WHYS FOR VARIABLE DESIGN

1. **Files should be created to the trim size. Do NOT create as separate pages outputting as spreads.**

   Mailers are processed as a 2-page documents. Files created as 6-pages but intended to be one spread (page) should be recreated as a flat spread rather than created with individual pages. Each spread is the full layout of one side of the mailer flat, to trim size. So a trifold piece would be a 2-page document, not 6.

2. **Once the design is done, resample your images in Photoshop to show in InDesign at 300 dpi @ 100%.**
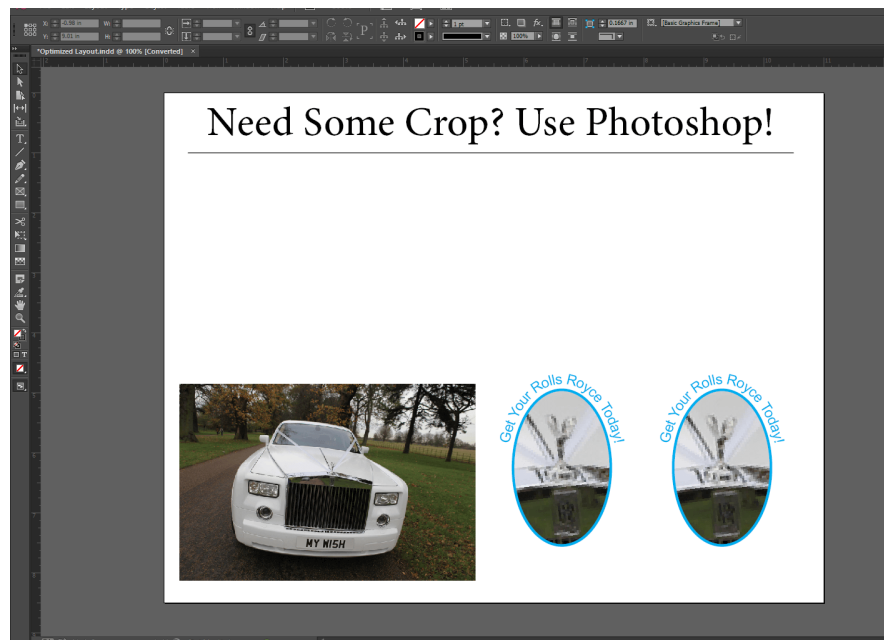
   High resolution images that are resized directly within InDesign still retain all the pixels of the original image, which can result in a "too high" effective resolution. InDesign will resize images, but it will not resample, which means it will not change the number of pixels in the image. This can cause, not only a slower production time and larger output file size, but a bloated document that is heavier to save, pack and transfer as well. Resizing an image inside InDesign will suffice in cases where the size change is minor or if you need the image's resolution to be higher than the 'Actual PPI' and you are comfortable with the 'Effective PPI' that you see.

3. **Crop the images in Photoshop instead of using the placement box in InDesign to crop images. By cropping in Photoshop the information that is cropped out is removed rather than just hidden in InDesign which leads to small file sizes.**

   For the left oval, the Rolls Royce image was placed directly into the Adobe InDesign frame and cropped so that the desired portion of the image fits in the oval. Although it looks cropped, the ENTIRE image is still there hiding in the background. This means that there are a lot of unnecessary megabytes in the document. The entire image will be packed and transferred as part of the final output, making it heavier in file size and slower to produce.

   For the right oval, the image was opened in Adobe Photoshop and cropped to a regular rectangular image of the approximate size needed for the oval frame. Then, it was placed back into the oval frame in the InDesign document. Ultimately, this way will help decrease the file size and optimize final output.

   Though both methods give the same visual result, a better practice is to use Photoshop to crop the image before placing it into InDesign.
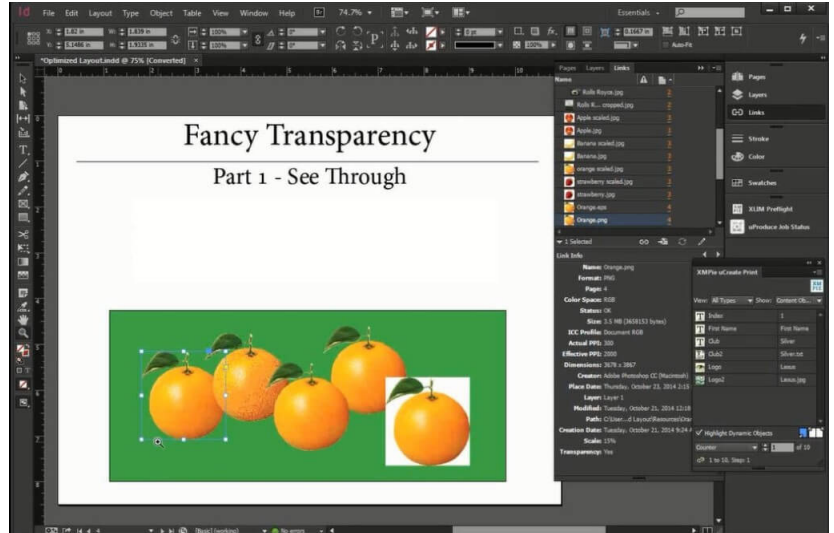
4. TRANSPARENCY

Avoid file types like a PNG or PSD where the background is defined as transparent.

InDesign has to flatten the transparent image with the elements behind it in order to render the resulting image and calculate the color of each pixel in the orange and the green background. All this adds time to the production process. If either the image or the background are dynamic, this also means that the both need to be rendered multiple times.

Use clipping paths or detect edges.

With the clipping path feature in Photoshop or 'detect edges' in InDesign the images are not rasterized because they do not include any transparency effect. It is better to use a clipping path or detect edges to get the desired transparency look! You don't actually need to use true transparency effects!

5. DYNAMIC TEXT ON TOP OF TRANSPARENCY

Avoid dynamic/variable text that is semi-transparent, where you can see the background image through the letters of the text (see box on left). Since the text is of the same opacity as the white frame it has to be rasterized with the background for every recipient.

Transparency with two separate boxes – a white frame that is 80% opaque and a text box that is 100% opaque. You can see through the background, but you can't see through the ink of the letters. This changes the visible effect of the design, making the text opaque. This way, rasterization between the background image and the semi-transparent frame only occurs once. The dynamic text will then be placed on top of the static rasterized white frame and image.

Use the flattener preview in InDesign to identify the areas that will be rendered (this also applies for the "see through" effect example). Ensure that the dynamic text elements you have in your design are not in the areas that will be rendered.