

HOW TO USE MODERN POSTCARD'S COLOR PROFILES

PREREQUISITE: ADOBE PHOTOSHOP VERSION 6 OR LATER.

Adobe Photoshop is the premiere image editing and color management software. All of the following processes employ the use of Photoshop.

Section 1: WHAT IS A COLOR PROFILE?

This will help you to understand what a profile is, and how it is used in color management.

Section 2: PLACEMENT OF PROFILES

This will tell you where to put the profiles on your computer. Do not try to open them. They will become part of a list that you can choose from in certain applications such as Adobe Photoshop.

Section 3: CONVERTING TO PROFILES

You will need to do this to properly prepare your image to print.

Section 4: ASSIGNING PROFILES

This is another way you can use profiles, but not as important as converting to profiles.

Section 5: TAGGED OR EMBEDDED PROFILES

This will tell you how to determine whether or not an image has a profile, and also how to embed a profile into an image.

For more information please visit the ModernPostcard Help Center.

http://www.modernpostcard.com/preparing_materials/color/

Section 1: WHAT IS A COLOR PROFILE?

A profile describes the colors reproduced by a device, such as a camera, a scanner, a monitor, an inkjet printer, and a printing press. The profiles you have downloaded from Modern Postcard's website, define the color space of MP's printing press. The color space referred to is the total possible colors reproduced by the inks (cyan, magenta, yellow, and black) used on MP's press. And when utilized within a color management system, printing industry technicians can control color output with a great degree of consistency and predictability. Profiles can be used, but not opened. They are like tags of information that can ride along with a file. Depending on preferences within certain applications, they can be ignored or implemented according to color management settings.

When our clients use our press profiles, they can get a better idea of how their files will print on our press. For example, let's say you have a well-calibrated monitor*, and you've just prepared an image file on it. You like what you see, and you want it to print that way. All you have to do is convert it to a profile that describes the press your file will print on. Modern Postcard provides 3 such profiles, and here's a description of each:

MP_Color_CMYK_<Paper Name> <Date>.icm: This is our most popular profile and used for full color images.

MP_B&W_CMYK_<Date>.icm: This is used for black-and-white images, and utilizes all 4 colors (CMYK).

MP_B&W_Gray_<Date>.icm: This is used for grayscale images, and utilizes only black ink with our 4/1 (CMYK/K), postcards.**

We update our press profiles a few times each year. Be sure to download our most recent press profiles before submitting your next job.

*re: well-calibrated monitor: don't overlook this...a well calibrated monitor is more important, or equally important as a good press profile. For an in depth instruction on monitor calibration, do an internet search. Basically, however, a well-calibrated monitor displays subtle differences in white to gray and gray to black gradations, as well as overall contrast, brightness and gamma (midtone density).

**4/1 cards: coated on one side, which is usually the front and capable of printing up to 4 colors (cmyk), and uncoated on the other side, which is usually the back and can only print one color (black).

Section 2: PLACEMENT OF PROFILES

These profiles are placed into your computer and used by Adobe Photoshop (and other icc-compliant applications). Such applications can utilize our press profiles as additional choices among several already existing on your computer. Place the profiles (icm's) into the appropriate folder on your computer. If you intend to use the "color settings" dialogue, check the advanced button in order to access our profile.

Mac OS 9.x or earlier - Hard Drive / System Folder / ColorSync Profiles

Mac OS X or later - Hard Drive / Library / ColorSync / Profiles

Win98, Win98SE, WinME: C: \ Windows \ System \ Color Win2000: C: \ WinNT \ System32 \ Spool \ Drivers \ Color WinXP: C: \ Windows \ System32 \ Spool \ Drivers \ Color Win NT: C: \ WinNT \ System32 \ Color

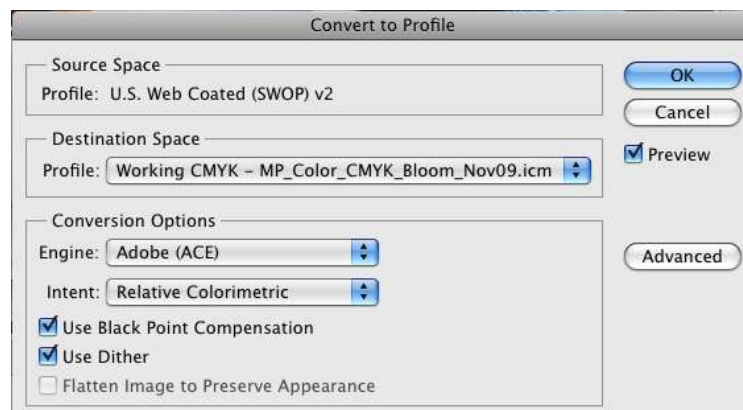
Another option in Windows is to right click on the profile, and click "install".

