

FINAO'S GUIDE TO STYLE

or, everything I ever wanted to know about creating Finao products but was afraid to ask...

HOW TO DESIGN PAGE SPREADS FOR FLUSH MOUNT ALBUMS



PAGE DESIGN

Well, we have gone over the ins-and-outs of simply setting up your files. Man, this is a lot of work. Am I ready to design yet? Technically, yes but we want to make sure you are going to receive the look you are trying to achieve. Hang in there! As my buddy Vincent Van Gogh says, "Great things are done by a series of small things brought together."

As we mentioned earlier, you are free to design your albums in any way you choose, however, it's important to always keep a few basic principles in mind before you begin any kind of page design work.

GREAT IMAGES WILL SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

If you have knock-down, drop 'em dead images you don't need tons of accents, words, page numbers or other decorative elements. We all love to try and use them and we all get caught up in the details of them (myself included) however, the reality is, it's more work for you and can potentially cause you more problems with your page designs later on. This leads us to point number two...

TRY TO AVOID OVER DESIGN - LESS REALLY IS MORE

As I just touched on, and you will shortly find out about, having a lot of flexibility in your design is probably THE number one design consideration you should have from the moment you sit down and begin to plan your design. You will achieve better results and have happier clients if you do this. I promise.

WHERE DO I START?

THE LONG ANSWER

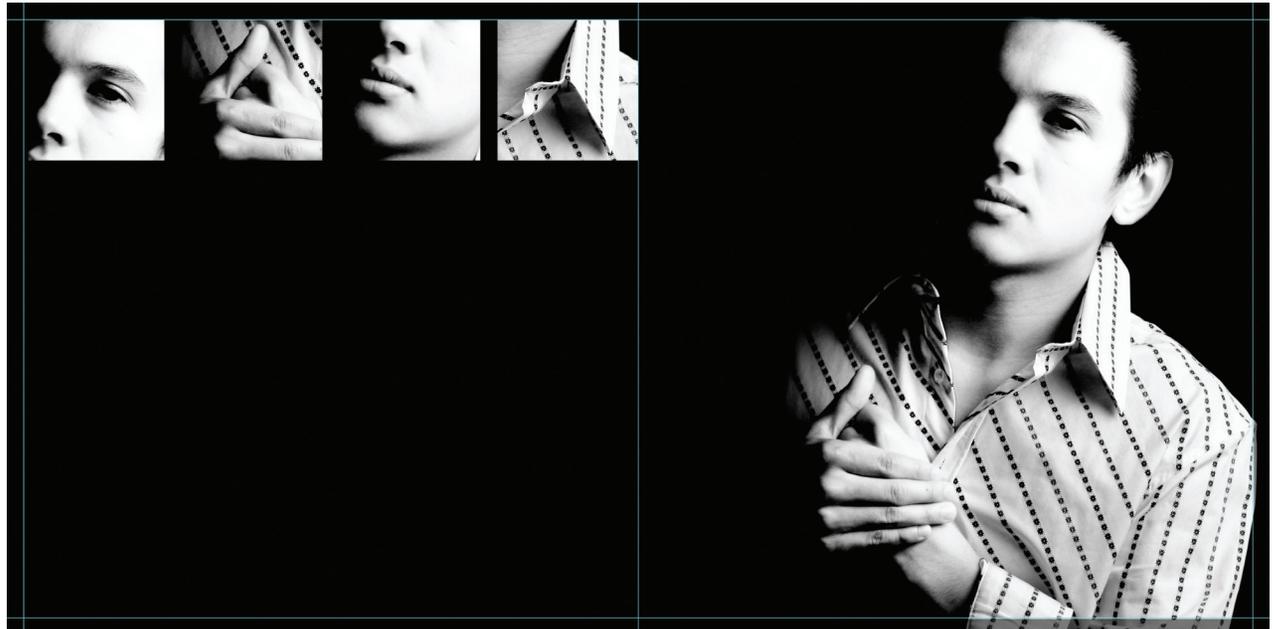
All page designs need to be configured so that you have a 3/8th inch safety margin around the outside edges of your design. It is important to keep in mind that we hand trim all finished books so there will be some variation between pages. This trim is usually only a very small amount and tends to be less than the 3/8th inch, however, we suggest that you make sure that words, faces and other critical features you aren't willing to lose, fall outside this 3/8th inch safety margin.

