

quoins2pixels

An exclusive publication for members

by Bob Lindgren & Joe Polanco

Hiring A Sales Rep

Without sales growth, profit growth is impossible. Growing sales almost always means adding sales reps. Every firm who endeavors to do this quickly discovers that hiring a successful sales rep is the hardest of tasks. The opportunities to waste large sums of money are immense and the failure rate is very high.

- Firms that have made the best of this tough challenge generally hire sales beginners and focus on personality traits rather than printing knowledge.
- They look for people who really want to make a lot of money, bearing in mind that while almost everyone wants to be rich only a few are willing to go to the trouble of getting there.
- They look for people who have a high level of curiosity and who are better at listening than talking, who can feel the prospect's pain points and think about addressing them.
- For the same reason, it may be useful to look for trainee sales reps who have actual experience in the printer's target customer type.
- They look for people who have had some experience with outside selling even not in printing as they have lived in that environment and accepted its challenges.

Once they hire the sales trainee, they must deal with compensation. Even though some firms have salaried sales reps, it's likely that given the special challenges of outside sales, a clear, incentive-based system is best. Even if it's salary only, the rep gets a raise based on performance, so the salary is really a delayed and uncertain version of a commission.

If the rep is paid on a commission basis (gross sales, value added or some other variant), they must also receive a draw, since initially their sales may be zero. The draw should not be high enough for them to be comfortable, for the object is for them to move to commission earnings high enough to cover the draw (and more!) or leave if they can't get there.

Of course, the trainee sales rep needs help and should get it, but at the end of the day, the ball is in their court—that's why finding a successful candidate is tough, but it can be done.



Opportunities In Print

A recent study conducted by RR Donnelley titled “The Optichannel Opportunity Report” surveyed 300 in-house marketing decision makers. The results reflect industry studies which have been conducted over the past 10 years showing that print plays an important role in today’s digital world – and just one channel of communication is not very effective. The term “optichannel,” crafted by RRD, is defined as “marketing outreach on two or more channels where specific customers are most likely to engage, often through real-time data.”

Here’s the takeaway.

How do we craft a strategy which can help our clients utilize these tools, i.e. Optichannels to make them more effective and in turn make us the vendor of choice. The first step is research. How well do you know your customer’s market? Which marketing channels do they use to communicate with their customers? Are you talking to the right people in their marketing/sales groups so you know their marketing strategy and the role print will play?

The second step is a bit more challenging – finding the solutions to help those customers. It could be utilizing existing resources or looking for firms with specialties your company lacks. It can be daunting since it takes a coordinated effort of analysis as well as searching for partners who are new to your firm. The reward is further integrating your company as a trusted supplier, and not losing sales along with the potential to add additional sales from other similar customers/prospects.

Put It To Work

Most printers operate with a single shift, with perhaps a skeletal second shift. Even during that single shift, equipment and floor space lies idle for part of the time. Lurking inside that reality is the possibility of a leap forward into serious profit.

The key to making that leap is a relentless commitment to fill those idle hours with new sales. While there are challenges in hiring employees and a few key supervisors, the rewards are disproportionately large.

A pricing policy based on getting as much as the customer will pay while also getting the order is a central part of this process. This is facilitated by the reality that most of your competitors’ single shift operations produce necessarily higher price points.

The reality for the printer who takes the leap forward to full utilization is the gusher of contribution dollars (sales minus materials, buy-outs, factory wages, and commissions) which is the source of that leap forward in profits for the firm.

Print Factoid

Before 1863, postage paid only for the delivery of mail from Post Office to Post Office. Citizens picked up their mail, although in some cities they could pay an extra one- or two-cent fee for letter delivery or use private delivery firms.

quoin2pixels 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.