



SIGNATURE

ENGAGE . EXPLORE . ENERGIZE . EXCEL .

PRINT & GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION: Your Regional Resource Providing Business Support Services and Connections

As 2023 draws to a close, we wanted to update our membership on the consolidation that occurred earlier this year, joining PIA and GAA staff and resources into the new organization, Print & Graphic Communications Association (PGCA), to bring increased value to our combined membership. We appreciate that you have chosen PGCA to be your trusted resource for all things PRINT!

As you know, PGCA has a wealth of services and benefits available to you and your entire company and we are constantly adding new ones to help our members grow and enrich their businesses. Please never hesitate to reach out to the PGCA team if you have any questions, concerns or challenges of any kind – if we don't offer the service for some reason, we can connect you with an expert who can help you!

We'd like to remind you about the most popular PGCA services that will guarantee your dues ROI:

- **Access to Industry Experts** – Human Resources, EHS, Insurance needs, Consultants, Peer Groups ... you name it ... we can help answer those tough questions!
- **Continuing Education** – Print University online training, in-person and virtual interactive training sessions on a wide range of topics, expert presenters and more...
- **Environmental, Health & Safety** – Need help with Safety training, OSHA concerns, or navigating an audit? Give us a call!
- **Discount Buying Power Programs** – Big savings on UPS, printer towels, equipment, software, insurance and more (see page 15 for more details).
- **Community Networking** – We bring the NY, NJ, PA and DE Print industry together with many networking events. Come out and meet someone new!
- **Customer Referrals** – We constantly connect our members with Print seekers who don't know where to go for specific projects. Our members receive those leads!
- **And much, much more!**



PGCA Holiday Party



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TEN WAYS TO SAVE WITH PACKSIZE & PGCA

By using the On Demand Packaging® system, companies eliminate all the empty space inside their packaging. On demand packages means less corrugated, less void filler, and a smaller impact on the environment. PGCA members save \$11,000 with waived equipment fee.

1. USE LESS CORRUGATED

By using smaller boxes, on demand packaging users significantly reduce their corrugated cardboard spend.

2. MINIMIZE VOID FILL

The smallest possible box means there's a reduced need for non-recyclable void fillers, eliminating up to 50 percent used.

3. REDUCE BOX MANAGEMENT

Companies that use packaging on demand don't need to worry about managing a large box inventory.

4. OPTIMIZE WAREHOUSE SPACE

By eliminating a large box inventory, companies can free up valuable warehouse space. Store products instead of boxes.

5. MINIMIZE DAMAGES

Damage to products can occur when they jostle around inside the carton. Eliminating that empty space has been proven to greatly reduce damages.

6. REDUCE INFRASTRUCTURE

Right-sized boxes mean you get more bang for your buck from existing infrastructure. More boxes can fit in a truck, a conveyor, or any other part of your supply chain.

7. INCREASE THROUGHPUT

When companies are able to create any sized box at any time, orders can be turned around quicker by eliminating box size guesswork.

8. REDUCE SHIPPING COSTS

Major shipping companies charge for packages based on weight and size; it's more important than ever to minimize your box sizes.

9. INCREASE SUSTAINABILITY

Packsize customers use less corrugated and filler material, while also improving their shipping activities.

10. INCREASE CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Your customers would rather not throw away oversized boxes and the copious amounts of void filler sent with them. Smaller boxes reduce damages and improve your customers' brand experience.

Packsize On Demand Packaging® System



How will you use Packsize to save? Get started today!

Special offer for PGCA members only:

Packsize will install at no cost, at your facility, the advanced box-making equipment needed to make custom boxes (minimum quantities apply). An \$11,000 value!

Visit packsize.com for more information on the Packsize On Demand Packaging® System.

Questions? Contact Kim Tuzzo at Print & Graphic Communications Association, (716) 691-3211 or kim@printcommunications.org



COVER CONTINUED

New Services Introduced During 2023: Make sure you and your staff are taking advantage of these valuable services.

- **Print University:** 60+ courses on print fundamentals, available on demand and free to members. Login at the member sign in button at printcommunications.org to access.
- **Member Ask a Member:** Online forum to facilitate exchange of information between members. Find questions and answers submitted by members in the Members Only section at printcommunications.org.
- **HR Academy:** Essential training for Managers and Supervisors. A series of management webinars to be conducted by Nick Fiorenza and Mike Dodd over the next several months.

PGCA is planning a full schedule of local events in your area, to bring members together for networking and education. Watch your email and mail for dates and locations. Contact us if you would like to host an informal networking event at your facility.