Note: Windows NT does not support ICM 2, and has no built-in color management. Any color management is done entirely by applications, and is hard wired into them. So the location for profiles under Windows NT is just for reference.

Section 3: CONVERTING TO PROFILES

Converting to a press profile is a necessary step in preparing your image file to print at any printer. If you don't, you will not get from your printer what you see on your monitor.

Below is a method for converting a CMYK image file from one color space (U.S Web Coated SWOP v2) to another (MP_Color_CMYK_Bloom_Nov09). You can convert your image file to a press profile by going to Edit/Convert to Profile. (Older versions of Photoshop may need to go to Image/Mode/Convert to Profile).



This will not cause your image file to shift in appearance much if any. If you check, you'll notice

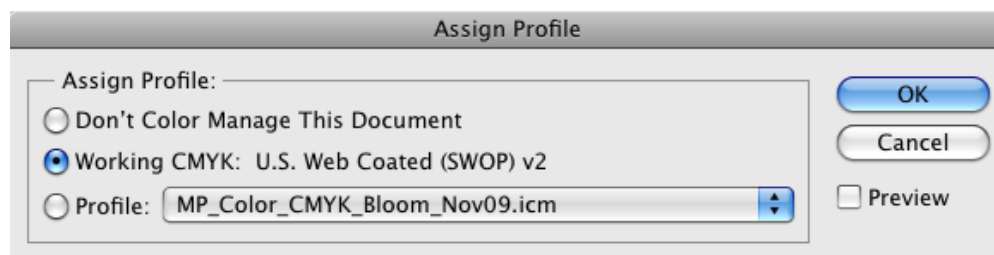
that the CMYK values have been changed, and now your image file is prepared to print at another printer.

IMPORTANT: Another step to help you print what you see on your monitor is to have your monitor calibrated. Also, when converting from RGB image files, you may notice a greater change in appearance. This is usually normal.

Section 4: ASSIGNING PROFILES

Assigning a profile is nothing more than viewing an image file as it would appear on another device. Color values within the image file will not change, but its appearance will. This will not prepare your image file to print. It will only show you how your image file would print if you have a press profile for a specific printer.

For example, if you are viewing an image file that has the embedded profile of SWOP (U.S. Web Coated (SWOP) v2) and assign it Modern Postcard's profile (MP_Front_Color), you would notice certain colors shifting. Flesh tones would probably become more orange, blues more purple, and some other things would also change in appearance. You can assign a profile by going to Edit/Assign Profile (older versions of Photoshop may need to go to Image/Mode/Assign profile).



Now you'll know how your image file would have printed if you didn't first convert it to the press profile of your printer. But you'll want to convert your image file first. Read *Section 3: Converting to Profiles*.

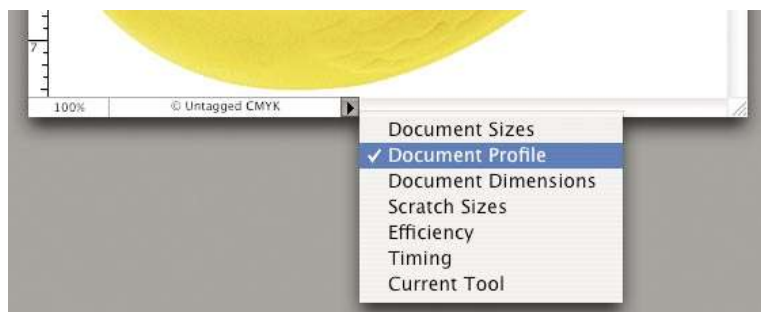
*You can only assign profiles that are from the same color space as the image file. In this case, that color space is CMYK, a printing color space. Many Photoshop users prepare their CMYK image files in Photoshop's default CMYK color space, SWOP, as used in this example. Therefore, converting from SWOP to your printer's press profile usually renders good results. If converting from RGB, go directly to your printer's press profile.

Section 5: TAGGED OR EMBEDDED PROFILES

You should know that tagged and embedded are interchangeable words. If an image file does not have a profile, or in other words, if a profile was not embedded when the image file was saved, it would be considered “untagged”.

