

The Perfect RFQ

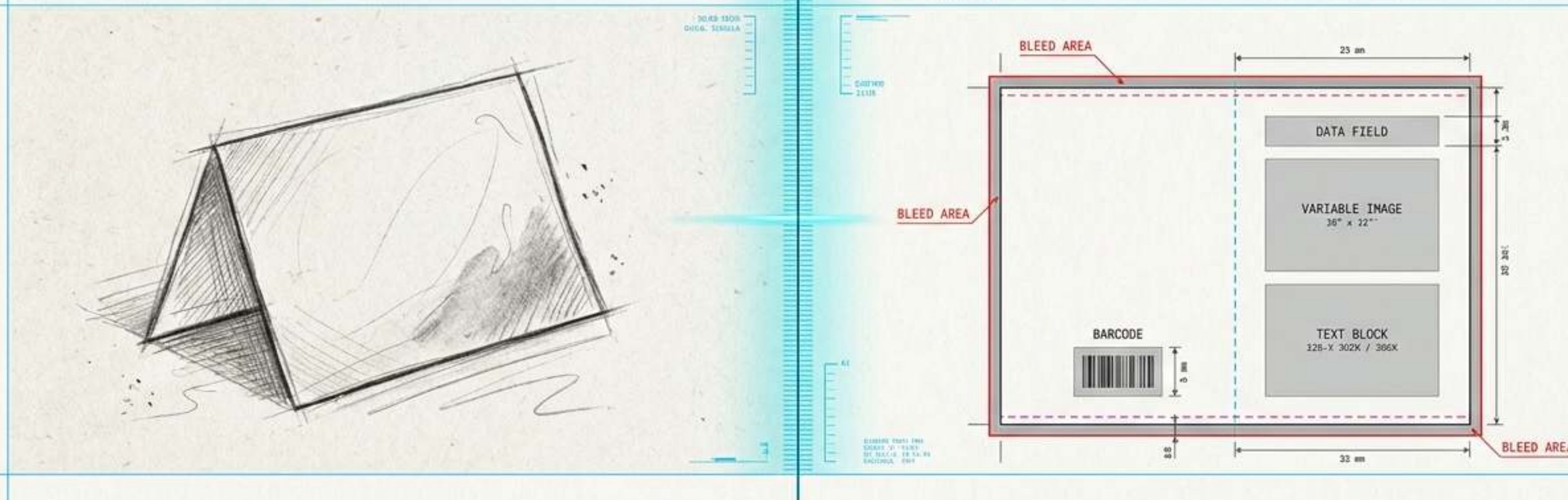
A Print Buyer's Playbook for
Sourcing Custom Cards.

FILE: CUSTOM_CARDS_PROCUREMENT_GUIDE // STATUS: APPROVED FOR PRESS

Translating design intent into technical reality.

Creative Intent

Technical Reality



Securing an accurate quote and a flawless print run requires more than just a beautiful design. It demands a precise technical and commercial commitment that aligns recipient action with physical specifications.

Defining the physical boundaries of the product.

	Custom Cards (Target)	Standard Ephemera	Secure/Regulated Cards
Format	Flat, folded, rack, gift, inserts	Flyers, labels, booklets, packaging	Payment, ID, access-control
Primary Function	Brand communication, loyalty, greetings	High-volume information distribution	Financial transactions, security access
Material Constraints	Premium paper/board, varied finishes	Standard weight paper, utility finishes	Specialised plastics, embedded tech
Technical Route	Standard commercial press with finishing	High-speed web or digital	Specialised secure facility (Requires entirely separate RFQ process)

WARNING: Requests involving magnetic stripes, chips, or regulated financial functionality cannot be processed as standard custom cards.

Recipient action dictates physical specifications.



Read/Retain

Recommended Stock:
Heavyweight, premium feel.

Design Implications:
High visual hierarchy.



Write On

⚠ Prohibited Finishes:
High-gloss coatings.