Our best wishes for a Happy Holiday and a prosperous and healthy New Year!



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HR Academy Essential Training for Managers & Supervisors
Monthly Webinars, 60 to 90 minutes
PRINT & GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION

PGCA Holiday Party



Joshua Wink, Lindenmeyr Munroe and Kathie Hartmans, Quality Bindery Services, Party Sponsors



Jim Bubar, Zenger Group and Mike Keil, Heidelberg



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PGCA SAFETY GROUP MEMBERS RECEIVE DIVIDEND CHECKS IN FOURTH QUARTER 2023

***25% Dividend declared and delivered to participating members**

If your company is one of 70 participants in the PGCA Workers' Compensation Safety Group, you recently received your dividend for the 2022-23 policy year. Group participants received a check equal to 25% of their discounted premium, in addition to the maximum 25% upfront discount they received at their April 2023 renewal. Dividend checks ranged from \$121 up to \$166,350, with the average check totaling \$7,394.

In addition, group members will receive an increased up-front discount at the April 1, 2023 renewal of 32.5%. Is your current carrier offering that kind of savings?

The PGCA Workers' Compensation Safety Group continues to be the best way for printers to purchase NYS Workers' Compensation coverage. The upfront discount, combined with the consistent cash dividends and "best in class" services from Safety Group Manager Gilroy Kernan & Gilroy, delivers a quality program to participating members.

Visit printcommunications.org/insurance-nyswc to complete a no-obligation quote form or contact PGCA at info@printcommunications.org or Andy, Ross or Sarah at GKG (see contact info. on page 4) to see how your company can save on this mandatory coverage. It's a no brainer!



Dividend Checks issued to Participating Members with the average check totaling \$7,394.



Our team of experts will assess your facilities' energy needs, build a custom, client-specific electricity or natural gas procurement strategy, and take the burden of energy management off your plate.

CONTACT A DEDICATED ENERGY CONSULTANT, FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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AS YOUR TRUSTED ENERGY ADVISOR, WE CAN:

- Provide a real-time, apples-to-apples comparison of supplier pricing
- Negotiate on your behalf
- Minimize budgetary risk
- Provide customized energy management solutions
- Set & meet energy efficiency & sustainability goals

PGCA STAFF PRINTS AT BOOK ARTS

Kim Tuzzo and Caroline Wawrzyniec of PGCA staff did the manual labor printing this year's holiday card but many thanks go to Rosemary Williams, pictured below with Caroline, for her friendly and expert technical assistance, as well as her artistry, in making the card a work of art. The card was printed on Mandy the Mangler, a Vandercook letterpress, at Western New York Book Arts, in downtown Buffalo



Our thanks also go to the crew at Hodgins Engraving for creating our logo die, Charlie Launsbach at Lindenmeyr Munroe for donating the paper and Kathie Hartmans at Quality Bindery Services for cutting the stock and folding and scoring the finished card.

Get your hands dirty and take a class at Book Arts! Classes are offered in letterpress and screen printing, Japanese stab binding and more. Find out more at wnybookarts.org.



PUSH BACK

PREPARE TO NEGOTIATE

By Bill Farquharson, Sales Vault

"I love to negotiate," said no one. Ever.

Negotiation means confrontation and disagreement. Negativity swirls all around the subject and it causes a lot of discomfort. What's more, the net result can mean you've won the order but have suffered a loss of some kind as well.

Now, I could give you the top five sales tips on the subject, but you could Google that just as easily as hearing it from me.

I could—and will—advise you to read an excellent book on the subject, "Never Split the Difference" by Chris Voss (or better yet, listen to the audiobook). Interesting, engaging, and entertaining, Voss is a former FBI hostage negotiator who brings his skills to the business world.

But in all the research I did for an upcoming Sales Vault workshop on the subject, nowhere did I find the advice you are about to hear:

Expect it.

Expect to negotiate. You see, I find sales reps are often blindsided when they encounter push back. This is especially true for existing customers. They just accept the reorder, get a quote, and send the number over to the client. But when the customer says, "We've gotten other quotes," they panic. Or when a new customer asks, "Is that your best price?" their immediate reaction is to lower their bid.

You need to approach every encounter with the understanding and expectation that you'll be confronted with a negotiation. Be ready with a response, gang, because when you give your price, it's game over. Your choices are to lower the price or substantiate it. So, be ready.

Short Attention Span Recordings Available Online

Watch the recordings of the past year's Short Attention Span Webinars in the Member Resources section at printcommunications.org. These are quick, to the point webinars on the following topics:

- Building Trust
- She Sells
- Negotiation
- New to Sales
- Sales Fatigue, Burnout and Reset
- Get That Appointment
- Where to Find New Business
- Time Management
- Motivation
- How to Make Every Client Feel Like Your Top Account



Need more in-depth sales training? Check out the Sales Vault, a virtual encyclopedia of weekly sales webinars, templates, live discussions — everything you need to succeed. PGCA members receive a discount on the monthly subscription. Check it out at salesvault.com/partners. Watch your email for the next short attention span webinar in January.

WHO ARE YOUR "A" PLAYERS?

**ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP:
OVERCOMING HURDLES**

By Joe Truncale, Founder & Principal, Alexander Joseph & Associates, Inc.

During a recent client leadership team session, the topic of Top Grading was discussed at length. The conversation centered on ways in which the team could define what distinguished "A", "B", and "C" players. One team member suggested one word to begin the discussion: hurdles.

Here's their take. Suppose your employee is entered in the 400-meter race (that's once around a typical running track). A little way into the race, they encounter a hurdle. Clearly, this hurdle is not supposed to be there (the hurdles are a different event in track and field), but there it is. What does the employee do?

Some employees upon encountering the unexpected hurdle, will stop and contemplate the hurdle. They will decide that since this is something totally unexpected, it is understandable and acceptable that they stop and await further instructions. Some will stop, remain in place, and may actually feel a sense of relief that the hurdle gives them a built-in excuse for stopping and waiting. Still others will see a hurdle off to the side and drag it onto the track, directly in their path so that they too may have a reason to stop running, in effect, manufacturing their own hurdle. After all, no one told them what to do if they encounter a hurdle.

But some, upon encountering the unexpected hurdle, will leap over it, go around it, under it, or simply push it out of the way. In other words, they will do whatever is necessary to stay on track and finish the race. This, according to this team member, is one of the many positive traits of an "A" player. Not bad!



The search for "A" players takes many forms. How to distinguish these exceptional individuals can present a unique set of challenges. A pretty good place to start is to determine whether and to what extent they are critical thinkers and problem solvers. Overcoming unexpected hurdles is a good indication of team members who will add significant value to any roster and will serve as a positive example for their colleagues.

For more ways to identify "A" players for your organization, contact me at joe@ajstrategy.com.

BOOK ARTS ANNUAL FUND
Dec 1, 2023 - Jan 31, 2024

SEE HOW YOUR DONATION DIRECTLY IMPACTED WNY ARTISTS AND LEARNERS OF ALL AGES OVER THE PAST YEAR

ARTISTS & PROGRAMMING

2023

10 Gallery Exhibitions
64 Artists Exhibited
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1 Summer Youth Art Resident
3 Open Mics & Poetry Readings
56 Studio Workshops
17 Local Teaching Artists
182 Attendees
38 Local Poets Featured
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Visit printcommunications.org/events/

- **PGCA HR Conference**
May 2 & 3, 2024
Turning Stone, Verona, NY
- **Americas Print Show**
May 8 & 9, 2024
Huntington Convention Center
Cleveland, OH
- **Raymond A. Bubar Golf Classic**
July 26, 2024
Terry Hills Golf Course
Batavia, NY

WEBINARS

- **HR Academy: Essential Training for Managers & Supervisors**
Series of Monthly Webinars
January 9, 2024 – April 25, 2024
- **Unlocking Sales Success: An Educational Series on Sales Enablement**
Series of Weekly Webinars
January 16 – February 13, 2024

Visit printcommunications.org to access:

PGCA Online Safety Webinars:
17 webinars on mandatory and recommended safety training topics

Print University Webinars:
60+ webinars on print industry fundamentals



MANAGER AND SUPERVISOR TRAINING

HR ACADEMY: ESSENTIAL TRAINING FOR MANAGERS & SUPERVISORS | Monthly Webinar Series



As announced last month, PGCA is pleased to announce the Association's monthly series of 60-to-90-minute webinars on managing employees effectively while complying with employment laws.

Association Counsel Nick Fiorenza and Mike Dodd of the Ferrara Fiorenza law firm will present these programs.

The HR Academy's objectives are to teach managers and supervisors effective HR management skills to improve their day-to-day interaction with employees and minimize the risk of employment-related litigation.

Sign up for one webinar or the remaining five. Visit printcommunications.org/events/ or contact us info@printcommunications.org for more detail on the series.

Next webinar on the schedule:

- How to be an Effective Leader in Your Company**
January 9, 2024 – 10:30 am

Whether they realize it or not, your supervisors are leaders of your business. Effective management today requires so much more than core technical knowledge. Today's workforce has changed dramatically, and effective management demands an appreciation of this leadership role. Many supervisors are promoted into supervisory positions from production positions. All too often, these supervisors have difficulty transitioning from "friend" to supervisor.

This session will help participants:

(1) acquire a set of leadership skills that will increase their ability to lead and influence others more effectively, and (2) enhance their ability to prepare for important one-on-one discussions at work, based on an assessment of the relationships involved.

Session 2	JANUARY 9, 2024 — 10:30 am How to be an Effective Leader in Your Company	
Session 3	FEBRUARY 15, 2024 — 10:30 am Employment Documentation (Finally) Done Right!	
Session 4	MARCH 7, 2024 — 10:30 am What You Need to Know about Managing Disability Related Absences	
Session 5	APRIL 11, 2024 — 10:30 am Eliminating the Root Causes of Employment Discrimination and Harassment	
Session 6	APRIL 25, 2024 — 10:30 am Turning Around the Non-Performing Employee (or Turning Them Loose)	

GET YOUR COPY TODAY!

WAGE + BENEFITS SURVEY RESULTS AVAILABLE

The Print & Graphic Communications Association Wage + Benefits Report **is the most reliable labor management report** in the graphic communications industry, with 410 companies participating, and over 14,135 compensation data points from across North America. The Wage + Benefits 2023 Survey captured wages for most industry positions in sixteen categories, segmented by region and company size. The survey also captured policies for overtime, vacation, PTO, sick-time, and health insurance. Reports were also compiled for Inplant, Packaging, Union and Digital.



Participating PGCA members receive a free copy of the reports. If you did not receive your free reports, which were emailed a few weeks ago, contact info@printcommunications.org and we'll get them off to you. Survey results are available for purchase by non-participating companies.

UNLOCKING SALES SUCCESS

UNLOCKING SALES SUCCESS: AN EDUCATIONAL SERIES ON SALES ENABLEMENT

Series of weekly webinars

January 16 - February 13, 2024 | 12 to 1 pm

Embark on a transformative journey through a comprehensive five-session workshop designed to empower sales professionals with cutting-edge strategies and tools in the dynamic landscape of sales enablement. In this immersive program, participants will delve into the core principles of sales enablement, gaining insights into optimizing processes, enhancing collaboration, and leveraging technology for success.

The series will be led by Kelly Mallozzi, popular sales trainer and co-host of the monthly Short Attention Span webinars. Here's what will be covered each week:

January 16, 2024 | Session 1:
Foundation of Sales Enablement

January 23, 2024 | Session 2:
Hiring, Onboarding and Developing Sales Talent

January 30, 2024 | Session 3:
Strategic Sales Communication

February 6, 2024 | Session 4:
Measuring Success and Continuous Improvement

February 13, 2024 | Session 5:
Review of Key Takeaways & Action Items

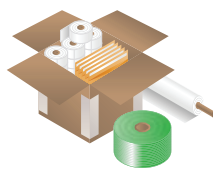
For more detail on each session and to register, visit printcommunications.org/events/

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PERSONAL LISTENING DEVICES IN THE WORKPLACE

By Stephen Stankavage, PGCA Director of Environmental, Safety & Health

Greetings safety fans!

This month I thought I would talk about a topic that members have approached me about. Many of them are experiencing increased pressure from employees due to recent technological advances. Personal listening devices have exploded in popularity in the last 10 years with the invention of Bluetooth connectivity. This format can deliver exceptional sound quality without having the bulky wires attached to a playing device. Moreover, the headphones have been integrated into just about every electronic device we may need to carry, giving us the gift of music, audio books, podcasts, all while still being able to answer phone calls without removing our phones from our pockets. And all without infringing on anyone else's sensibilities.

Because of this, you now see ear buds in peoples' ears just about everywhere; the gym, the subway, the mall, doctor's offices and in the park. So, it's only common that you would see them in the workplace, right? After all, most listening devices now come with noise cancellation which seems like a natural fit for the workplace. Many employers have accepted them like a gift from the gods. There are no longer multiple radios competing in the workplace. The reality and gift that music provides to people is that it lowers stress levels and makes monotonous and tedious work more bearable for workers.