When you embed a profile into an image file, others can recognize your file as being prepared in a certain color space. Your image file can then be color managed, which means you will have a better chance of getting from your printer what you’re expecting. If your image file is not tagged, others would either have to guess when attempting color management, or not color manage your file at all, which is usually the case.

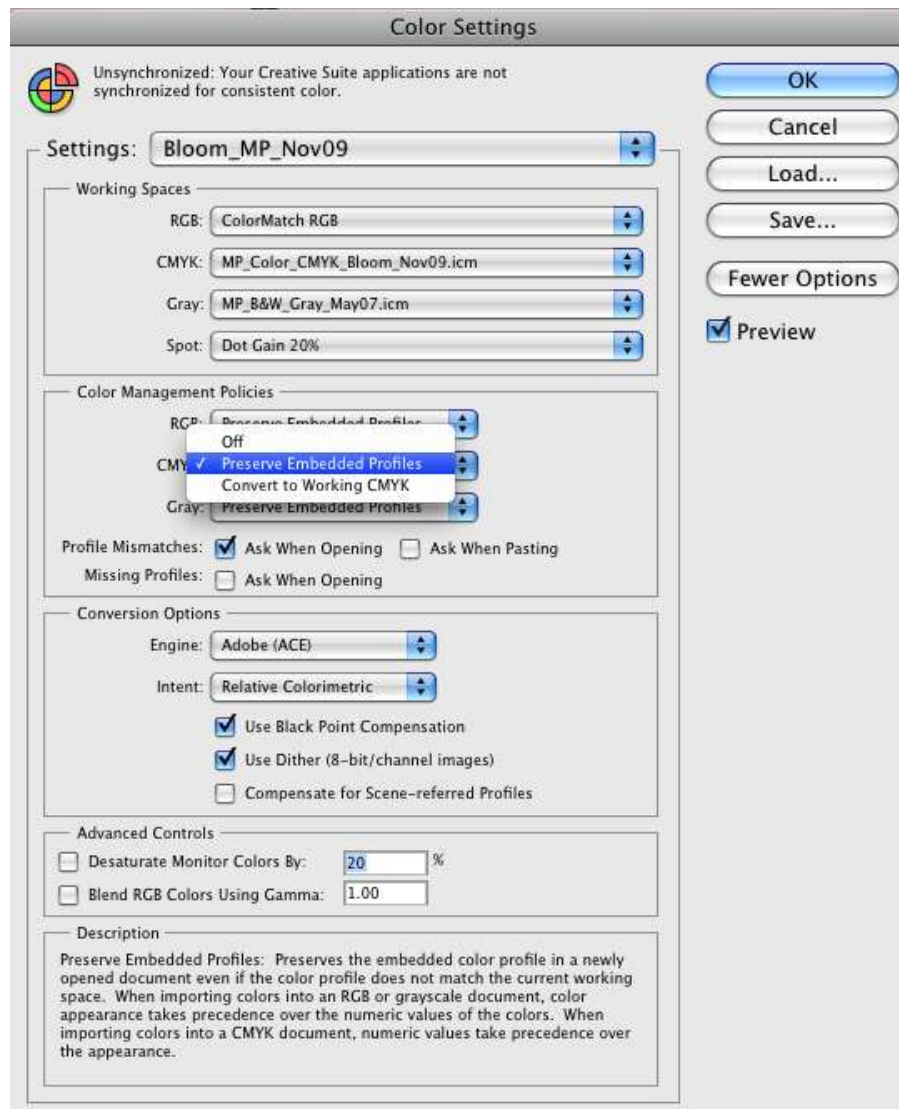
This image capture shows you one way to check if an image file has an embedded profile. In this scenario, it does not have an embedded profile so the document’s profile is labeled “Untagged CMYK”.



(This image is of the lower portion of an image file as opened in Photoshop. By clicking on the black triangle to the right of the information window, you can view a document’s profile. If a profile is not embedded, it will be considered untagged.)

There are two ways to embed a profile. One method is automatic and is controlled in Photoshop’s “color settings” dialogue by choosing “preserve embedded profile”. When you save an image file that either has a profile assigned to it or was converted to a profile, that profile will be embedded.

The “color settings” dialogue can be located under the menu headers Photoshop, File, or Edit depending upon your operating system (Windows, Mac OSX, or Mac 9 and earlier).



Another option, which will override the “color settings” dialogue, is when you do a “Save As” function (from the drop down menu “File”) and check the appropriate radio button like this:

