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## Choosing the Right Tool for the Job: InDD; PSD; AI

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We all know that if you really, REALLY have to hammer in a nail with the sole of your shoe, you can do it. It might not plunge all the way in, and you might put a hole in your loafer. But, if you find yourself in a situation where that nail absolutely has to be in that wall, and there is no hammer in sight, you'll find a way to make it work.

The same rings true with graphics software. CAN you design an advertisement in Microsoft Word? Sure. Should you? Absolutely not. (And please, PLEASE don't ask me to).

But, despite knowing the difference between word processing software and graphic design software, the decision from there gets even more specific. There are plenty of software packages out there that address graphic design needs, but for the purpose of this discussion, I am going to limit it to the Adobe suite of products, and specifically, Adobe InDesign, Adobe Photoshop, and Adobe Illustrator.

Adobe has come up with some amazing products, and with every version they get even more robust and intuitive. Each software package can do a little of what the others do, but they also have specific purposes and it's important to use the one created for the intended task.

**Adobe InDesign:** Intended for page layout of single or multi-page documents, InDesign seems to have surpassed Quark Xpress in popularity in recent years. InDesign can import text and imagery and lay them out on whatever grid or organic layout you decide to create. You can set master elements that appear on every page, change sections at will, and format extensive amounts of document text easily and fairly quickly, especially if you utilize the style menus. Simply put, InDesign is the frame into which you place text and imagery.

**Adobe Photoshop:** Intended for photo manipulation and raster-based image creation, Photoshop allows the user to create complicated visual effects and filters. Amazingly complicated, yet easy-enough to grasp the basics, the capability of Photoshop is nearly endless. If you wanted to put a six-pack on Jack Black, you would do it in Photoshop. If you wanted to take that image and import it into your own bootleg version of People magazine, you would do that with InDesign.

**Adobe Illustrator:** A vector-based illustration program, images (not photographs) are created and sized proportionally using an in-born algorithm that keeps image resolution in check. Illustrator starts with basic drawing elements such as lines and shapes that can then be treated with color, shadow and a myriad of other design elements. Logos are generally created using Illustrator for the easy use of its end product. As an example, vector images (or .eps files) are often required by promotional vendors because their sewing or screen printing machines can interpret the lines into thread or ink. Gradients and robust color applications that are often created with Photoshop are difficult to translate to a thread or the limited ink of a screen press. Illustrator is for image creation and does not have multiple paging capabilities.

Over the years, Adobe has worked to ensure their software works well together, and has even created a special software (Adobe Bridge) to provide a platform for using these and others together in an efficient manner. For example, graphics created in Illustrator can be used and even edited in InDesign. Files created in Illustrator can be brought into Photoshop with the ability to maintain vector qualities. And, Photoshop files can be imported into InDesign with their individual layers as well.

In each of these programs, flexibility is paramount and creativity is key. But, make no mistake, you'll find no pre-created templates here. These programs assume that you will come up with your own designs and not plug your own content into something that has already been established. If you are looking for pre-created templates, you may want to look at Microsoft after all.

In the AEC environment, more and more marketing departments are using InDesign to lay out qualifications, proposals, and the rest of their collateral fleet. Although basic training is needed, the final product is one that not only looks professional, but keeps up with other industry submissions and, if it is not already being used, should be given serious attention during your next budget review.