THE SHORT ANSWER

Save yourself a headache – Use a template.

We have basic Photoshop page templates available for use to all registered customers. They can be found on the downloads page of our web site. There is no additional set up needed by you simply turn on your guides and go! Easy peesy, japeesy!

example a



WORKING WITH THE SAFETY MARGIN

Now, the 3/8th inch safety margin does not mean you can't color outside the lines if that is what you intend. Some of the best designs out there are risky, bold designs. There is no one saying you can't cut that groom's face in half but if you are going to do it, make sure it looks like you INTENDED to do it. If his face merely falls into that danger zone and gets slightly trimmed you are more likely to get complaints that it just looks off and looks like a mistake. If his face is supposed to be in the design, keep it and anything else that is important, well away from those trim and crop lines

Let's take a look at example A below. Here is a 14x14 spread that looks pretty good on-screen, right? However, notice that his shoulder, head and those boxes are right up there next to those trim lines. Watch what happens if we make a simulated trim, see example B.

Ok, well, it doesn't look bad, however, this was not my intended look. I would not be happy with this because what I wanted was some floating space

between his shoulder on the right and space around those boxes on the left. I'm also not too keen on his head getting cut off the top as well. This problem would have been easily solved if I had simply moved them over away from those crop lines.

Now remember, the ENTIRE mounting process is done by hand. This print will be mounted to a base board with another print on the other side and then the entire block will be cleaned up and edges trimmed. Not all sides may be trimmed from all prints evenly. Are you starting to get why having flexibility in your page designs is important yet? Here's a common example of something that can, and quite often does, happen with page designs.

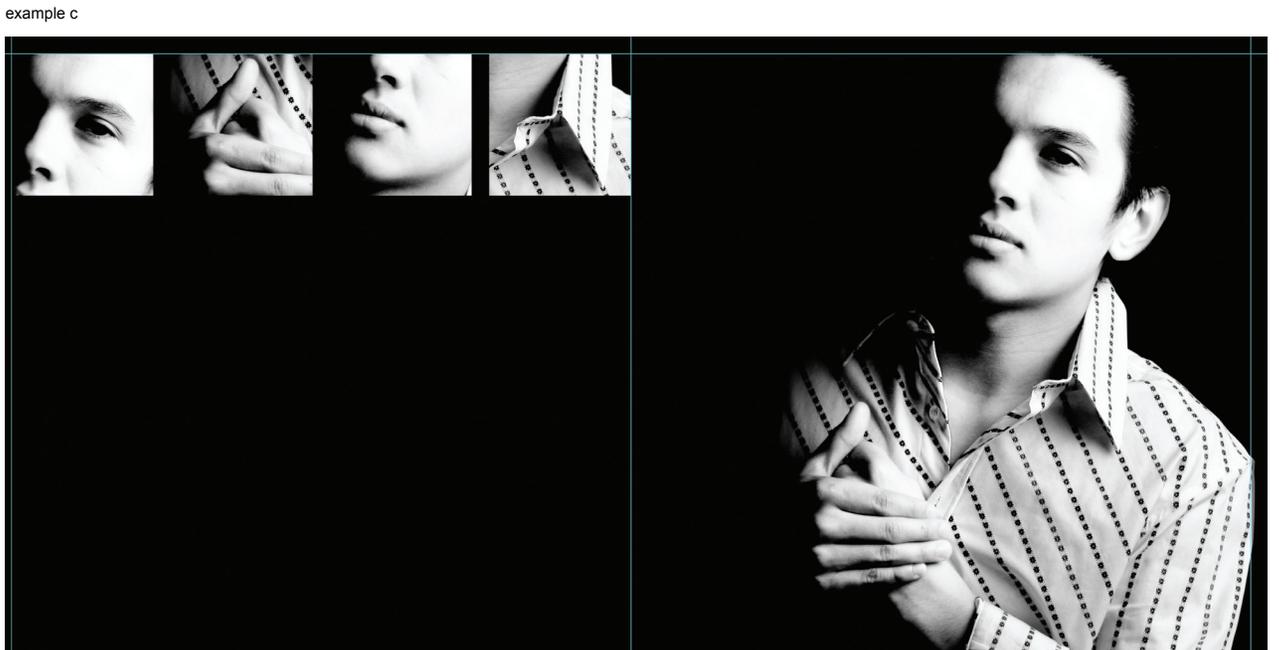
UNEVEN TRIM

In example B, which by the way was a perfect trim, what did I say about perfect, waaaay back at the beginning? Yup, it never happens. Remember, what we said about this being a hand bound process? The reality is, you are more likely to get something like example C. Notice that the full trim got taken off the bottom, the entire trim left on the top and more got trimmed off the left than the right.

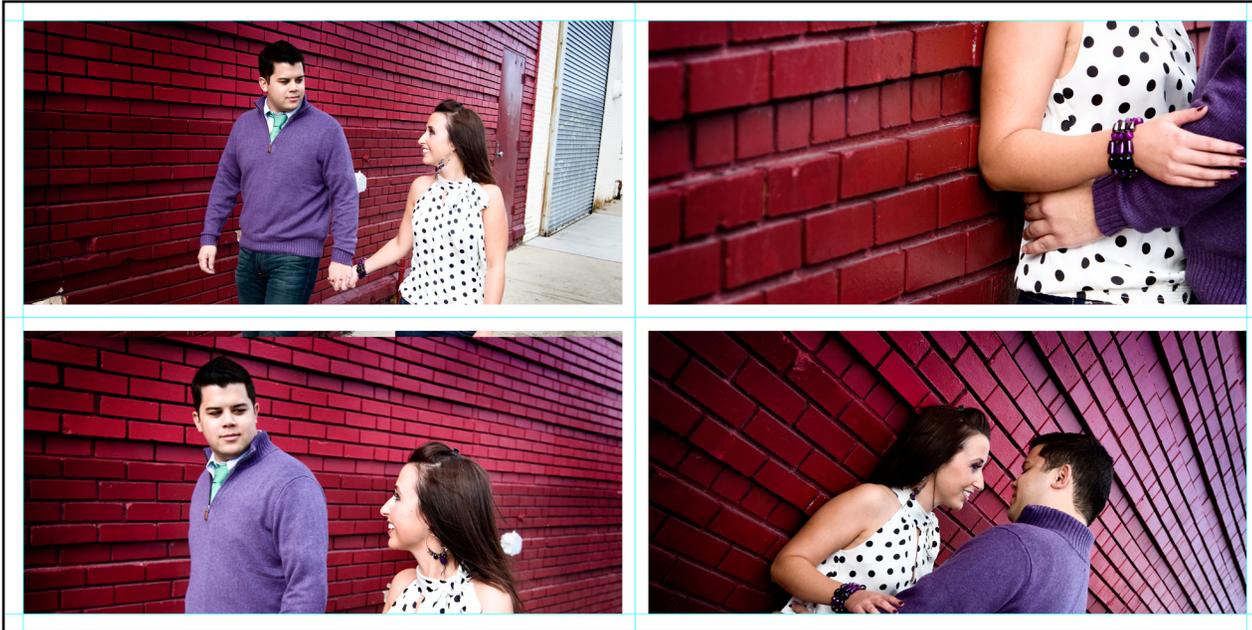
This is still not a horrible design, and actually worked more in my favor than the previous trim, but I would still be slightly disappointed if I got this back. My expectation was not met but that was because I failed to take into account my trim. I either have to live with it and hope my client likes it or pay to have the spread replaced, which now would take more production time and I run the risk of having problems during repair. Both of these things I could have avoided, had I taken more of my design flexibility and trim awareness into account at the very beginning. Lesson learned.



example b



example c



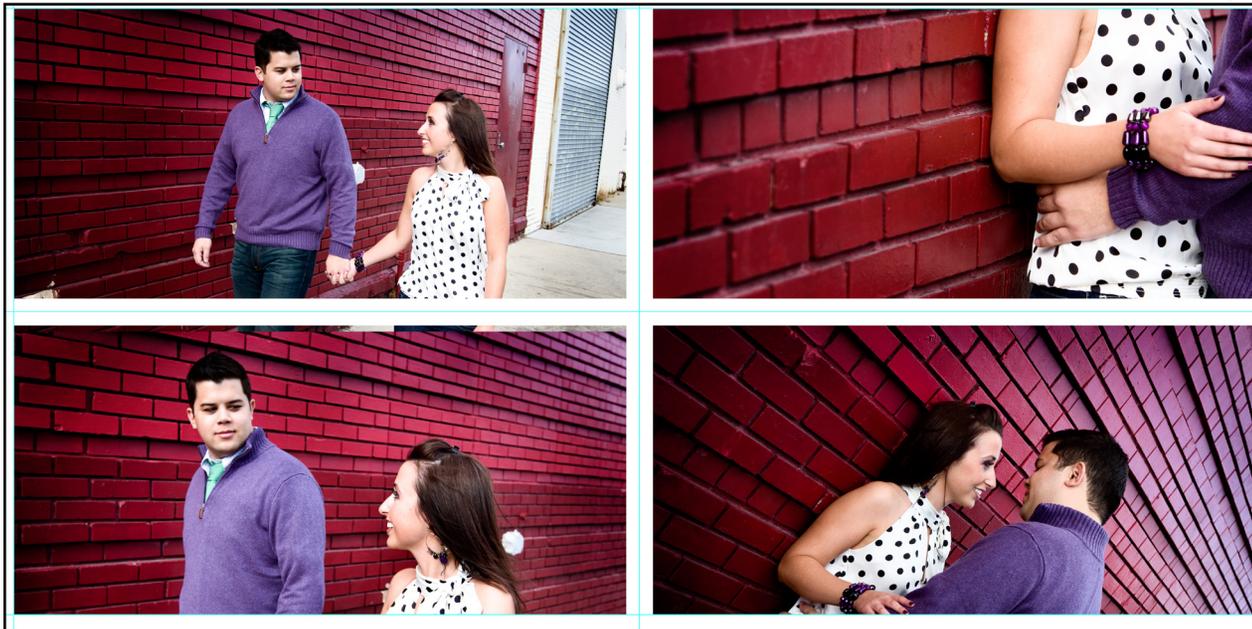
example a

Let's take a look at another common example that can run into trim issues:

This is a very common style of design we see, however, this can be tricky with that trim issue again. Let's take a look.

At first glance, example A seems like a nice clean, simple design. Can you spot what is wrong with it right off the bat? Those images are right up there against those potential trim lines. If you are expecting to get a white frame/border around those images after the book is trimmed you may be in for a surprise. What you may end up with is something more like example B. Not what you wanted at all, is it? Want to know how to fix it?

Well, one way would be something like example C. You take out all outside border and bleed the image off to the outer edge. Still nice and clean and no worry about an uneven outer border after the trimming is done.



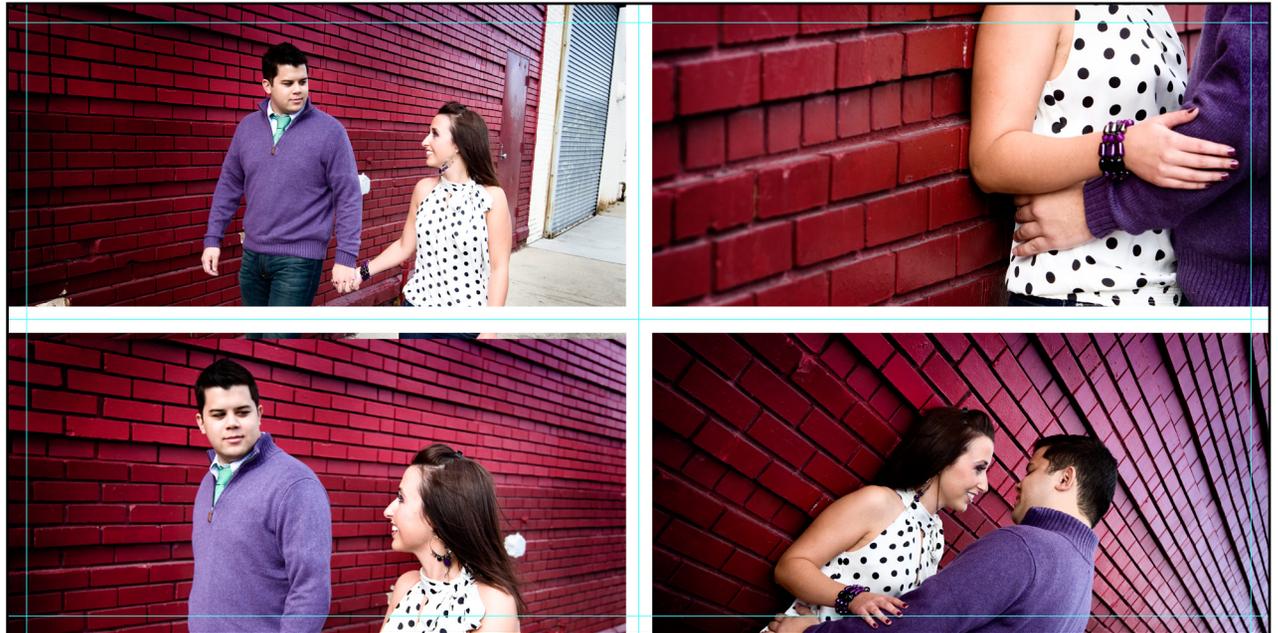
example b

But what if I want to keep the border around the images? You can do it but you are going to have to move those images much further in than the trim guides to allow for it. See example D.

Notice where the original trim lines are in relation to our new (pink) ones. We recommend at least a 1 inch border from the outside edge like the one in example D. With this design, after the trim is made, you should have no problem keeping a pretty consistent white border around all of the images and any irregularities in trim that may happen will appear minimal to the eye.

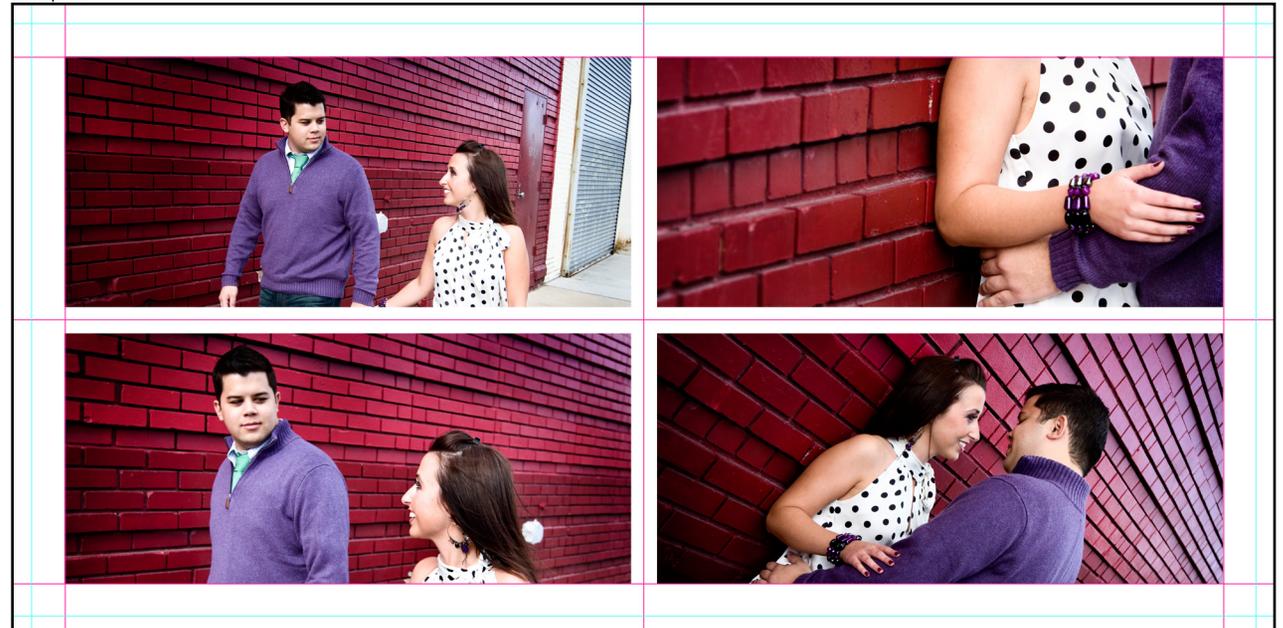
SPECIAL NOTE: DESIGNING FOR WHCC

There is one special note on the safety margin to consider if you plan on working with WHCC as your print partner. WHCC tends to enlarge images 2% during printing. Increase all page safety margins to a 1/2 inch to compensate for this variance.



example c

example d



SCALING FILES, SAFETY MARGINS AND YOU!!

There are many photographers out there who love to offer a large size album with a matching smaller size album as part of their packages. What an awesome idea, right?

Well, logic says that all I have to do is design my 14x14, I can re-size it to 3x3 and TA DA! I have two books for the time it took me to do one, right?