It also increases their morale and positive emotional state, making happier workers who are usually more productive over the course of the workday. What PLD's also provide is the fact that everyone can listen to any type of music they wish without disturbing or offending their fellow co-workers WITH the added benefit of noise cancellation. Many Employers are thinking it's a win-win that technology has finally provided a perfect solution, right? Yeah ... not so fast.

First, let's get the obvious OSHA requirements out of the way. If your workplace, or areas of your workplace, are above 85 dBs Time Weighted Average over an 8-hour period, the employer must provide employees with hearing protection. This is done through a developed and written "hearing conservation program" where the noise levels are determined through evaluation and multiple hearing protection devices are provided to employees

If your workplace, or areas of your workplace, are above 85 dBs Time Weighted Average over an 8-hour period, the employer must provide employees with hearing protection.

with a documented noise reduction rating (NRR). The NRR must provide enough protection to lower the ambient noise levels to below 85 dBs.

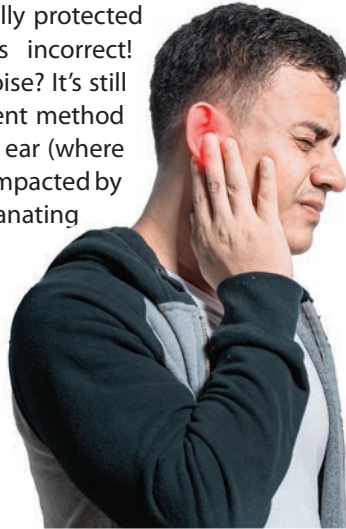
OSHA only accepts items approved by the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH), a division of the Centers for Disease Control, as acceptably rated for personal protective equipment. There are no PLD's on the market that are approved by NIOSH.

Under appendix B to 29 CFR 1910.95, OSHA provides methods for determining the proper hearing protection that employers need. The most important item here is, whatever the NRR is on the packaging of the hearing protection should be subtracted by 7 to get a more accurate noise reduction rating. For example, if the NRR of the hearing protection is 23, you should subtract 7, which equals 16. Therefore, if the noise measurement of the facility is 91 dBs, subtracting 16 because of the NRR brings the noise level your employees are exposed to down to 75 dBs. Well within acceptable standards for OSHA.

Now, here is where it gets confusing for employers. PLD manufacturers now state that many of their products now offer either active or passive noise cancellation. Passive noise cancellation is achieved by physical features like the design or materials used in the device. They block outside noise by physically blocking outside sound waves not generated by the PLD to enter the ear. Active noise cancellation uses more advanced technology to detect and analyze the sound patterns of incoming noise and then generates a mirror "anti-noise". Both designs are meant to increase the **sound quality** of the listening device, not necessarily to protect the wearer from noise. What you must remember is, sound is still reaching the ear through the speakers of the listening device. And that's what you need to worry about, the total noise! Noise is still reaching the ears.

Furthermore, the newest technology of PLDs is the bone-conductive Bluetooth listening devices. If you haven't heard of this technology yet, here's the scoop. These PLD's do not sit in the ear canals like typical PLD's. They sit outside of the canals and transmit sound vibrations through the skull to the bones of the inner ear, leaving the ear canals open to hear other sounds. To an outside listener, you won't hear a thing, but to the wearer, they sound just like you are hearing music from everywhere!

Truthfully, it's actually pretty neat technology. However, employees think that, because the ear canal is open to accept canal hearing protection, they are fully protected from the workplace noise. This is incorrect! Remember what I said about total noise? It's still there! It's just transmitted in a different method by bypassing the eardrum. The inner ear (where hearing damage occurs) is still being impacted by the various noise transmissions emanating from the workplace AND the PLD's.



Because of these new technologies, many manufacturers are now stating that their devices are "OSHA approved" or "100% OSHA compliant." This is a flat out lie of marketing. OSHA has stated on many occasions that the agency DOES NOT register, certify, approve, or otherwise endorse commercial or private sector entities, products, or services – period, end of story. OSHA only accepts items approved by the National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH), a division of the Centers for Disease Control, as acceptably rated for personal protective equipment. There are no PLD's on the market that are approved by NIOSH.

Moreover, if you look at many of the manufacturer's websites, they state that hearing loss can still occur even with noise cancellation. Here's Apple's disclaimer: *"Listening to sound at high volumes may permanently damage your hearing. Background noise, as well as continued exposure to high volume levels, can make sounds seem quieter than they actually are. Check the volume after inserting AirPods or AirPods Pro in your ears, or putting AirPods Max on your head, and before playing audio."*



Federal OSHA has been rather annoyingly vague about the subject of personal listening devices. OSHA has stated that "there are no specific OSHA regulations that prohibit the use of headphones on worksites." However, while the use of headphones on worksites may be permissible at managerial discretion, such use may create or augment other hazards apart from noise. In a 1987 letter of interpretation OSHA states *"special earmuffs equipped with volume-limited music for use in monotonous high noise jobs to protect employee hearing but at the same time allowing them to enjoy background music will be considered compliant."* *"The use of Walkman in noise environments in excess of Tables G-16 and D-1 is a violation. Ear buds, speakers, or the like are not an acceptable form of hearing protection, nor will the like be worn over hearing protecting devices."* So, while OSHA offers no direct guidance on the use of PLD's, trust me, they will cite you if their use creates or increases the hazards of the workplace.

What should employers do then, given the above information? We all want a happy and safe workforce. So, allow PGCA to be the bad guy if needed. As a Safety director for the printing industry, I feel PLD's in the workplace can be very dangerous for employee safety, aside from the noise.

Hazards of PLD's in the workplace:

- **They can be distracting, leading employees to lose their situational awareness.**
- **Employees can develop tunnel vision to their surroundings and may step out into the path of a forklift or place their hands someplace they shouldn't.**
- **They may misunderstand voice commands and fail to hear emergency alarms and warnings.**
- **PLD's can also increase the noise level exposures of your workplace to above 90 dBs leading to over exposure and the chance of a hearing loss injury.**
- **OSHA has stated that any powered industrial truck operation while wearing PLD's will be cited as distracted driving.**

However, if you do allow employees to wear PLD's in the workplace make sure you follow this guidance:

- **The combined noise to the ears does not exceed 85 dB's. This is going to be very difficult to control from a managerial perspective.**
- **Headsets or earbuds are not allowed to be worn under, over or in place of hearing protection.**
- **The use of PLD's does not create or increase any hazard that would keep the employer from providing a safe and healthy workplace (i.e., working around machinery with hazardous points of operation that clothing or body parts can be drawn into).**
- **Establish redundant methods of emergency alarm awareness.**

In closing, PGCA stands ready to discuss your concerns with personal listening devices used by your employees. If you have any further questions or would like PGCA to evaluate PLD usage in your workplace, please feel free to contact me. Keep them safe, friends!

About the author: Steve Stankavage has 25 years' experience in Environmental, Safety and Health with 16 years' experience in the printing industry. Steve came to GAA, now PGCA, from the defense contracting industry but also has EHS experience in heavy construction, wind energy, waste management and academia. Contact Steve with your safety questions and concerns at sstankavage@printcommunications.org or call (570) 579-6497.





THE ONE STOP SHOP

In recent years, the professional print buyer has joined the dinosaurs in the world of the extinct. The trend has been partly fueled by the belief that the internet changed everything and that geeks rule, and partly driven by the drive to cut non-core staff.

The first result of this is that we are challenged to show clients that print is an inescapable part of a campaign. The good news is that the customers are learning this. The better news is that the missing professional print buyer presents us with an opportunity to manage and drive the campaign, not just to quote the print. This does not necessarily mean that we must become an advertising agency, but it does mean that we must become the “one stop shop” for the customer’s graphics needs. We must think beyond quoting the print run to putting together the entire project from birth to mail.

Good print brokers have already figured out how to do this, and it isn’t that hard to put together. It’s really a matter of learning about the customer’s business by being a good listener. Also, we must be open to buying out whatever the customer needs for the project and managing the result.

The best news is that the reward for success is being totally liberated from the “joy” of being low bidder.

ONE STOP SHOP – PART II

The business strategy of being a “one stop shop” is a proven one and adopted by many in the industry. A key element in those firms’ success has been an integrated web-to-print solution allowing the client’s staff (who are usually digital natives) to easily order their print needs without having to interface with another person.

Not having a web-to-print solution or continuing to maintain a legacy option are not

Continued on page 14

FIND SALES IN LOCAL BUSINESSES

HOW BUSINESSES CAN SAVE LOCAL PRINTERS FROM THEMSELVES

By Deborah Corn, Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse

There is a local shopping area of retail stores, restaurants, and businesses a mile from my apartment. It’s where I do my grocery shopping, dry cleaning, package sending, eyebrow waxing, get sandwiches, breakfast, Mexican, Chinese, and Thai food, and order pizza for delivery. It’s where I occasionally buy wine, visit T-Mobile, and grab a smoothie. There are additional stores and restaurants, but I don’t shop or eat in/take out from them.

The ONLY local business above that communicates with me is the pizzeria. I have been in this neighborhood for seven years.

Sure, I get emails now and then from the grocery store and dry cleaner. T-Mobile reaches out on a national level through multiple channels. But none of these are communicating with me. They are broadcasting one-sided messages based on their marketing plans and sales efforts, not based on my behavior, purchase history, or relevant needs.

Since the pandemic, several of the businesses closed including a location for a regional dentist, a Firehouse Subs, a gym, and an insurance office. A few moved in; a tattoo shop, a frozen yogurt store, a gift store, and a smoke shop (not a dispensary – they sell cigarettes, cigars, and smoking tools of all kinds).

In the last two years, the biggest retail spaces have changed hands. The gym has a new owner and name, there is a restaurant with a new owner and name. This space has been an Indian restaurant, a Crabby Bills, vacant for months in between, and now it is Buttermilk. This breakfast/comfort food spot looks like it will stick. I certainly hope so. Robots bring yummy food to tables – fun!

A tanning salon opened on one end where the walk-in hair-cutting store closed, and one closed on the other end making way for a donut shop that just closed a month ago after being open for two years.

All the retail/restaurant spaces in this area are managed by ONE guy, from one commercial real estate company. I see his poster in all the empty store windows, fading from the sun pounding on it week after week, month after month, year after year. The Firehouse Subs space has been available for lease for at least four years, and the SAME poster is in the window.

I don’t know the specific reasons why these businesses have opened, closed, or changed hands. **I do know, however, that no one local in printing and marketing is helping them open, stay open and create, maintain, and sustain relationships with customers and the community that surrounds this shopping area.**

Here is your mission. BE PROACTIVE!

Drive around your neighborhood where local shopping, eating, and services are concentrated. Make notes about which businesses are there, were there, are coming soon, or need occupants. Write down the names of all the commercial realtors, property owners, and management companies listed on posters and associated with the stores, and the bigger property they were built on.

That is one hell of a relevant prospect list.

Do your research. What time is the area the busiest? What businesses are most active during this time? What businesses need traffic at other times? For example, a restaurant that opens at 11 am doesn't benefit from local patronage before then and may stay open when most of the other businesses are closed.

Make your plan. How can you help each business? How can you collectively help all the businesses in the shopping area? How can you help the commercial relators?

Here is an idea to get you started. I presented this during the pandemic, but it remains topical and relevant for this situation. You will have to do some work upfront, but it is doable.

Create a custom mailer for the shopping location.

Price out mailing a standard-size envelope that doesn't require additional postage and contains information about the businesses in this specific location. Each business gets its own insert. Figure out how many businesses can be included in the mailing to stay within the weight limit of standard postage.

Figure out costs for weekly, bi-monthly, and monthly mailings to residences within two miles of the shopping area. The U.S.P.S. offers a program called Every Door Direct Mail that is perfect for this. By searching zip codes, you can get pricing and know the quantities to print for each.

Assume that these businesses CANNOT create marketing materials themselves. Work with a designer and create templates for the inserts. After you have their logo and basic information about each, the businesses can update for sales and specials via email or a customer portal if you have access to those.

Figure out how much this will cost. Divide that by the minimum and maximum number of businesses that can be included to have a range of pricing that gets lower as more businesses participate.

Add value through a menu of options. Businesses can stand out with a spot varnish or soft-touch coating, by using thicker paper or having a foldable or die-cut insert, for example. Each business can decide how it wants to present itself and if it wants to spend more money on its insert that is their choice.



Once they see results – more foot traffic, more sales, more people on their websites and connecting on social media, more people in for “happy hour” with a coupon or calling about leasing ... then you can start expanding your offers to each individual business.

Does the tanning salon have SWAG? Does the frozen yogurt store have a punch card to keep track of purchases before a free one? Does the dry cleaner have a wrapped vehicle? What are the restaurants putting in takeout bags? Are the signs in need of a makeover? How can you help the commercial realtors with those old posters – and PS, none of them by me have QR codes!

Each of the businesses has a vested interest in the success of the shopping area. More traffic is good for everyone. Awareness of all the stores in the area is good for everyone. Shopping locally is good for everyone. Helping the neighborhood thrive is good for everyone.

There is a significant amount of print and marketing help you can offer these businesses after you get your foot in the door, show results, and establish trust. Once you have a solid case study you can take this show down the road to the next shopping area, and the next, and the next.

While getting new, sticky customers is certainly good for you, showing how the power of print drives sales, marketing, customer communications, and local loyalty is priceless.

