different because of the internal color profiles. They all recreate the color slightly different just like computers; therefore, the chance that your computer monitor color profile will match what your graphics program, and your printer, will create for color is very low. So back to the end of the process and your color palette.

We suggest sublimating your color palette on a piece of white aluminum for hard substrates at the very least, and if you do fabric items, you should sublimate it on a white T-shirt. You should do this on both items because colors can look different on fabrics as compared to hard substrates. If you really want to dial in your colors, than you should do it for all of your blank products that you offer, but for most people that would be overkill.

WHERE DO I GET A COLOR PALETTE?
Good question, and we have a great answer for you if you use CorelDraw. We have a two-page color palette, as well as the matching docker palette that you can load into your CorelDraw, which will dock on the right side of your screen. Now that you have your sublimated color palette, you can chose the color from your palette. You will also be able to choose your text or piece of your vector graphic, and click onto the corresponding

color on your docker palette, and it will be colored correctly. Go to www.dyesublimation.com/jpcolorpalette.html to download the CorelDraw color palette print file, the CorelDraw matching color palette docker file, and the instructions on how to install everything.
If you use Adobe products such as Photoshop or Illustrator, we have the same color palette in an EPS form for you to download, print out of your graphics program and sublimate.

WHAT ABOUT PANTONES?
Many times a customer will have a specific Pantone color they may need to have sublimated as part of a graphic, and they will be able to give you that specific Pantone number. This often comes up if you sublimate a company logo. You could certainly pull up the Pantone color palette in CorelDraw and color your text or graphic with that. But, more than likely, your sublimated color will be wrong.
Pantones are a set of specific colors, and most people that deal with color on a regular basis will have a printed Pantone color chart with all the Pantone colors shown on it. This will allow you to find the exact color that your customer needs, and see the hard copy of the actual color, even if your customer is on the other side of the world.
The only other way to get an accurate match would be for your customer to mail you a hard copy of the printed item for you to see the color and match with. You will then take that chart, and hold it next to your sublimated color palette and find the closest color match. If it is not an exact match, you will then need to print out a series of small color swatches and change the RGB values slightly until you find an exact match. If your customer expects an exact match, you are more than able to charge a fee for that exact match.

SUBLIMATION COLOR IS CONSISTANT
If you keep the sublimation process consistent, your colors will remain consistent. Because of that reason, color palettes are the perfect tool for easy color matching. One last tip is to date your printed color palette when you first sublimate it. Then, if you have color issues down the road, you can re-sublimate the color palette and see if there has been a change, which makes it a great troubleshooting tool, as well.
It is also important to work with a vendor that can get you set up when you first start in sublimation with all the tools you will need to be successful. The tools are available, and if you use them, matching colors is not scary at all.