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MEMBER-DRIVEN HR FORUM KICKS OFF

Real Questions, Practical Answers from PGCA's Association Counsel

Our Association's first HR Live Town Hall brought members together for an open, practical conversation about today's HR and employment law challenges. If you couldn't be there, here's the substance and the energy you missed – and why the next HR Live, October 30th, should be on your calendar.

Real-World Issues & Member Takeaways

Association Counsel Nick Fiorenza opened with a concise overview: federal rules haven't dramatically changed, but enforcement priorities have. Members should expect a different tone at the federal level – even as state agencies continue to enforce long-standing protections robustly.



Key themes from the opening remarks included: shifting EEOC priorities (greater scrutiny of DEI and more openness to reverse-discrimination claims); renewed debate over disparate impact (neutral rules that disproportionately harm protected groups); ongoing flux around gender identity protections; and active state-level enforcement. Members also heard quick updates on NLRB, DOL and FTC priorities, and a reminder that often overlooked retaliation claims are top "hidden" liability for PGCA members.

The 14-Interview Investigation: Thoroughness Wins

Our first member topic involved a universal challenge for HR executives and other managers tasked with workplace leadership: when and how to conduct an investigation into an employee's claim of outright discrimination or simply "toxic" workplace conduct. The member shared a recent investigation involving alleged hostile work environment and discrimination. The team interviewed 14 individuals and found the claims unsubstantiated – while surfacing a different issue: documentation gaps around training.

Two takeaways resonated with the group:

- ☐ A careful, well-documented process often protects the organization even when allegations don't pan out.
- ☐ Investigations commonly reveal process fixes (e.g., formalizing who trained whom, when, and on what).

Nick's tip: build investigation muscle – timeline the facts, identify witnesses early, document every step, and close with a written outcome and any remedial actions.



Check out the topics discussed at the first HR Live webinar.



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COVER CONTINUED

Secret Phone Recordings: Common, Legal Nuances – and How to Defuse

A highlight for many: how to handle employees who record meetings or conversations with supervisors on their phones. In one-party consent states (like New York), an employee who is part of the conversation can in most situations lawfully record it. While such recordings can often be excluded or at least diffused if matters proceed to formal hearings, this is often not the case. State agencies determining whether claims have merit are often persuaded by even incomplete recordings during intake and probable-cause reviews.

Practical strategies were discussed:

- ☐ Assume you're being recorded. Train supervisors to choose words carefully and keep conversations professional and factual.
- ☐ Ask upfront (for new matters): "Are you recording this? We prefer that you don't." If the employee says no, document the response. Should the employee later produce a recording, at least you can establish that they were not being truthful with you.
- ☐ Avoid retaliation pitfalls: If a recording issue surfaces in the middle of a pending complaint, changing approach just for that employee can be framed as retaliation. Apply practices consistently and prospectively.
- ☐ Policy with federal labor law awareness: A narrow workplace-recording policy may be appropriate but ensure it doesn't chill protected concerted activity.

Bottom line: the best defense is a culture where employees don't feel the need to record – through respectful communication, consistent process, and timely follow-up.

RIFs and Rehiring the Same Role: Risk Calculus and Documentation

Another member described a scenario many employers face: a reduction in force (RIF) is implemented, then months later the business needs to fill that role again – with similar title but revised responsibilities. Do laid off employees need to be brought back? Nick's guidance emphasized risk awareness and documentation:

- ☐ Default presumption: Absent contrary documentation, an employee separated purely for economic reasons is presumed capable of the job held (or a close variant).
- ☐ If you don't rehire them: Be prepared to show how the job materially changed and why those changes matter or be prepared to fully document performance shortcomings.
- ☐ Be sure to review possible "protected status" issues – prior disability leaves or other protected time off included.
- ☐ Mitigate at the time of RIF: Consider severance with tailored release language, adverse-impact review, and clear business justification files.
- ☐ Practical step: Before external posting, consider outreach to affected employees when feasible, especially if the role is substantially similar.

The group also noted how performance evaluations can undercut later arguments – an overall "satisfactory" rating invites questions about why a similarly-scoped role wouldn't be offered back.

