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what do you know?

I know, it's been a while. I'm not going to bore you with the details. Now, what to talk about.

Talk about strange occurrences. I got an email, "Hey PJ, we drew you name and we have a prize for you." I'm like, "yeah, right. I'm skeptical." Contacted the web site and they said the drawing and the prize is real. I just about fell out of my chair. I get these 5 minute training sessions every month with an example of real life hacking, phishing and scamming. I decided it could be a faked email.

Knowing the email was real, I reach out and it is a Silhouette Cameo 5. I then began to visualize custom Christmas cards to pass out at the end of the year. I know, it's July, but time will pass quickly.

First thing I wanted to do was to redesign a flat envelope. I redesigned the A7, so is the A7 still an A7, or is there a new technical term for it? A7 cards are for 5 x 7 cards and the flap folds along the 7¼ inch side. I rotated the layout so the flap folds along the 5¼ inch side. With the Cameo, and the Cricut I currently have, I can double up on production of the Christmas cards. I plan to have art work cut into the flap, and the name printed on the front of the envelope.

I looked up instructions for designing flat envelope files. (Disclaimer) I do know how to set up envelopes, I have designed flat envelopes as part of my job in the print shop. I wanted to know if there were any special tips for setting files up for die cutting machines. There didn't seem to be any special tips for redesigning envelopes. I set up the envelope, and was going to order some 11 x 17 paper, these envelopes are huge, as flat sheets of paper. Then I remembered I have loads of 11 x 17 paper. Cancel order, but there were a few tools I needed that I didn't have. I cut a sample envelope, without the fancy cutting, and it worked out nicely. Plus I hadn't quite decided how to decorate the flap. Then it was time to choose the font. I looked through all the fonts on the computer. Narrowed it down to 7. I didn't want to do a stencil font, so I set up the files with a one letter initial for the back flap. After going through all that, there were aspects of the font I didn't like for the project. Then I started to set up the files with another font. Got to the letter G and decided I didn't

like it either. But then I had so much time wrapped up into selecting and manipulating the fonts, I decided there had to be a faster way. Data merge! Data merge was going to save my bacon. But did it? I had set up files to data merge in Illustrator. and Photoshop, and even InDesign, Illustrator had required <XML> at one time and it was difficult. Good news, data merge is not so difficult anymore. A CSV (comma separated value) file can be used. Well ... that worked but didn't work. I could not output to a vector file with live text. My typing isn't perfect, I've made a mistake or two. I know, Illustrator has the retype feature. But what's the harm of leaving text as live text? So I switched to InDesign for the data merge. And from InDesign, I can export to EPS with live text. Then I can do the print and cut with the Cricut. The name with print, the initials will be a cut-out.

The envelopes are done, now what? Stickers. I drew a little tree graphic with Illustrator. It's cute. Then I started watching videos on setting up files for stickers. The videos I saw left out one step, Cricut calibration. Without that, couldn't get the Cricut to line up on the artwork to cut out. I did not use sticker paper for the test, I used cover stock (card stock if you must say it). I got it to work. Now to design the cards. I haven't even started.

What will the cards be like? One idea is to scale up the tree and use it as a cut out on the card front, and write something simple to put on the inside. And of course it will use data merge. One thing I'll do, I'll go to a local printer and have the cover stock cut down to 7 x 10. Oh snap, I tried to confuse myself. I thought the paper would have to be trimmed 5 x 14 with a fold on the top, but not so fast. After thinking about it and digesting the options, I can still have it trimmed out to 7 x 10, fold it on the left and still have vertical artwork to fit the style of the vertical envelope.

Why do I complicate the process? I suppose I had complicated ancestors and I got the complicated gene, which I'm trying to break.

Am I over thinking this, probably, however, this is the first really involved project that I've taken on in quite a while and I want to get it right. I'm the designer and the client, so I must please the client, as the designer, and as the client, that designer ha better get it right!



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