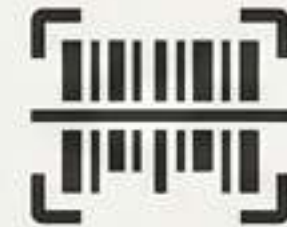
Design Implications:
Dedicated uncoated writable zones required.



Mail

Recommended Stock:
Standard postal-compliant weights.

Design Implications:
Protected space required for addresses and franking.

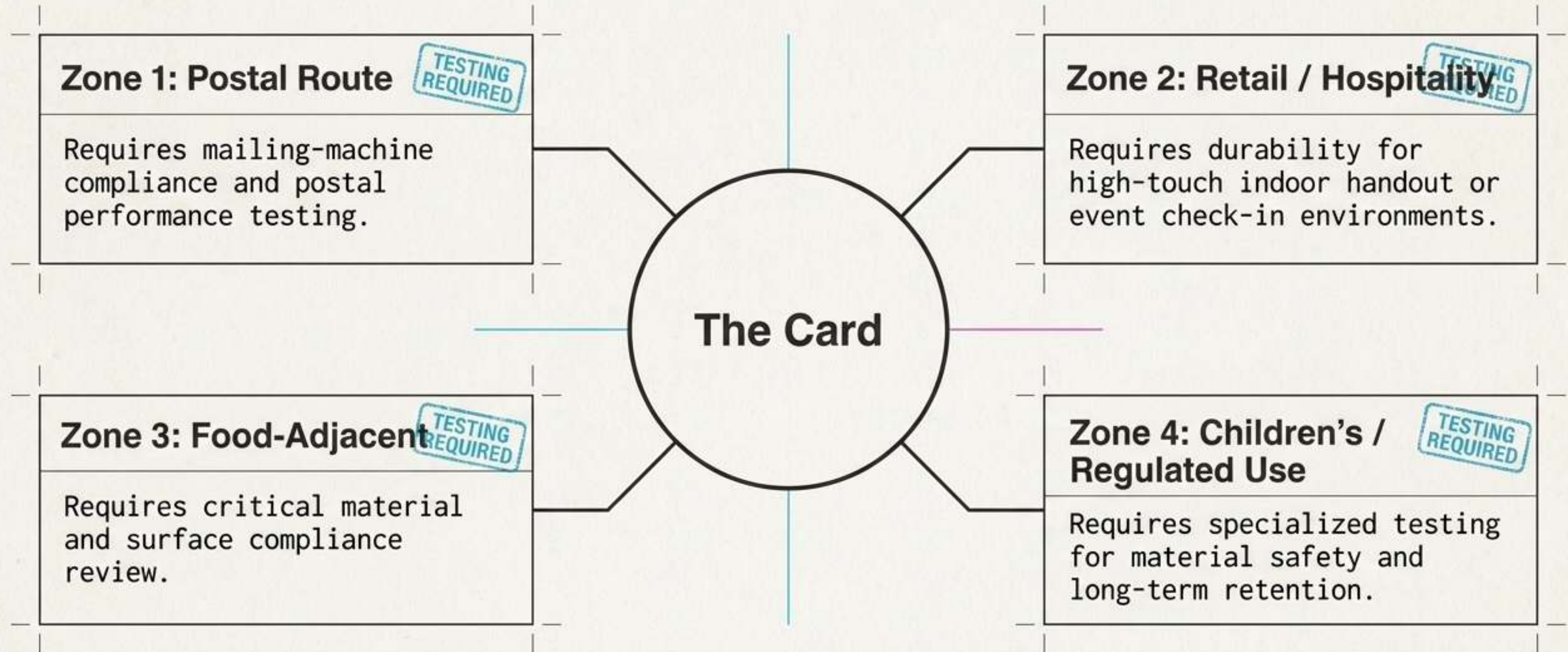


Scan/Redeem

⚠ Prohibited Finishes:
Foils or spot-UV over data areas.