When 'Personality Clashes' Morph Into Discrimination Claims

What seems like a routine conflict can quickly be framed around protected categories (race, gender, disability, pregnancy, etc.). Members reinforced the value of early HR escalation, consistent complaint channels, and supervisor training to recognize when an issue has legal implications. The consensus: treat "just a conflict" with the same care as a potential discrimination complaint – document, investigate, and close the loop.

Supervisor Documentation: The Everyday Shield

Frontline supervisors often make – or break – your legal posture. The session reiterated basics that are easy to say and hard to do consistently:

- ☐ Write fact-based notes; avoid labels or conclusions (e.g., "lazy," "bad attitude").
- ☐ Apply rules consistently across employees and shifts.
- ☐ Use progressive discipline properly; maintain a paper trail that aligns with policy.

The group discussed the general need for more supervisory training opportunities on this topic and using the HR Live platform for such training.

AI in HR: Use It – But With Guardrails

Members asked where AI is showing up in HR and what the pitfalls are. One broad AI category is its use in human resources management programs – hiring, documentation, evaluations – for example. The challenge is ensuring that neutral criteria is maintained. The second broad category involves use of AI in the workplace by our employees. Advice: assume employees are using AI somewhere – from drafting documentation to estimating or customer communications. Build a simple, living AI-use policy that requires disclosure when AI assisted a deliverable; sets quality-control expectations; and prohibits relying on AI outputs without human review.

Sample AI Policy Available:

While Nick is not generally a fan of samples, templates and "cut and paste" policies, he has developed a draft AI policy to get you started. Contact PGCA at info@printcommunications.org to request a copy.

Key HR Live Takeaways

Workplace Investigations

- ☐ Assign a neutral investigator; define scope and timeline on day one.
- ☐ Gather documents first; prepare a question bank; interview in logical order.
- ☐ Document each step; issue a written finding and remedial actions.

Recording-Aware Conversations

- ☐ Train supervisors to assume recording; keep tone professional and factual.
- ☐ For new matters, ask and document: "Are you recording?" Apply consistently.
- ☐ Review/refresh any recording policy for NLRA compliance; avoid retaliation cues.

RIF & Rehire Discipline

- ☐ Memorialize business rationale; run adverse-impact analysis; align evaluations.
- ☐ If roles return soon, assess material changes; consider outreach to affected staff.
- ☐ Use severance/waivers thoughtfully; ensure language fits your state's jurisdiction.

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FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR PGCA MEMBERS**NEED RELIEF FROM HIGH WORKERS' COMPENSATION COSTS?**

PGCA and Insurance Partner Gilroy Kernan & Gilroy are conducting a feasibility study to evaluate the development of a regional Workers' Compensation program tailored exclusively for our membership. Help us by submitting your data in a few clicks.

Print & Graphic Communications Association (PGCA) has offered a Workers' Compensation Safety Group program in New York for 30 years that offers unique upfront discounts and back-end dividends to 80 PGCA members. The PGCA Safety Group is the best performing workers' comp program in New York State.

PGCA is excited to announce the launch of a feasibility study to evaluate the development of a regional Workers' Compensation program tailored exclusively for our membership that would expand the NYS model to the rest of the states in PGCA's territory.

This initiative would build on the tremendous success of the NYS Safety Group, which has provided participating members with significant premium savings, dividend returns, and long-term rate stability, all while maintaining a strong focus on safety and claims management.

To guide this study, PGCA is working closely with our long-time insurance advisors:



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Their collective experience in building and managing high-performing workers' compensation programs will be critical to evaluating whether a new regional program can be structured to deliver savings, safety resources, and claims support that align with the needs of our industry.

What's next?

Members are being asked to confidentially share general workers' comp data such as class codes, premiums, and claims history. Your participation is entirely voluntary—but your input is vital to assess whether a custom PGCA program can deliver real value. **Access the survey portal using the QR code above or go to <https://printcommunications.org/compstudy> to get started. Submit your data by November 1st.**

We are excited about the potential to replicate the NY Safety Group's success and provide members with a superior option to the traditional workers' compensation marketplace. Stay tuned for updates as the study progresses and we look forward to sharing findings later this year. Contact PGCA or any of the GKG staff listed with questions.

Link to video: Ross, Andy and Sarah talk about the Workers' Comp feasibility study and its potential for savings. <http://bit.ly/GKGvideo>





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H.R. 2441
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URGENT: LEGISLATION THREATENS PAPER-BASED COMMUNICATIONS AND THE PRINTING INDUSTRY

Congress is currently considering legislation — **H.R. 2441 and S. 1877** — that would make **electronic delivery the default** for many essential financial and personal documents, requiring consumers to opt in to continue receiving **paper-based communications**. Visit <https://bit.ly/PGCAactioncenter> to **quickly send a message to your elected officials**.

While the bills are positioned as supporting modernization and digital access, the truth is they represent a **direct threat to the printing industry and the right to consumer choice**.

What's at Stake for the Printing Industry

If passed, this legislation would:

- **Diminish consumer access** to paper-based communications, especially for seniors, rural communities, and low-income individuals without reliable broadband.
- **Reduce demand** for printed financial statements and disclosures — a critical revenue stream for printers, paper producers, and mailing services.
- **Jeopardize data security** by pushing sensitive personal information into less secure digital channels.
- **Undermine an industry** that supports over **7.9 million U.S. jobs** and contributes **\$1.9 trillion in annual sales revenue**.

Additionally, the proposed shift could result in **\$2 billion in annual losses to the U.S. Postal Service**, further destabilizing mail delivery services that many printers rely on.

Why It Matters to You

As a member of the printing industry, your business relies on strong demand for paper-based communication. This legislation threatens that demand by removing paper as the default option — pushing consumers into digital delivery unless they take specific action to opt in.

It's not just a policy change — it's a forced migration away from print.

Take Action Now

We urge every member to contact their U.S. Senators and Representatives today and voice strong opposition to **H.R. 2441 and S. 1877**. Visit <https://bit.ly/PGCAactioncenter> to quickly send a message to your elected officials.

Amplify the Message — Please share this alert with:

- ✓ Your employees
- ✓ Customers and vendors
- ✓ Industry partners and peers

The more voices we raise, the louder our message becomes.

MEMBER NEWS

HAPPY RETIREMENT, KATHIE & CHUCK AND QUALITY BINDERY SERVICES!

One of the industry's biggest champions and most memorable people, Kathie Hartmans and Chuck Stachowiak, co-owners of Quality Bindery Services in Buffalo, have closed the business and retired after 32 years of service. Besides their bindery services, Quality Bindery Services preserved the memories of countless



people with their bible and rare book repair service. Kathie always had the latest industry scoop and usually a quick answer when we needed an industry resource. She served as Chairwoman of Printing Industries Alliance from 2020 to 2023 after more than 20 years of board service. Kathie was quoted in an article at the time her term as Chair was up:

"I'm surprised with the excuses people give for not joining [the Association]. It's a proven fact that people do business with people they know, like and trust. The connections you make are the primary benefit of joining a trade association. You meet others in your field, find potential piggy-back service partners, meet suitable mentors, and constantly network."

Chuck could always be counted on to make you laugh at Association parties, and his foursome, including his brother Danny, would often have the best score (and the most laughs) at the annual WNY golf outing.

Over 50 printers, vendors, family and friends gathered at WNY Book Arts on September 30th to pay tribute to Kathie, Chuck and what they have meant to the printing community in Western New York and beyond. A few of the people from the party sent their memories of Kathie and Chuck:

"I first came to know both Kathie and Chuck in the early 90's at M&M Bork when located at 27 Metcalf Street in downtown Buffalo. It didn't take long before we were figuratively connected at the hip. Plotting, planning, quoting and then producing and delivering were on the docket, on a weekly or even daily basis. The successes were countless, which boiled down to meeting commitments with quality products. It wasn't always easy and at times we missed the mark, but that is where respect, friendship and appreciation were formed. We grew our businesses and families side by side for decades, often seeking counsel or opinion on topics outside each other's wheelhouse. Keller Bros. & Miller could have never grown into the company it is today without the bindery and more importantly the support of Kathie, Chuck, Dave and their staff. Will they be missed? You can bet your last sheet of paper on it."

— **Ralph J. Salerno**, Keller Bros. & Miller, Buffalo, NY

"Congrats to Kathie & Chuck on their retirement! Kathie not only did a great job while on the [PIA] board and as a chairperson – she also ran a great business and took care of her employees better than anyone I know."

She has a huge heart and would help anyone in the industry in whatever way she could through the years."



Chuck and Kathie are two of the nicest people I have ever met; funny, always laughing. I still wonder if they are married or not but that's beside the point."

Enjoy a long, well-deserved retirement!"

— **David Carver**, Nosco, Inc., Lockport, NY

Thank you, Kathie and Chuck, for everything you have done for the print community. You are both irreplaceable and are already greatly missed. See you at the next party!



BOARD MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

PGCA BOARD CONVENES IN GETTYSBURG

PGCA board members and staff gathered in Gettysburg, PA in September to discuss Association business, strategize the Association's future and enjoy some camaraderie. The board members listened to a presentation by Jay Ziegler, President and Operating Partner, Jamie McLennan, General Manager and Senior Sales Associate and Cassie Soucia, Marketing Director, from Innvoke, headquartered in Cranbury, NJ. Innvoke recently re-branded after a series of acquisitions. They were asked to evaluate PGCA's marketing including website, social media, email blasts and printed newsletter and provide their input on strengthening PGCA's brand. We are in the process of incorporating many of their excellent observations. Thank you, Cassie, Jamie and Jay, for taking the time (on a Saturday!) to offer your expert opinions and positive comments!



Top: Some of the board members, staff and partners on a haunted pub crawl. (Left to right), Charlie Olivo, Perfect Communications, Adam Silver, Worth Higgins, Kim Tuzzo, PGCA, Andy Biernat, Gilroy Kernan & Gilroy (GKG), Bob Schwartz and Kathy Holmes, K & W Finishing, Glen (PGCA Chairman) and Janet Boehmer, Sentinel Innovation, Ross Kraft, GKG, Shane Chatham, Flower City Printing and Tim Freeman, PGCA.

Bottom: Board members listening to the presentation by Cassie Soucia, Jamie McLennan and Jay Ziegler, Innvoke.



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SNACKABLE BENCHMARKS

MOTIVATION: THE REAL MVP (SORRY, COFFEE)

By Kelly Mallozzi, Principal, SuccessinPrint and Vice President and Program Director, Girls Who Print

Motivation: it's the secret sauce that keeps sales teams in the game. So why do we keep treating it like background music? In the print world (where coffee runs out faster than ink), motivation absolutely deserves top billing.



Motivation Isn't a Magic Pill

Frankly, nobody "wakes up motivated" every day, and anyone who tells you otherwise is misguided. One day you're ready to show up, do the work, and crush your goals; the next, you'd give a kidney for a new qualified lead. The kicker? That's normal! Human beings are not robots, and sales managers need to stop pretending that one motivational speech fixes everything.

Ask any rep: what fires them up changes depending on the month, the market, and what's going on at home and in the broader world. Some folks want public praise; others just want a decent podcast and the freedom to work while wearing comfy footwear.

Tiny Goals, Big Wins

You can't bulldoze through Mega-sized sales targets and expect people not to collapse. Break those monster goals into snackable benchmarks: book five calls, land one solid proposal, get a "yes!" from that notorious tough customer. When those micro-wins happen? Celebrate it. Confetti, praise, awkward high-fives. Celebrate big and celebrate often. Why wait for the destination when the journey is a game worth playing hard every step of the way?

Flexibility: Stop Playing Teacher's Pet

Want a motivated team? Quit micromanaging schedules like it's 1985. Flexible work hours aren't trendy perks. They're the difference between creative pros showing up or checking out for good. If someone does their best work after their kid's soccer game, let them! The result: fewer burnout Fridays, more surprise wins. Motivation skyrockets when people can actually live their lives.

Put Motivation Front and Center

Market shifts? Supply chain drama? As if sales wasn't tough enough. Motivation is the only thing that'll keep everyone moving, brainstorming, and not bolting for greener pastures. Let motivation take center stage.

How? Rethink goals often, listen, and celebrate anytime a rep moves the ball down the field. Sales is a grind, but with enough motivation (and yes, a little snark), teams can turn chaos into pure momentum.

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NOVEMBER 13, 2025: CULTURE BRIEF

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NOVEMBER 20, 2025: SALES BRIEF

Fearless on the Phone: Overcoming Call Reluctance



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competition and start putting aside your best masterpieces in print.

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VIRGINIA GOLF OUTING RECAP

VIRGINIA GOLF OUTING A BIG HIT!

The Virginia Golf Tournament was held on October 7th with 18 foursomes enjoying a beautiful day at Hunting Hawk Golf Club in Glen Allen, VA. The original date in September was rained out, although the golfers that showed up that day enjoyed an impromptu networking lunch that Mike Vares was able to put together at the last minute.

Our thanks to Adam Silver, Worth Higgins and PGCA Board member, for using all his methods of persuasion to help make the outing such a success. Thanks again Adam!



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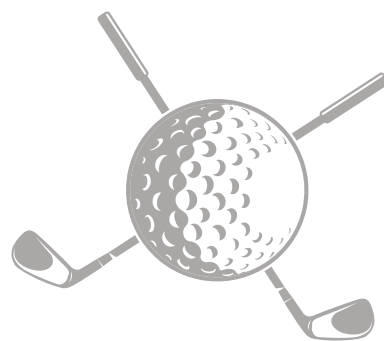


Photo Captions:

- 1) (left to right) Matthew Brown and Sokthy Heng, Moorim, Adam Silver (PGCA Board Member) and Hutch Taylor, Worth Higgins & Associates.
- 2) The winning foursome! (left to right), CJ Philips, Pratt Industries, John Robinson, Bryce Poremba and Steven Roberts, Elite Print Finishing, with Mike Vares, PGCA (center).
- 3) Registration table: Mike Vares and Debbie Woolbright, PGCA, greet golfers as they arrive at the outing.

VISIT YOUR CUSTOMERS IN PERSON

THE POWER OF FACE TO FACE

By Joe Truncale, Founder & Principal,
Alexander Joseph & Associates, LLC

It's been said that "a desk is a dangerous place from which to view the world." A recent newspaper article and a long-ago television commercial reinforce this notion.

In a Wall Street Journal article titled "This Fed President Is Ditching His Desk," Richmond Fed President Tom Barkin describes his approach to understanding factors impacting the regional economy in his area of responsibility. He goes out and talks to people, meeting with and interviewing business owners and managers in a variety of industries. His method is relaxed but not random. He probes, prods, and follows one question with another, each designed to understand not only what business leaders are planning to do, but why and when. All designed to gather real-time economic intelligence at a grass roots level. A former McKinsey consultant, Barkin is adept at collecting feedback in a structured, purposeful way and interpreting the responses, looking for patterns and distortions.

The idea of getting out and talking with people is not new but in our time of digital communication, it's often overlooked. And it is especially useful with customers.

A United Airlines television ad from some years ago hammers home this point. It features a business owner addressing his team members. He tells them of a phone call he received that morning from a long-time customer. "He fired us, after 20 years. He fired us. Said he didn't know us anymore. I think I know why" was his opening line. He goes on to tell his team that they, and he, had become a bit too casual in how they communicate with their customers, leaving some with the impression that they weren't as interested in them as they once were. "Phone calls, a fax..." (ok, so today that's probably an email or a text message) had taken the place of face-to-face conversations. He hands out plane

tickets to each team member, telling them they are to go and meet with their customers. As he's walking out, he's asked where he's headed. "To visit that old friend who fired us this morning..."



The message this ad brings is perhaps more relevant to business owners and CEOs today than when it first aired decades ago. Ask yourself this: When is the last time you went to visit your customers, face to face? They're too busy to see you? Ask anyway. Not sure what you would say? Start with "thank you"!



Customers reported that they didn't see their sales rep as often as they once did."

In a research study conducted by NAPL economists, printing company owners were asked what they needed and wanted most from their suppliers (of equipment, machinery, technology, and consumables). New automation, advances in technology, and delivery times were among the many items reported. Near the top of the list? These customers reported that they didn't see their sales rep as often as they once did. Economic pressures and enhanced communication options had gradually taken the place of face-to-face meetings, in which customers found great value and enjoyed learning about new developments and just "talking shop." What would your customers say?

For more actionable ways to advance your customer relationships and to build new ones, contact me at joe@ajstrategy.com or visit my website at ajstrategy.com.



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TOP BUSINESS CONCERNS

THE NEXT GENERATION OF PRINT EMPLOYEES INTRODUCTION

By Jim Hamilton, Green Harbor Publications

Introduction

Not long ago, Museum of Printing President and Rochester Institute of Technology Professor Emeritus Frank Romano recorded a WhatTheyThink video about print education entitled Print Basics Are Not. Frank’s point was that in his lifetime, print education (which had been taught in virtually every high school in the past) had, for all practical purposes, disappeared. At one time, someone who learned about letterpress printing or who was able to operate a Linotype machine could find work in any print shop across the country. With the move to offset printing and later on to digital printing, Romano notes that there was no longer an identifiable set of basic skills for a wannabe print employee.

An Evolution in Printing

I am a little younger than Frank, but in my lifetime, I have seen a wholesale compression of the print workflow process. I started my career as a paste-up artist and was paid reasonably well for my dexterity with an X-Acto knife, layout boards, and rubber cement or hot wax. Around that time, advancements in electronic prepress took typesetters out of the equation and replaced them with PostScript output bureaus, which subsequently were absorbed entirely into the prepress process. Seeing the writing on the wall, I returned to school and got my graduate degree in Printing Technology at the Rochester Institute of Technology’s renowned (at the time) printing school. Today, the last vestiges of this path reside inside RIT’s engineering program as the “Department of Graphic Media Science and Technology”.

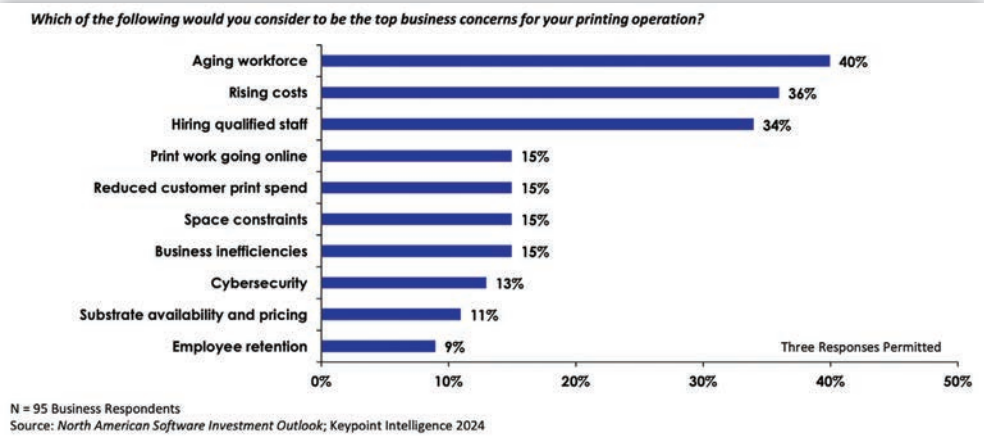
Educating the Next Generation

The question is, how do we educate the next generation of folks who will work (to some extent at least) in the world of print? In its North American Software Investment Outlook Study, Keypoint Intel-

ligence asked respondents about their top business concerns. An aging workforce came in at the top of the list, and the ability to hire qualified staff was not far behind.

The Keypoint Intelligence study asked respondents: “Which of the following would you consider to be the top business concerns for your printing operation?” They put an aging workforce at the top of the list. Hiring qualified staff was not far behind.

Figure 1: Top Business Concerns (below)



How will printers replace these aging workers once they retire? Where will new employees come from, and what will these employees need to know to do their jobs?

A follow-up question from that same research may provide some insight. When these same respondents were asked about their production workflow issues,

they provided a laundry list of problems. Many of these challenges could be lessened or resolved with workflow automation and improved software tools, despite possible resistance from management (due to cost concerns or other factors) or existing staff (who may be resistant to change).

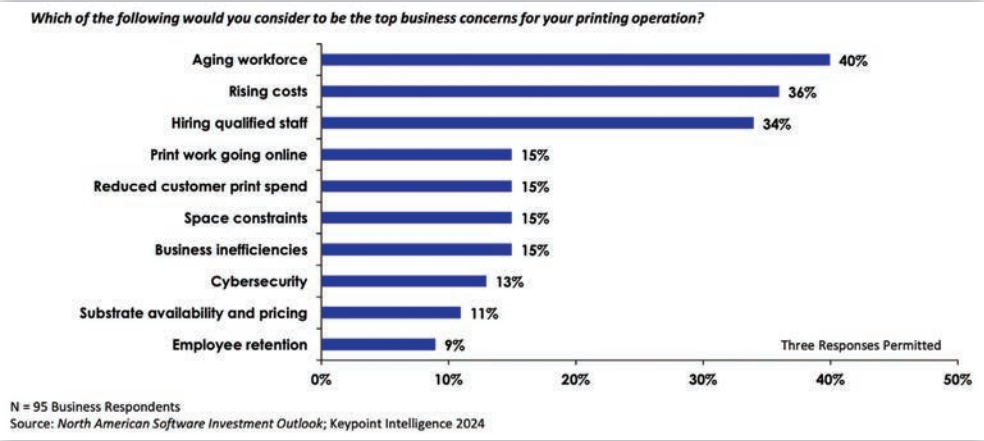
Figure 2: Workflow Challenges (bottom)

Setting aside the difficulty associated with retaining low-level manual workers (cited by 29% of respondents), most of the above issues generally require software-savvy

employees. These types of candidates can be found and trained to address print or multi-media workflows.

Conclusion

As print service providers (PSPs) tell us that an aging workforce is their top business concern, the question remains: Where do we find the next generation of workers?



For web and print design, education is crucial for both electronic and print output, whether that is for graphical user interfaces (GUIs) or for printed matter like books, brochures, or posters. An understanding of type, layout, graphic design, illustration, photography, and the use of color are all essential pieces, which today require a solid understanding and familiarity with computers, software, and programming basics.

The reality is that no recent graduate is likely to walk through your door today with an understanding of print workflow. That shifts the responsibility to you as a PSP to train and educate. As Frank Romano makes clear in his WhatTheyThink video, the print "basics" that once were taught everywhere are no longer part of the curriculum.

About the author: Jim Hamilton of Green Harbor Publications is an industry analyst, market researcher, writer, and public speaker. For many years he was Group Director in charge of Keypoint Intelligence's (formerly InfoTrends') Production Digital Printing & Publishing consulting services.

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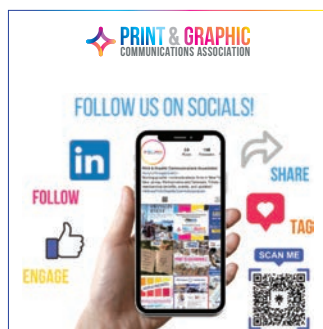
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2026 SALES

It's Q4 and time to begin thinking about sales over the next six – 12 months. Since there are a multitude of macro-economic variables (fed rates; tariffs; paper pricing; economic trends, usage of AI, etc.), some industries are being adversely affected while others are seeing tailwinds. Consequently, it's a good time to visit with our customers and discuss how they will be affected.

It's a process many firms abhor since it's time consuming and doesn't result in guarantees of sales in the future. Regardless, here are a few questions which need answers from clients: Do you see any changes in your business over the next 12 months? Are you facing additional competition? Do tariffs affect your business? Are you changing marketing strategies in '26? Do you anticipate any changes to your media mix? What will they be?

**Reinforce
connections
and offerings
with your
customers**

These are just a few of the possible questions, and the strategy/timing should be discussed with the sales team. With the constantly changing media channels of the 21st century, this process should occur every year with major clients (and upcomers). The answers gleaned not only provide useful data for planning, but also an opportunity to reinforce our connections and offerings with our customers.

About the Author: quoin2pixels is written by Joe Polanco. The author has spent decades in the printing industry, and held various management positions within the industry. As a value-added service of PGCA, Joe is available to expand on these articles, or aid with projects. Contact Joe at jspolanco49@gmail.com.

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