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FLEXOGRAPHIC PRESS TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

ADHESION, INK

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
☐ Ink fails to adhere to the substrate.	1. Improper ink formulation/chemistry.	1. Check ink for correct type and grade for substrate being run.
	2. Insufficient heat and/or air volume in main dryer.	2. Increase heat and/or air volume in main dryer.
☐ Ink fails tape test.	3. Low treatment level of substrate.	3. Check surface of substrate for adequate treatment level.
☐ Ink fails crinkle test.	4. Excessively reduced ink viscosity, binder destroyed.	4. Restore and maintain ink viscosity at optimum point.
	5. Surface of substrate may be contaminated.	5. Apply wash-coat before printing.
	6. Surface of substrate may require special application.	6. Apply primer before printing.
☐ Ink fails rub test.		

BINDING

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
☐ Intermittent dark lines of varying widths running in the web direction of printed image.	1. Irregular web tensioning, substrate moving independent of plate movement.	1. Reduce web tension. Clean and lubricate driven and undriven rollers. Check web-tensioning mechanisms for proper operation.
	2. Gear bottoming off pitch line.	2. See defect "Gear Marks."
	3. Intermittent plate slur.	3. Run bearers.
	4. Excessive ink viscosity.	4. Reduce ink viscosity.
	5. Non-compressible stickyback.	5. Use cushioned stickyback.
	6. Low durometer plate materials.	6. Use higher durometer plate materials.



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BLEED

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ An under-color wetting into an over color in a trapping or overprinting application.	1. Under color drying too slowly or over color drying too fast.	1. Improve under color drying rate by reducing viscosity and/or ink film thickness. Use a faster or slower solvent as required. Adjust or check between station dryers. (Preceding colors must be dry enough to receive subsequent colors laid down.)
	2. Poor physical property resistance.	2. Use proper ink formulation and pigment grade selection.
□ Diffused or migrating colors in a dried/cured ink film.		

BLOCKING

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Undesired adhesion between two surfaces.	1. Improper ink drying.	1. 1. See defect "Drying Too Slow."
	2. Excessive pressure in rewind.	2. Reduce rewind tension.
	3. Excessive weight in stack.	3. Reduce stack height.
	4. Softening of pre-applied coatings.	4. Use solvents that do not attack prior coatings.
	5. Web rewound too warm.	5. Reduce web temperature by chilling within $\pm 10^\circ$ of room temperature or reducing dryer temperature.
	6. Web rewound with excess surface moisture.	6. Avoid rewinding excess surface moisture on web before rewind.

BRITTLINESS

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Ink film/substrate breaks or cracks when flexed.	1. Excessive heat or UV exposure level in drying/curing system causing a release of moisture and plasticizer from substrate or ink film.	1. Control web temperature. Reduce heat and/or increase volume of air through drying chamber. Reduce UV lamp power.



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COLOR STRONG

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Excess ink transfer to substrate.	1. Excessive ink viscosity.	1. Reduce ink viscosity.
	2. Excessive pigment load.	2. Add extender.
	3. Incorrectly specified anilox roll.	3. Select anilox roll with lower cell volume.
	4. Incorrectly specified fountain roll.	4. Select fountain roll with higher durometer.
	5. Light setting of fountain roll nip.	5. Increase fountain roll nip pressure.
	6. Doctor blade incorrectly set.	6. Adjust doctor blade to parallel with a minimum pressure setting.

COLOR VARIATIONS

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Inconsistent color throughout a press-run.	1. Lack of viscosity and/or pH control.	1. Maintain viscosity and/or pH control.
	2. Inconsistent press speeds.	2. Maintain consistent press speed.
	3. Variation in ink batches.	3. Mix adequate amount of ink.
	4. Color contamination.	4. Improve cleanup procedures.

CURING OF UV INK

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Ink fails to cure.	1. Low lamp power setting.	1. Increase lamp power setting.
	2. Weak exposure bulbs.	2. Replace exposure bulbs.
□ Ink offsets in rewound roll.	3. Dirty lamp reflectors.	3. Clean lamp reflectors.
	4. Lamp focus incorrect.	4. Adjust lamp focus to optimal distance.
□ Ink picks on idle rollers.	5. Excessive press speed.	5. Reduce press speed.
□ Ink tracks through the press.	6. Excessive ink film thickness.	6. Reduce ink film thickness.
	7. Lamp shutter not opening.	7. Check lamp shutter assembly operations.