Shop Long and Prosper!



Deborah Corn is the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse at Print Media Centr, a Print Buyerologist, international industry speaker and blogger, and the cultivator of Print Production Professionals, the #1 print group on LinkedIn. She provides printspiration and resources to print and marketing professionals through education, events, Podcasts From The Printerverse, ProjectPeacock.TV, and an array of community-lifting initiatives including Girls Who Print, Elevate Print, International Print Day, and Print Across America.

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QUOINS2PIXELS CONTINUED

great solutions for today's print provider. Thus, it's time to take a serious look at upgrading or installing a print portal, and there are two key elements which must be considered. Integration and UI.

Integration is essential to allow the proper workflow, invoicing, and inventory management with minimum touchpoints. While there is a valid argument for turn-key software, this can be extremely expensive in transition costs. Stand-alone solutions promote their ability to digitally interface with other software, but often require additional software and/or programming for data transfer and uploads.

UI (User Interface) is often overlooked and is the key to the system's success. Regardless of how great the backend works (the printer's data collection, billing, etc.), if the client's users grow frustrated with how the system works for them, it creates a conflict point which will be detrimental to sustaining the business relationship.

While it's easy to look at this decision as another capital decision, it's much more. We need to analyze the hard cost of software and maintenance along with the cost of transition time and lost productivity. We also need to make sure that the software will provide a useful tool for our present and future clients and offer a clear transition path as we grow. Whether stepping up for the first time or upgrading, one needs to remember that this solution touches every part of your business and needs to start with the customer and then progress to internal needs.

The Price Is . . .

Your customer or prospect tells you what they need, and your mission is to give them a price.

This should not be an opportunity to turn your estimator loose to crunch a lot of numbers as the point of the exercise is to get as much as the customer/prospect will pay, but also get the order—leaving money on the table or getting nothing is not the path to high profit.

Reasonably, you need a starting point, but it need not be more than a number drawn from an internal price list. The heavy lifting is done by thinking about the customer relationship—if it's a long-time customer who trusts your work, the pricing can be on the high side. On the other hand, if it's a prospect, the pricing needs to be lower so that you have a chance to get the work and build a relationship.

Finally, you need to think about the importance of the project to the buyer. If it's the centerpiece of a new product launch and, better still, way behind schedule—price is no object—they just need to get it done. However, if it's a no priority throwaway, they have the time to shop and probably will.

The Next Step . . .

You've spent decades of your life building your business, but now, your golden years are here. What then is the future of your business? Leaving it to your children or key people, selling it to another firm, or just continuing into the in-definite future?

The first step in answering this question is determining what your business would be worth in each of these scenarios. Reaching out to consultants with extensive industry experience is crucial in establishing probable values so you can make the right decision for you and your family.

About the authors: quoins2pixels is written by Bob Lindgren and Joe Polanco. As a value-added service of PGC, they are available to expand on these articles or aid with projects. They can be reached via email at bob.lindgren815@gmail.com or jspolanco49@gmail.com.



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INSIGHT INTO THE PRINTING INDUSTRY

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PGCA is pleased to provide members with reports based on surveys conducted by Ralph Williams and his colleagues at the Jones College of Business at Middle Tennessee State University, in conjunction with 15 regional printing associations. This quarter, there are three reports for your review. Contact us at info@printcommunications.org to request a copy of the reports or download them at printcommunications.org under Benchmarking in the members-only section. Thanks to the members who participated in the survey this fall. We are also indebted to Ralph and his fellow professors for providing these valuable reports!

Branding Your Firm as a Good Place to Work: Employer Branding

This report defines and explains two key concepts: an Employee Value Proposition

(EVP) and Employer Branding. A model is presented that illustrates their findings. The survey closes with survey participants' responses to open-ended questions about their employer branding approaches.

The Printing Industry: A Big Picture of Revenue Trends, Business Outlook, Other Knowledge, and Actionable Thoughts

In this report, results are shared from the October 2023 study that provide insights related to revenue, business outlook, customers purchasing more or less printed products, and customer turnover. The study closes with thoughts on how to proactively address this environment.

The Printing Industry: A Big Picture of Inflation, Paper Supply, and Postal Mail Rates, with Actionable Thoughts

In this report, insights are provided as to how our industry is affected by external factors, including inflation, paper supply, and postal mail rates. Findings are shared regarding printing cash reserves and employees per \$1m in revenue. The study concludes with printing firm leaders' thoughts about a potential recession with actionable thoughts shared throughout our report.

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