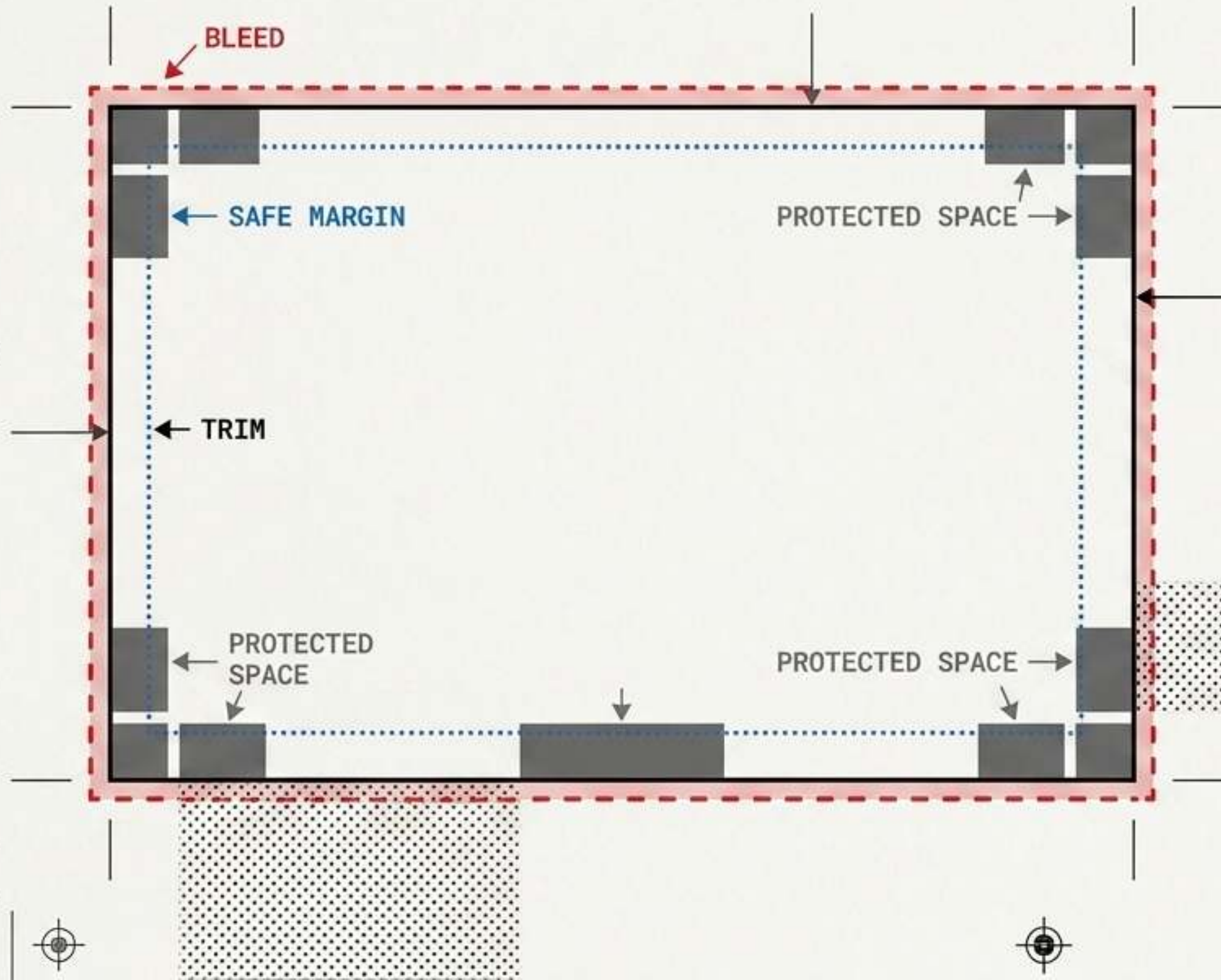
Design Implications:
High-contrast protected zones for QR/barcodes.

Environmental stressors require active compliance.



