

quoins2pixels

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The Job Must Be Returned

The job has been printed and delivered. Now, the customer says that it's unacceptable.

It's essential that before a credit is issued or a rerun agreed to that the job be returned in its entirety. Why? Because the client is prevented from using the job anyway while getting it free. It also gives us a chance to inspect the job to see what really went wrong. Of course, there are occasions where the job is mailed by the printer before the problem is found and then it can't be returned. If the client mails it, he does so at his risk.

The Job Must Be Returned – Part II

The situation outlined above is not uncommon in our industry. We produce a custom manufactured product which most customers purchase "sight unseen." They provide us with a hodge-podge of elements (files) and expectations which we may or may not be able to meet.

This unique aspect of our industry argues for an exceptional sales/customer service team. One which can understand the customer's expectations – and explain the limits of our capabilities, whether it's product "quality" or delivery deadlines. Thus, the reason for our sales/production teams to effectively communicate with each other – and with our customer. This type of focus should be #1 and can help mitigate situations which we covered in our first article.

Lease Financing

If you're looking at a new piece of equipment, there will probably be a lease option on the table. Chances are that the lessor is not the firm who made the equipment. This reality can be a big problem if the equipment has problems or can't do what it was supposed to do. Why? Because the leasing company can correctly say, "our money was not defective." This means that you cannot withhold lease payments as leverage to fix the problem.

When equipment is on your floor, there should be adequate time for you to test it (preferably using independent experts). You should have a right to have it removed or repaired to your satisfaction without charge and with the cancellation of the lease. These rights can be obtained, but the time to do so is before you sign the deal. Read the contract and get help if necessary. If it doesn't contain the language you need, propose it and have it included in the final contract.

If you are purchasing the equipment to do a specific kind of work, get contract language guaranteeing that it can do it (the sales rep's statement "no problem" won't cut it). You have a chance of doing this when they're still trying to get the order. When they've got your signature, you're done.



Discipline = Consistency

An employee is constantly late; argues with other employees; often shows up at work “under the influence.” In many situations, the answer is termination . . . but what if this person is a key (high producer) employee. It could be a top-producing sales rep or your best press operator. Terminate and you may have shot yourself in the foot, or keep them and create a cancer and you’ll wish you would have cutoff the foot.

Often small companies, which have a familial approach to their employees, can survive with a “look the other way” in dealing with “Uncle John.” But it’s not a valid way to create a powerful organization – and the larger the company – the ugly reality of litigation becomes a determining factor.

As much as an employer may dislike “rules” which can limit their decision making, in these cases, a process needs to be created. That process can be as simple, or as complex as one wishes it to be . . . but it needs to be followed consistently to create “hurdles” in potential litigation. No policy is going to guarantee that an employee won’t run to the EEOC or another agency and claim discrimination but by following a documented process and treating individuals fairly, we can minimize that possibility.

“Just Print It”

We were talking to a firm who had successfully completed a large project for a customer and mailed them an invoice approaching 6 figures. Then, they got an angry call from their customer saying “the bill is too high.”

The customer is a regular buyer from the printer, but for much smaller projects. When they placed the order, they never asked the price and the printer did not give them a quote but just produced the job and billed it. Lurking inside this story is the reality that the client did not realize what they were getting into, and now were way over budget.

The printer would like to keep them as a customer and is stuck with trying to find the win-win out of this story. It’s useful to remember that while it’s nice to get unquoted work, not giving them a formal quote when the job is large or unusual is playing with fire.

Ask And You Shall Receive

If there was ever a time when you could get more for your work, it is now.

Accelerating inflation in at the top of everyone’s mind. Employees are hard to get except at higher wages which also must be paid to keep the ones you have. Our principal raw material, paper, is hard to get and its price is zooming upward. Your customers know these realities as well as you do.

You have the further advantage that as a custom manufacturer, everything you produce has a different purpose, different copy and different appearance. Your estimating system is the only thing that thinks they’re the same. This reality makes price comparison difficult for the customer particularly under current conditions.

This should be the time when you can finally put some more margin on the estimate and still get the order.

quoins2pixels is written by Bob Lindgren and Joe Polanco. Bob and Joe have spent decades in the printing industry, and throughout their careers, they have counseled hundreds of company owners on a variety of management topics. As a value-added service of [The Printing Industries Alliance](#), they are available to expand on these articles, or aid with projects. Bob can be reached at (818) 219-3855 and Joe at jspolanco49@gmail.com.