



## Design on Time & An Inch Off the Sides

By Dana Kader Robb

What is a production schedule and how can understanding how it works help you? You may have heard the term when you were dealing with desktop publishers, designers or printers. Learning *how* a production schedule works is the first step in harnessing its power...

Imagine you make a haircut appointment for 11 a.m. You're told that it will take approximately 45 minutes to cut your hair and that you'll be out in time for your noon lunch meeting. Being on a tight schedule, you show up at 11 and the stylist is ready. You get a great haircut, you're out at 11:50 on the dot and your lunch date comments on how fantastic you look.

What happens if you're running late and you don't get there until 11:15? Your stylist will try her best to accommodate you and may rush the cut a little to get you out on time. Or you may end up just a bit late for your appointment.

But what if you've had a hectic morning and there's no way you can get to the salon until after your noon meeting. Unfortunately, you can't expect the stylist to be waiting for you and fit you in at that point. You understand that she has many other clients who *have* gotten there at their scheduled times. While it's possible that she may have an opening soon, you realize that you need to work around her schedule.

Designers also live and die by schedules. We consult with clients to determine when a project must be completed and develop a series of deadlines when copy, proofs and layout are needed to meet the due date. For example, if you have an appointment to send copy to the designer by the 15th of the month, she's planned an appropriate amount of time to complete your project. She took into account the time needed for printing, mailing and delivery.

When a due date is missed by one day, you may have to make some small compromises but it shouldn't be a big deal. More days, and the whole project gets moved back. Additionally, it may take longer than originally planned due to a large project or other commitments the designer already has.

Desktop publishers, designers and printers all want to make our clients projects as painless as possible. By working together to meet a production schedule, both designers and clients win with an outstanding printed piece that's done on time. We just ask that you understand that – like a stylist – we can only work on a person who's in the chair.