State the environment explicitly in the RFQ. Do not guarantee lifespan or certification without material review.

The architecture of a press-ready layout.



BLEED

Artwork extending past the trim to accommodate cutting variance.

TRIM

The final finished size of the card.

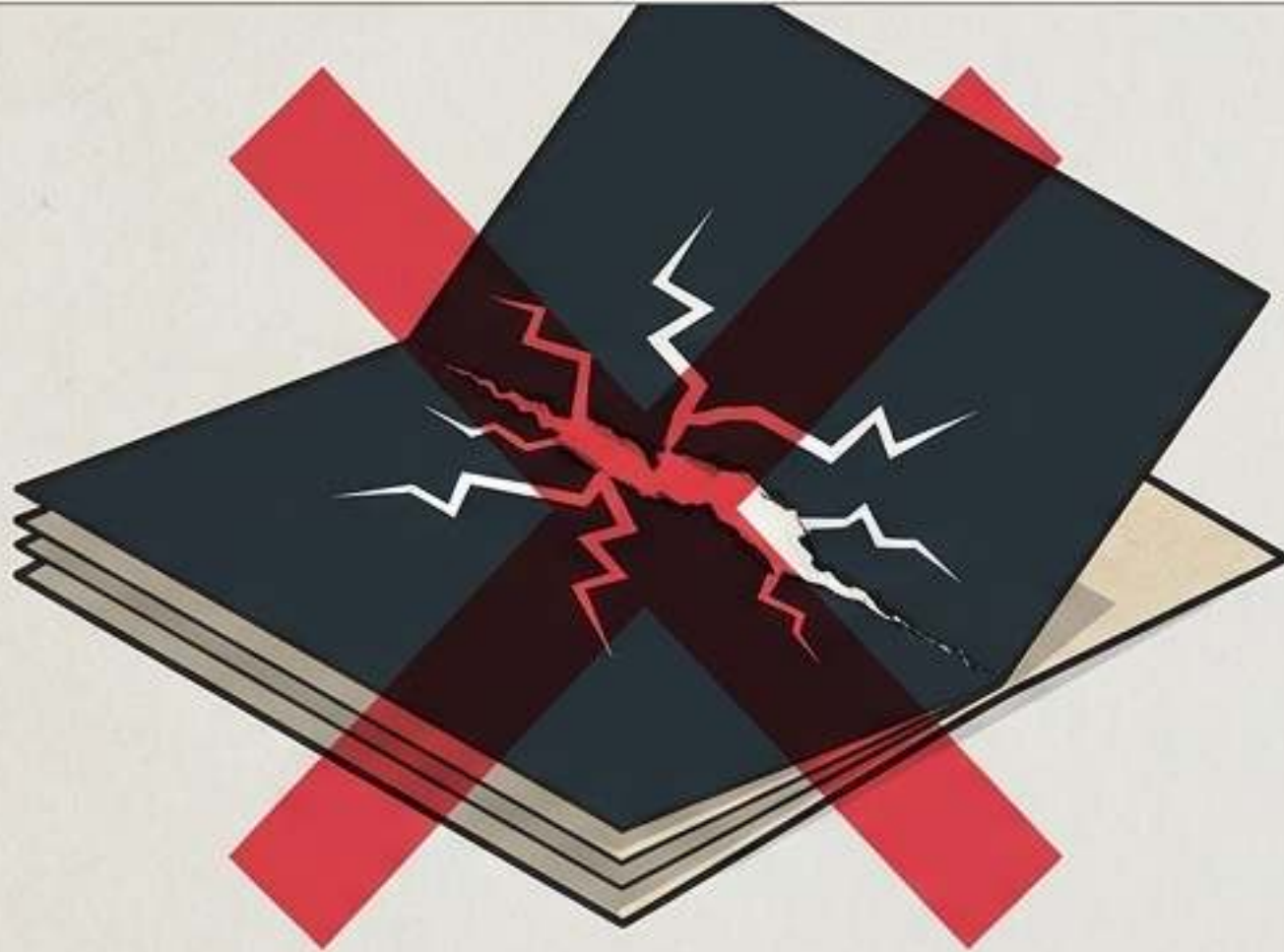
SAFE MARGIN

The boundary keeping critical elements away from the blade.

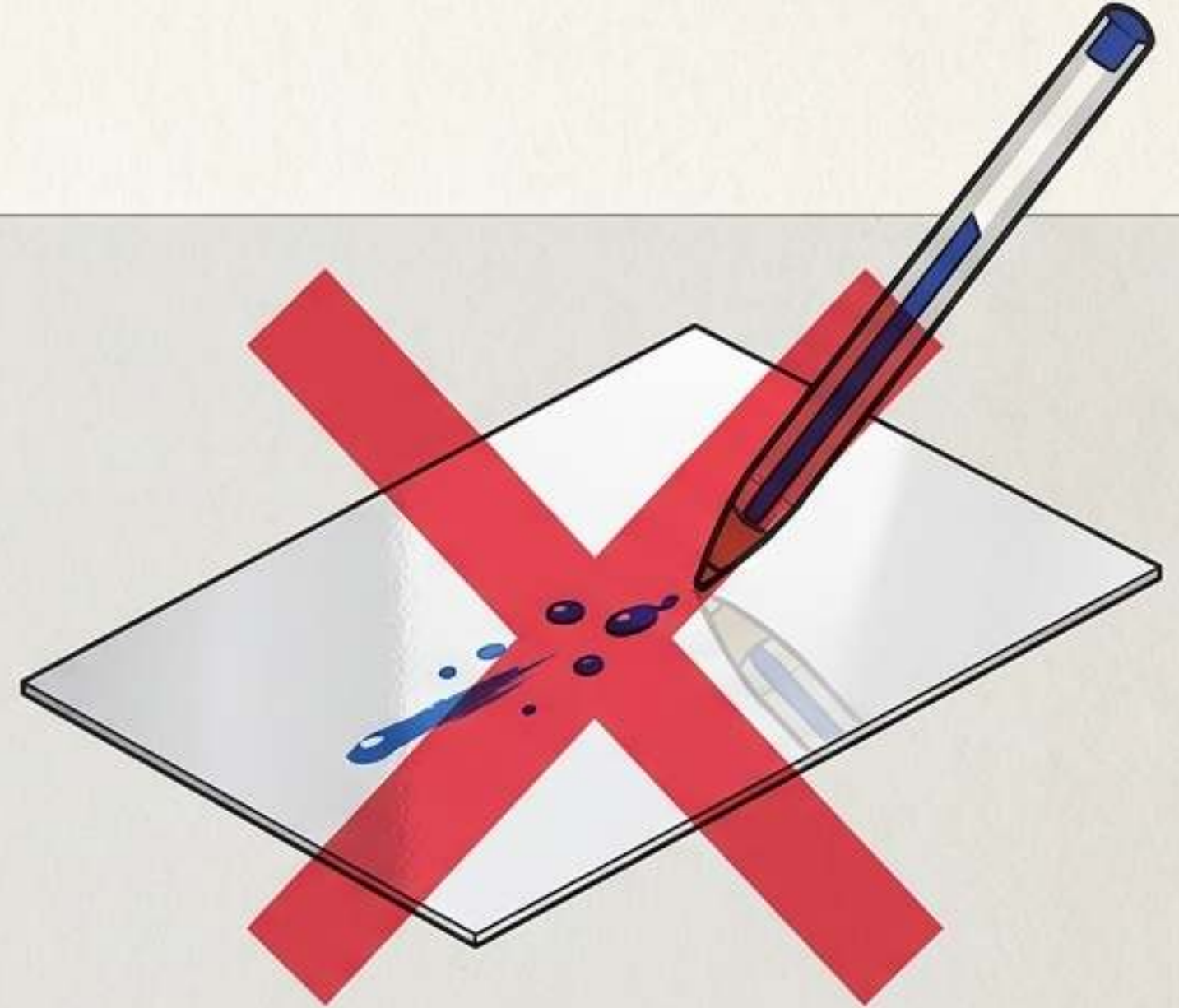
PROTECTED SPACE

Mandatory clear zones for legal copy, barcodes, and QR codes to ensure contrast and readability.