YES and NO

All I can say is, check your design first. Remember that 3/8th inch safety margin? It is a constant, it does not change or scale with your album size. It is always 3/8th of an inch. PERIOD. Let's take a look.

The first example (example a) looks pretty good at 14x14. Lots of room and space around the edges and a good, simple clean image. I am awesome sauce!



example a

But wait a minute, watch what happens when I take that exact same image and drop it into the 3x3 template (example b).

ZOMG!! WHAT?!?!111

Her head and hands are now in the danger zone. This won't work. *Freaking out ensues. Dogs and cats, living together! MASS HYSTERIA!*

The reality is this image may end up being just fine, IF the trim goes well. However, do you want to take that risk and have to replace it later on? If you know that you want to produce large and small versions of the same book, you need to take the scaling and safety margin into consideration during your initial design phase. Don't assume it will scale perfectly because it may not. Know it will by dropping your larger files into the smaller template and checking. Make small adjustments if you need to. A small amount of extra time here, can save you extra weeks of production and yelling clients later.



example b

CHECKLIST

- ✓ What software can I use?
- ✓ Are my files numbered correctly?
- ✓ Do I have cover images?
- ✓ Are my files the correct size?
- ✓ Are my files the correct resolution?
- ✓ Why do I have a headache?
- ✓ #@\$!, I should've used a template!
- ✓ #@\$!, I should've used the correct template!
- ✓ Is my page design flexible?
- ✓ Did I take trim into account while designing?
- ✓ Am I scaling my files?
- ✓ Does my file work in both templates?
- ✓ Am I doing a single page?
- ✓ Do I need to worry about visual centers?
- ✓ #@\$! my head still hurts!
- ✓ Am I working with WHCC as a print partner?
- ✓ How much do they enlarge again?
- ✓ Did I take that into account?
- ✓ #@\$! this is a lot of work!
- ✓ Is it happy hour, yet?

SPREADS VS. SINGLE PAGES

Up until now we have only dealt with spreads. Maybe you are doing a right starting book and need to design a first and last page. Fair enough. We have Photoshop templates set up for those pages as well to make your life easier, however, there are a few things to note when you are working with a single page instead of a spread.

VISUAL CENTERING

Problems can occur on single pages, and even sometimes spreads, any time you are trying to directly center an element on your page. Think back to our safety margin. If you are working with a single page and not a spread, keep in mind that you now have only 3 sides that will be effected by the trim. The side closest to the inside seam of the book will receive no trim so make sure if you plan on trying to center your images that you determine your VISUAL center and not just the actual center of your layout and keep safety margin in mind.

Our first example (example c) is just a simple opening page with some names, no biggie. Notice I have everything dead center in the page template and we are looking pretty good.

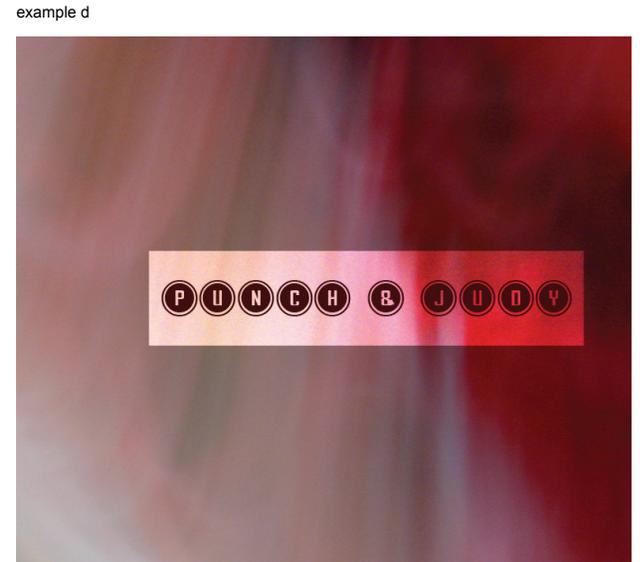
Well, watch what happens after that safety margin is trimmed (example d).

WHOAH!!

That isn't centered at all. Admittedly that is a tad exaggerated because I removed the entire safety margin, however you get the idea that had I just taken into account the fact that the top, right and bottom side had a trim and moved that text box over to the left a bit more, I would have ended up with something a bit more of what I was looking for. REMEMBER, it would not have been dead perfect center but it would have been visually closer to what I wanted. It's not a bad design and may still pass client approval, however, it was not what I had expected, once again.



example c



example d