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CURING OF UV INK (INCIDENTAL)

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Ink curing before printing and UV lamp exposure on plates, rollers, etc.	1. Direct exposure to sunlight.	1. Eliminate direct sunlight exposure.
	2. Exposure to general lighting sources.	2. Use UV filter covers on general lighting sources directly over press.

DOT GAIN

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ An excessive increase in the size of a halftone dot from film to the printed image.	1. Excessive ink volume.	1. Reduce anilox roll volume to a minimum while maintaining color requirements.
	2. Excessive plate thickness.	2. Use thinner plates.
	3. High-density stickyback.	3. Use cushioned stickyback.
	4. Low ink viscosity.	4. Increase ink viscosity.
	5. Excessive pressure settings.	5. Reduce pressure settings to a minimum.
	6. Poor ink metering application.	6. Use bladed ink metering application.
	7. Damaged or worn press components.	7. Check and replace damaged or worn gears, bearings or cylinders.
	8. Dirt on impression and/or plate cylinders.	8. Clean impression and/or plate cylinders.



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DRYING TOO FAST

Defect/Indicator	Probable Cause	Corrective Action
□ Ink drying on plates and/or rollers and failing to transfer.	1. Improper use of solvents.	1. Use proper solvents.
	2. Low pH level.	2. Check pH and adjust to optimum point.
	3. Uncontrolled or unrestricted air movement in the vicinity of plates and rollers.	3. Eliminate excessive air movement in vicinity of plates or rolls by fans, open windows or doors. Balance air intake and exhaust flow for between station dryers.
	4. Failure to use fountain covers.	4. Use fountain covers.
	5. Improper ink formulation.	5. Use proper ink formulation for substrate being printed.
	6. Excessive preheat web temperature entering print stations.	6. Reduce preheat web temperature entering print stations.
	7. Pressroom environment consisting of high temperature and/or low humidity.	7. Control pressroom environment to ideal conditions.



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DRYING TOO SLOW

Defect/Indicator	Probable Cause	Corrective Action
☐ Ink fails to properly dry.	1. Use of slower drying solvents.	1. Use faster drying solvents.
	2. Ink viscosity too high.	2. Reduce ink viscosity. Check viscosity approximately every 30 minutes.
☐ Ink pick-off or transfer to press rollers and/or subsequent plates.	3. Inadequate or unbalanced drying equipment.	3. Use adequate and balanced drying system to accommodate normal press speeds.
	4. Improper ink formulation.	4. Use ink formulation having more hold-out capability.
☐ Ink offsetting or blocking in rewind or stack.	5. Excessive ink film thickness.	5. Reduce ink film thickness.
	6. Pressroom environment consisting of low temperature and/or high humidity.	6. Control pressroom environment to ideal conditions.
☐ Ink penetration of paper.	7. Excessive press speeds.	7. Reduce press speeds.
☐ Tacky print surface.		

FEATHERING

Defect/Indicator	Probable Cause	Corrective Action
☐ Irregular string-like edges around print, often on trailing edges.	1. Excessive pressure settings.	1. Use minimum pressure settings for plate and anilox.
	2. Incorrect solvent balance.	2. Use correct solvent balance.
	3. Uncontrolled ink viscosity and/or pH range.	3. Maintain proper ink viscosity and/or pH range. Use fountain covers.
	4. Improperly set ink-metering applications.	4. Readjust pressure settings of fountain roll nip or doctor blade assembly.
	5. Poor shoulder angles on plate.	5. Use a steeper shoulder angle on the plate with consideration for support.
	6. Dust on the substrate transferring to the plate.	6. Use web-cleaning devices when necessary.
	7. Excessive static electricity present.	7. Use static eliminator bars.
	8. Dried ink on plates from startup or previous run.	8. Wash plates thoroughly after color OK and when order is completed.



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FILL-IN

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ An accumulation of excess ink on and around the printing plate surface—especially with relation to small type and screen half-tones.	1. Excessively fine type or screen for anilox roll selection.	1. Select higher line screen, lower volume anilox roll.
	2. Excessive pressure settings.	2. Use minimum pressure settings for plate and anilox.
	3. Uncontrolled ink viscosity and/or pH range.	3. Maintain proper ink viscosity and/or pH range. Use fountain covers.
	4. Improperly set ink metering applications.	4. Increase pressure settings of fountain roll nip or doctor-blade assembly.
	5. Incorrect solvent balance.	5. Use correct solvent balance.
	6. Excessively sized particles of ink pigment.	6. Improve grind and pigment dispersion.
	7. Lack of relief height in plate.	7. Increase relief height in plate.
	8. Low fountain roll durometer.	8. Use higher durometer roll.

FOAMING

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Ink foams in fountain.	1. Excessive agitation of ink in fountain.	1. Reduce flow rate of ink pump.
	2. Lack of defoaming agent in formulation.	2. Add defoaming agent to ink.
	3. Contaminated ink.	3. Replace with fresh ink.
	4. Excessive ink viscosity.	4. Reduce ink viscosity.

GEAR MARKS

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Parallel lines of misprint.	1. Gear bottoming off pitch line.	1. Adjust overall plate package thickness to pitch line.



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GHOSTING

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ A faint image of design transferring to the printed image or non-image area.	1. Ink starvation.	1. Change diameter of plate cylinder or change speed differential of fountain roll to anilox roll. Change anilox roll specification to a higher volume. Increase ink flow to chambered doctor blade.
	2. Improperly cleaned metering roll.	2. Thoroughly clean anilox and/or fountain roll.

HALO

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ An unwanted line surrounding a printed image.	1. Excessive pressure settings.	1. Use minimum pressure settings for plate and anilox.
	2. Plate cupping.	2. Make new plates and new plate matrix or engraving. Avoid cupping.
□ Printed image appears double edged.	3. Plate durometer too hard.	3. Use recommended plate durometer for printing given materials.
	4. Stickyback too thin or too firm.	4. Use compressible stickyback.
	5. Plate cylinder running out of round.	5. Check plate cylinder for T.I.R.
	6. Excessive plate grinding.	6. Reduce amount of plate grinding.



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HICKEYS

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ A small, solid print area encircled with a white halo.	1. Dust on the substrate transferring to the plate.	1. Wash plate, use web cleaning/static eliminator devices if necessary.
	2. Excessive ink tack.	2. Reduce ink tack level.

INK MOTTLING

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Spotted or irregular appearance of solid print area.	1. Excessive reduction of ink viscosity and/or pH level.	1. Add fresh ink and maintain optimum viscosity and/or pH range.
	2. Excessive anilox roll cell land areas.	2. Examine condition of anilox roll cell lands. Replace anilox roll if necessary.
	3. Contaminated ink.	3. Replace with fresh ink.
	4. Mottled pattern in surface of plates.	4. Remake plates if mottled appearance is evident on surface. Examine plate mold for like pattern of mottle.
	5. Foreign matter collecting on surface of plates.	5. Wash plates thoroughly.
	6. Dirty or pitted impression cylinders.	6. Clean impression cylinders thoroughly of inks, waxes and all other foreign matter.
	7. Uneven or irregular substrate surfaces.	7. Increase opacity of the ink. Reduce durometer of plate material.
	8. Ink lacks proper flow characteristics.	8. Consult ink supplier for reformulation.



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MISREGISTER

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ One part of design not correctly positioned with another.	1. Plates not mounted in register.	1. Remount plate in register. Review plate mounting and make-ready procedures.
	2. Incorrect web tension.	2. Adjust tension controls appropriately for substrate being printed.
	3. Incorrect drive-roller adjustment.	3. Check drive roll parallel for constant side-to-side pressure and center wear condition.
	4. Excessive web temperatures.	4. Reduce dryer temperatures.
	5. Failure to center press register compensators before putting job in press.	5. Center individual advance/retard running registers and side-to-side register compensators before manually keying in job register.
	6. Idle rolls dragging or running intermittently.	6. Replace or lubricate idle roller bearings.
	7. Press out of alignment.	7. Realign press.
	8. Gauge variations in substrate.	8. Replace substrate.



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MOIRÉ

Defect/Indicator	Probable Cause	Corrective Action
□ Undesirable interference pattern in process printing.	1. Improper screen angles.	1. Screen angles of each color should be 30° apart. The yellow should be 15° between two colors, in most cases the cyan and black. Actual angles are based on designated screening, providing the nominal screening rule is placed at least 7.5° away from the anilox screen angle.
	2. Anilox screen count too similar to plate screen count. For example, a 165 line anilox used with an 85 line screen plate can cause moiré because of harmonic $85 \times 2 = 170$, too close to 165 line.	2. Select an anilox screen count of at least three to four times the plate line screen count.



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ODOR

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Undesirable odor in printed substrate.	1. Retained solvents, amines or monomers.	1. Balance solvents and check for proper solvent use. Use correct UV ink chemistry. Check and adjust main dryer/UV lamp operation. Increase between station dryers/UV lamps. Reduce press speed to increase dryer/UV lamp dwell time.