Unplanned finishing destroys design intent.



Folding against the grain or over heavy ink coverage creates high cracking-risk.



Specialty finishes (gloss, foil) inherently interfere with handwriting, scanning, or mailing-machine requirements.

Always demand a proof strategy that reflects the actual finish and fold panel order.

The strict hierarchy of variable data artwork.

Layer 3: Variable Data

Must never overlap with Layer 2 finishes.

Layer 2: Specialty Finish

Must be provided as a separate, clearly labeled file layer.

Layer 1: Static Brand Art

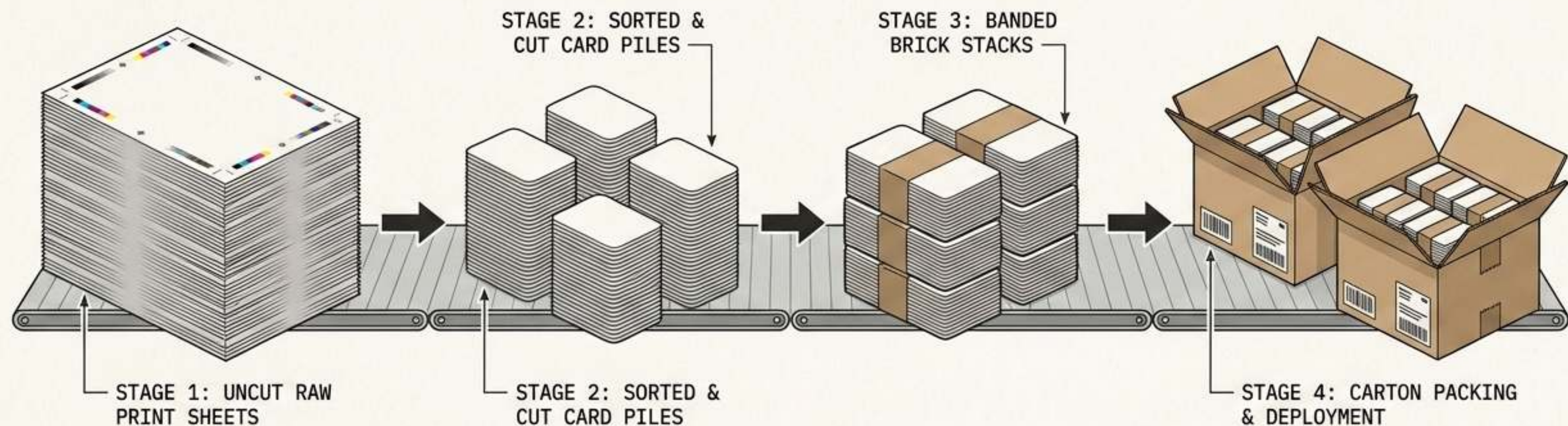
Needs finished size, bleed, and brand colors defined.



For folded cards, this entire stack must be provided as a flat layout clearly labeling front, back, and interior panels.



Final mile logistics and packing configurations.



Grouping 1 (Sorting)	Grouping 2 (Handling)	Grouping 3 (Deployment)
Define total quantity, specific variants, language versions, and data versions. Specify if packs need counting or sorting.	Explicitly define flat versus folded delivery. Specify banding sizes or shrink-wrapping requirements.	Mandate carton labelling specifications and insertion sequences. State whether the campaign requires staggered release drops or strict inventory reconciliation.

Pre-flight restrictions and disclaimers.

Without a defined specialist review and explicit technical testing, a standard RFQ cannot guarantee:



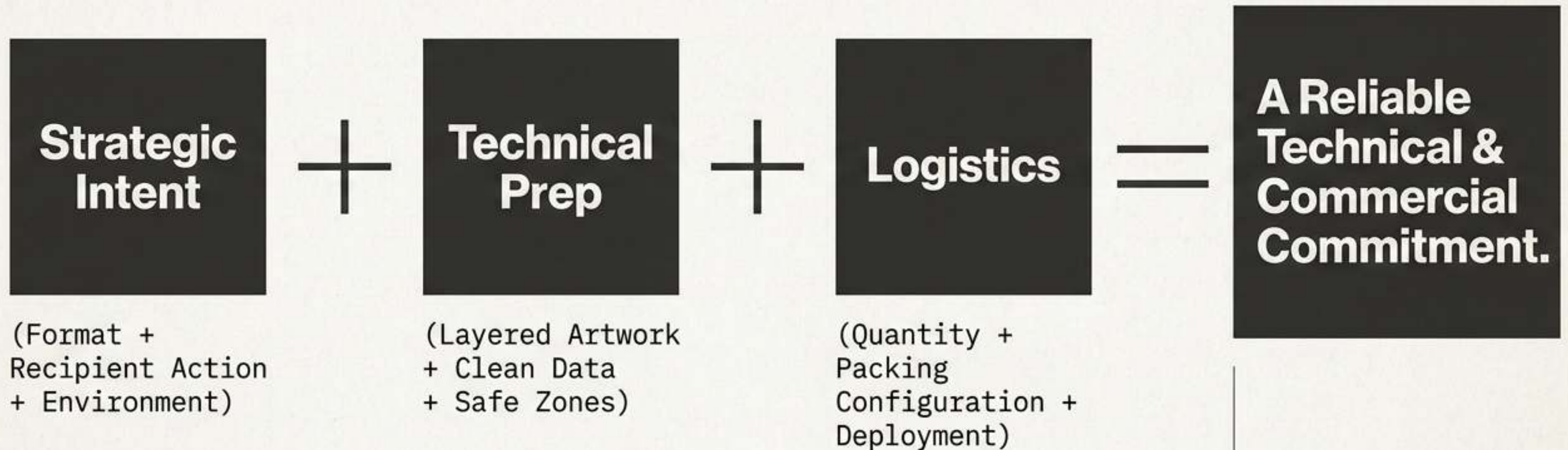
[ERR_01] Perfect colour matching across disparate stocks.

[ERR_02] Uninterrupted postal performance or mailing-machine compatibility.

[ERR_03] Flawless scanability or writeability over untested finishes.

[ERR_04] Exact lifespan, regulatory certification, price, quantity, or lead time.

The Quote Readiness Equation.



(A failure in any single bracket leads to an inaccurate quote or a failed print run).

The Perfect RFQ Checklist (Strategy & Design)

1. ☐ What specific card format and recipient action are intended? (Flat, folded, mailed, inserted, displayed, or written on?)
2. ☐ What finished size, orientation, panel order, and fold treatment apply?
3. ☐ Which stock feel, coating, finish, or writable areas are desired?
4. ☐ Where must codes, legal copy, addresses, and key messages remain readable?
5. ☐ What artwork files, colour references, and proof approvals will be supplied?

The Perfect RFQ Checklist (Data & Logistics)

6. ☐ Are variable names, serials, barcodes, or QR codes required?

7. ☐ Are mailing, privacy, compliance, or accessibility requirements involved?

8. ☐ How should variants be counted, sorted, and packed?

9. ☐ Are specific insertion sequences or inventory reconciliations required?

10. ☐ What physical and scanning tests are required before release?

The Final Proof.

A reliable card-printing enquiry leaves nothing to assumption. It identifies the exact format, recipient use, artwork
attwork structure, finish constraints, variable-data needs, and packing sequence.



Final technical and commercial commitments require quotation, artwork, and material review. Ensure all variables are locked before going to press.