TYPE 3 FONTS

TYPE 3 FONTS - WHAT ARE THEY?

Type 3 fonts are obsolete, bit-mapped and Postscript-based fonts, no longer supported by numerous leading software packages. These fonts (unlike vector fonts), consist of mini-form X Objects per character often making them impossible to cleanly convert to outlines when rendering.
Normal fonts can be outlined because they are small "programs" that tell the application to draw lines in a specific way. Outlining means converting these font lines into PDF lines. But Type 3 fonts are already PDF content - and they can contain almost any type of PDF content, not just lines. Many Type 3 fonts contain images and images cannot be converted to outlines.

WHAT POTENTIAL ISSUES CAN OCCUR FROM THEM?

Type 3 fonts can render with blurry or pixelated edges or even result in substituted text, random symbols substitutions, missing characters or even a change in colour when output through higher-resolution devices.

WHY AM I SEEING THEM IN MY PDF?

Leading applications such as Adobe's InDesign and Quark XPress haven't supported the use of these fonts for a number of years but they are 'creeping in' due to the increasing use of free or cheaper-to-use design applications such as Canva.

SO, SHOULD I STOP USING CANVA?

Not at all. A Canva-native document may not even use problematic fonts so still create a PDF but always check it via a preflight.
However, if you are receiving a PDF from Canva and intend to drop into an InDesign or Quark document and re-export that PDF, there is potential for the Type 3 font problem to occur. If there is no need to re-purpose a PDF via InDesign or Quark, use the original.
It's important to always check the PDF.

I'VE BEEN INFORMED MY PDF CONTAINS TYPE 3, WHAT CAN I DO TO NEGATE THE PROBLEM?

Best practice is to go back to source and change the affected font to a more stable TrueType or OpenType family. Otherwise, the same problem is likely to occur the next time that particular advert or page is used.

WHAT IF MY ADVERTISER CANNOT CHANGE? IS THERE A WAY TO FIX A PROBLEMATIC PDF?

Yes is the answer but it doesn't come without risks. Basically, the PDFs need converting to outlines or flattening. There are ways to do this but without a 100% guarantee. So, before you proceed to 'fix' a PDF, please make sure you have exhausted the other options. Remember, you are 'fixing' the entire page but it may only be a small area/quarter page advert etc that is the issue, so be careful.
Acrobat DC - Use the flattener preview in the Print Production Pallet. Make sure the correct settings are used (speak to your printer).
Enfocus PitStop - this independent application runs within Acrobat and has dedicated tools to manipulate PDFs.
Your printer - ask your printer if they can resolve the problems. They may have more advanced tools to assist but they will also inform you that they cannot be held responsible should any untoward results occur in the changed PDF.