A CURRENT OF IDEAS AND INSIGHTS FROM ANDRÉ GARABEDIAN & FILAMENT DESIGNS

HIGH RESOLUTION VS. LOW RESOLUTION

WHAT IS THE VALUE IN LOOKING YOUR BEST?

A client pays good money to have me design a brochure, invitation, poster, ad, or perhaps an annual report. Lots of hard earned dollars to make sure that a pro like me gets the job done the right way and helps to make you or your business look fantastic. Photos are sent to me to place into the file, and I open them only to discover that they are "low resolution." Well %@#&!!! Now I have to go back to the client and tell them the photo they sent is "no good." I hate doing that because they get frustrated and annoyed. They don't know why the photo is unusable.

"But it's what they (the person in the photo) sent to me for you to use. So, it should be fine… right?"

"Can't you just use it or fix it?"

"What do you mean 'low resolution'? I don't even know what that means."

Perhaps you have thought this or said it in the past. Let's take each question and answer it.

THEY SENT IT TO ME, SO ITS FINE…RIGHT?

Just because he or she sent it to you and you sent it on to me doesn't mean it will be appropriate or viable for use — especially if we are talking about a print project. A web or e-mail oriented project does not require the same resolution as a printing based project. Perhaps the person in the photo doesn't understand what is needed? Maybe they were not aware that this was a printing project. There could be any number of reasons that someone may have just sent you a photo they have used many times in the past, or they took off of their own website thinking it was just fine.

The reality is that it isn't just fine if it was taken from a website or Google. That may work on a web or e-mail project, but if we are putting ink to paper, the quality of a low resolution image will take a great design, all the time and money you put into it and make it look like an amateur put it together in MS Word.

CAN'T YOU JUST USE IT OR FIX IT?

The easy answer… sure. I can use it. **But see above!!!** Do you want to ruin a high-quality project with a blurry photo of your honoree, or keynote speaker for your event? How would that person feel when they see the result?

It can't be 'fixed.' If I take a low resolution photo, and enlarge it to the size I need, that is when you get a blurry, pixelated result.

In printing terms — I can't just add the pixels required by a wave of my magic mouse. Photoshop has its limits. The pixels have to be within the digital image to begin with.

WHAT DOES ALL OF THIS TECHNO HIGH RESOLUTION VS. LOW RESOLUTION MEAN?

Let's look at the example of an HDTV. The picture quality is what you see because there are enough pixels to provide you with that crystal clear image you enjoy so much. If you were to, say, cut the pixels by 75% imagine the kind of result you would encounter. It would look blurry and pixelated. The only 'fix' would be reducing the size of the TV screen by the same proportion. Now you have taken a 40 inch HDTV and made it a 10 inch HDTV. Anyone have a magnifying glass? From a printing position — well, it's probably best to look at the example on the next page.

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Figure 1 — LOW RESOLUTION
This image is an enlargment from the original 75 pixel width, 72 Dots Per Inch (DPI). This is a typical size for a small image on a corporate website. Often times, when this type of image is sent, it does not bode well for the printed result.

Figure 2 — HIGH RESOLUTION
This image began with an original width of 1,200 pixels, 300 Dots Per Inch (DPI). Even if larger then is needed, we prefer to scale images down. It offers far more flexibility, and a great result when printing.

WHAT IS DOTS PER INCH?

Dots Per Inch or DPI refers to the number of dots or pixels per inch. In the easiest terms, 300DPI vs 72DPI means that there are more dots or pixels crammed into the 1 inch space. This is what we need for a good quality result. The image on the left has 72DPI. The image on right is at 300DPI. The difference is obvious. So why is 72DPI OK for web or email projects? SIMPLE. Computer monitors and smart devices use screens that present at 72DPI, so we don't require that big huge image from you when we are putting together your website or eblast!

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WHAT IF I CAN'T GET A 300DPI HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGE?
While I can't magically fix it, **THERE ARE SOLUTIONS WHICH I ALWAYS LOOK FOR.** Perhaps we can get away with using a different image. Maybe we can reduce the physical size of the image to allow us to get a good result. I have even asked for and received a photo that a co-worker quickly takes with their digital camera of cell phone and yielded a better result then the low resolution Google solution.

What we always try to do is solve the problem while working with you to make sure the results are optimal. **If you are unsure if the image you have can work, e-mail it over, and let us review it.** We will know very quickly what we have to work with and if you may need to find a different image.

The more we communicate the better the result. I hope this explanation has helped you to help me get the job done!

Regards,

André Garabedian
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