OFFSETTING OR SET OFF

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ A transfer of ink to the side of the substrate opposite where it was printed.	1. Ink not dry at rewind or stacker.	1. See defect "Drying Too Slow."
	2. Trapped solvents or amines.	2. Reduce ink film to minimum acceptable thickness.
	3. Excessive pressure in roll.	3. Reduce rewind tension.
	4. Excessive weight in stack.	4. Reduce height in stack.
	5. Films treated on both sides.	5. Run minimum rewind tension. Apply offset powder to web before rewinding. Overprint with non-blocking varnish if necessary.
	6. Films with plasticizers subject to migration.	6. See No. 5.

PICK-OFF INK

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Ink transferring to subsequent plates and rollers.	1. Ink drying too slow.	1. See defect "Drying Too Slow." Increase between station dryer temperature and/or airflow.
	2. Excessive plate impression setting.	2. Use minimum plate impression pressure.



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PINHOLING

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Small holes in solid print area.	1. Physical surface of substrate is pitted, irregular or contaminated.	1. Consult your material supplier.
	2. Failure of ink to form continuous film.	2. Increase ink film thickness. Increase plate impression pressure to substrate. Add 2% to 3% anti-pinhole compound to ink. Check substrate for the appropriate treatment level.
	3. Ink drying too fast.	3. Use slower solvent or increase press speed.
	4. Excessive land areas on anilox roll.	4. Examine condition of anilox land areas. Replace anilox roll if necessary.
	5. Anilox roll cell engraving angle.	5. Specify 60° anilox roll engraving angle.
	6. Dirt on impression cylinder.	6. Clean impression cylinders.

PLATE SWELLING

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Plate dimensionally larger and softer.	1. Inks or solvents not compatible with printing plates.	1. Check inks and solvents being used for compatibility with your ink and plate suppliers.
	2. Residual solvent left in plate from processing.	2. Increase plate processing drying time.



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POOR INK TRANSFER

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
☐ Insufficient ink being applied to substrate.	1. Ink viscosity excessively reduced.	1. Rebuild tack and color strength by addition of fresh ink or extender – or both.
	2. Plugged anilox roll.	2. Thoroughly clean anilox roll.
	3. Ink drying on plates.	3. See defect “Drying Too Fast.” Reduce drying rate with slower solvent.
	4. Surface of substrate pitted or not ink receptive.	4. Verify ink formulation with ink supplier for given substrate. Add anti-pinhole compound. Check substrate for appropriate treatment level. Increase plate impression setting to the substrate.
	5. Improper pressure setting between fountain roll, anilox roll and plate.	5. Adjust pressure settings.

SEPARATION OR KICK-OUT, INK

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
☐ Curdling and thixotropic (similar to souring).	1. Presence of wrong solvent or excess diluting agent.	1. Add rich true solvent to return ink to proper balance.



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SKIPPING PRINT

Defect/Indicator	Probable Cause	Corrective Action
☐ Voids in print image area.	1. Inconsistent plate caliper.	1. Check plate caliper for a variation of greater than $\pm 0.001"$. Secure new plates or do necessary make-ready.
	2. Impression settings too light.	2. Increase impression settings for plate and/or anilox.
	3. Plate cylinder bounce.	3. Check T.I.R. of plate cylinder and impression cylinder. Observe the condition of shafts, journals, bearings and gears for cleanliness or excessive wear. Consider nature of artwork design.
	4. Failure to lock down print station.	4. Be sure printing stations are locked firmly in place when impression is properly set.
	5. Print station skewed or out of parallel.	5. Reset print station for side-to-side parallel.

SOURING INK

Defect/Indicator	Probable Cause	Corrective Action
☐ Ink exhibits a thixotropic state with a loss of flow and tendency to curdle.	1. Excessive moisture in ink due to high humidity levels.	1. Add normal propyl acetate. Keep fountains and reservoirs covered.



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STREAKS, SMEARS OR SPOTS

Defect/Indicator	Probable Cause	Corrective Action
□ Unwanted ink transfer on web or sheet.	1. Undissolved particles in ink.	1. Filter particles out of ink, clean up plates and anilox.
	2. Ink dripping onto web or sheet.	2. Check print station ink application and circulation system for overflow or leaks.
	3. Ink throwing off anilox roll.	3. Increase ink viscosity. Replace end seals or wipers.
	4. Ink not drying properly.	4. See defect “Drying Too Slow.”
	5. Excessive foaming.	5. Add anti-foam to ink.
	6. Contact with the ink film and substrate.	6. Remove any objects contacting the ink film and substrate.

STREAKS IN WEB DIRECTION

Defect/Indicator	Probable Cause	Corrective Action
□ Continuous dark lines through print.	1. Damaged fountain or anilox roll.	1. Replace or refinish metering rollers depending on extent of damage.
	2. Nick in doctor blade.	2. Hone or replace doctor blade.

STRIATIONS

Defect/Indicator	Probable Cause	Corrective Action
□ Parallel thin lines or bands present in solid print areas.	1. Excessive ink transparency.	1. Reformulate for greater opacity level.
	2. Excessive ink viscosity reduction.	2. Replace or add fresh ink.
	3. Plugged anilox roll.	3. Clean anilox roll.
	4. Worn anilox roll.	4. Replace anilox roll.



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WEB WEAVE

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Web failing to track or follow a true course through the press.	1. Web guides not operating or properly set.	1. Check and clean web guides regularly per manufacturer's instructions. Set web guides and position cores so that web will unwind and rewind at an equal measurement from the end of the respective shafts.
	2. Press out of alignment.	2. Realign press.
	3. A roller or rollers out of alignment.	3. Realign roller or rollers.
	4. Build up of ink, tape or foreign matter on press rollers.	4. Clean all rollers of foreign matter.
	5. Excessive web temperature (film substrates).	5. Reduce web temperature.
	6. Gauge inconsistencies with substrate.	6. Replace with new substrate.

WRINKLING

<i>Defect/Indicator</i>	<i>Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
□ Wrinkles in substrate.	1. Baggy substrate.	1. Tape rollers at web edge to draw out wrinkles.
	2. Equipment misalignment.	2. Adjust all roller alignment.



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PHOTOPOLYMER TROUBLESHOOTING GUIDE

REVERSE FILL-IN

<i>Problem/Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
1. Too much face exposure (especially with metal-backed plates).	1. Reduce amount of time for face exposure or mask this area and make the plate again.

CAN NOT WASH DOWN TO FLOOR

<i>Problem/Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
1. Too much back exposure	1. Decrease back exposure
2. Negative not dense enough	2. Make another negative

LINES WAVY

<i>Problem/Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
1. Not enough face exposure	1. Increase face exposure
2. Not enough back exposure	2. Increase back exposure
3. Not enough drying	3. Increase drying time – but not temperature or leave for 5 hours at room temperature.
4. Saturated solvent	4. Refill reservoir with clean solvent
5. Artwork exceeds material capabilities	5. Redo artwork or compensate with more face exposure.

FINE DOTS OR FINE TYPE WASHES OFF

<i>Problem/Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
1. Not enough face exposure	1. Increase face exposure
2. Not enough back exposure	2. Increase post exposure
3. Over-brushing or too much brush pressure	3. Make sure time is set correctly or pull pressure drum away from brushes.
4. Artwork exceeds material capabilities	4. Redo artwork or compensate by increasing face exposure.



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PLATE TOO HARD

<i>Problem/Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
1. Over-exposed	1. Reduce face exposure and/or post exposure time.

LETTERS OR SOLIDS CRACK WHEN FLEXED

<i>Problem/Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
1. Too much face exposure	1. Decrease face exposure
2. Too much post exposure	2. Decrease post exposure
3. Too much chlorination	3. Decrease amount of light finishing
4. Not enough back or face exposure	4. Check UV lamp intensity
5. Incompatible ink or wash solvents	5. Use only compatible ink or wash solvents

SMALL HOLES AND DEPRESSIONS IN SURFACE OF SOLIDS

<i>Problem/Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
1. Poor housekeeping during plate-making	1. Provide positive room ventilation. Get rid of dirt and lint: Clean room periodically, clean exposure bed daily, change vacuum sheet.
2. Improperly made negative: Over or Under-exposed film, insufficient density, pinholes or kinks in negative	2. Redo negatives that have scrapes or kinks in the printing areas; touch up pinholes.
3. Low face exposure	3. Increase face exposure
4. Faulty material	4. Return sample to manufacturer for quality evaluation.

KINKS IN POLYESTER CARRIER SHEET

<i>Problem/Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
1. Plate curls in brush unit or falls out of drum clamp in the processor	1. Refer to the mechanical troubleshooting section.

TACKY FEELING PLATES

<i>Problem/Probable Cause</i>	<i>Corrective Action</i>
1. Insufficient light finishing	1. Check finishing times and lamp output.