

WhatTheyTh!nk

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FASTSIGNS PROJECT OF THE YEAR

FASTSIGNS York (Pa.) scores a touchdown with Shippensburg University's football facility.

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THE FUTURE OF THE PRINTING WORKFORCE

Once, most high schools in America taught printing. In metropolitan areas, there were high schools specifically for printing. Initially, these schools and departments focused on letterpress and then offset lithography.

Many students pursued a printing career because it was in the family. For others, they were touched by the printing bug in class.

When desktop publishing and digital printing came along, skillsets changed. Students spent more time in front of a screen designing a page rather than printing a page.

The Museum of Printing hosts 32 school groups a year. Most printing programs today are called graphic communication, and they integrate graphic design. The high schoolers we see have their sights on graphic design as a career, not printing.

In class, students design a page and output to a digital printer. They spend more time in front of a screen. Some schools still have an offset duplicator and some bindery equipment, but their number is dwindling.

We graduate 40,000 graphic designers each year from 2- and 4-year baccalaureate programs in the U.S. We graduate less than 1,500 from baccalaureate printing-specific programs. Of course, there are many high schoolers who do not go to college.

Most of the skillsets of the “old”

printing industry are now apps. The terms “dot etcher” and “film stripper” are alien to modern ears. Our machines are highly automated. When you go from a PDF to a printing plate, all the analog steps, and the jobs that went with them, disappear.

There was a push in the 1980s to attract young people to printing, and they did a brochure with job descriptions. I wonder how many kids are eager to be “estimators?”

Many schools cannot afford the very machinery they need to teach on. They wind up with a sheetfed digital printer which also provides inplant printing for the school.

There has been effort to develop print skills. Print[ED] was developed in 1986 by the Printing Industries of Georgia. In 1990, Printing Industries of America adopted the Georgia program as a national industry-approved accreditation program. GAERF assumed management in 2000. In 2019, GAERF transferred administration to the Printing & Graphics Association, MidAtlantic (PGAMA).

Because there are so few high schoolers opting for college degrees in printing, much of the scholarship money raised by the printing industry supports graphic design students.

It is time for everyone with a vested interest in printing to unite and develop realistic programs that attract, and educate, the next generation of printers. ●

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Building the Future in Print & Graphics

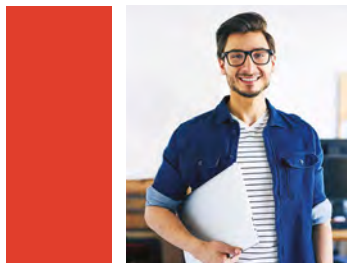
The Print and Graphics Scholarship Foundation (PGSF) is a non-profit organization that offers undergraduate college and technical school scholarships, grants, and graduate fellowship assistance to individuals interested in graphic communication careers.

PGSF recipients include full-time students as well as those working in the print and graphic communications industry who seek additional education to further their careers.

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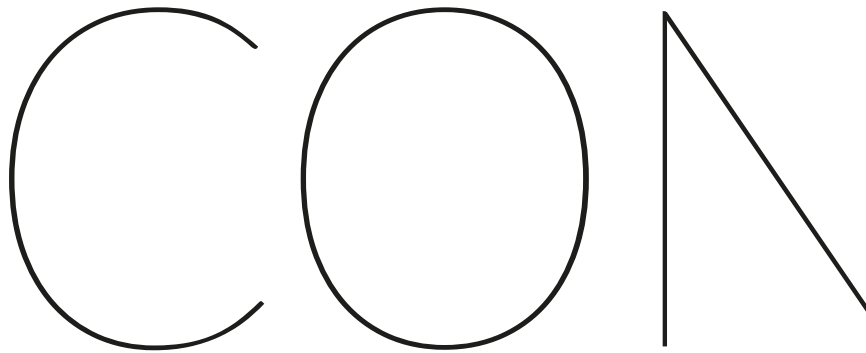
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WhatTheyThink (ISSN 2642-3189) (USPS 500-850) Volume 45, Number 4 is published nine times per year in January/February, March, April, May, June, July/August, September, October, November/December by WTT Media, Inc., at 2038 Ford Parkway #218, Saint Paul, MN 55116. Periodicals postage paid at Saint Paul, MN and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WhatTheyThink, 2038 Ford Parkway #218, Saint Paul, MN 55116. Subscriptions: Individual subscriptions are available without charge in the U.S. to qualified subscribers. Publisher reserves the right to reject non-qualified subscriptions. Annual subscription prices in the U.S.A \$95; Canada \$125 USD; all other countries \$150 USD. Printed in the USA. Copyright © 2021 WTT Media, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recordings or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission. WTT Media Inc. does not assume and hereby disclaims any liability to any person or company for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions in the material herein, regardless of causation. The views and opinions in the articles herein are not those of the publishers, unless indicated. The publishers do not warrant, either expressly or by implication, the factual accuracy of the articles herein, or of any views or opinions offered by the authors of said articles.



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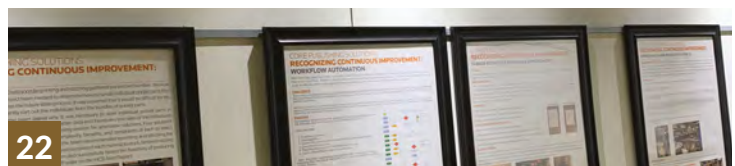
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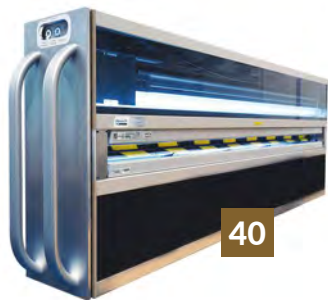
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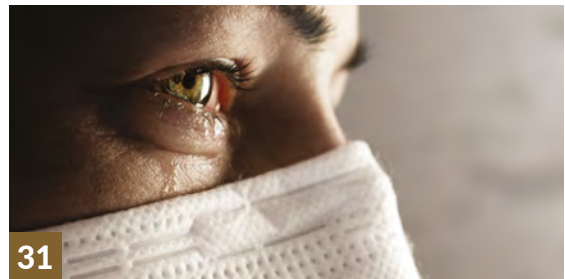
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How to engage and educate tomorrow's print and packaging workforce.

By David Zwang

BRANDING FOR THE FUTURE

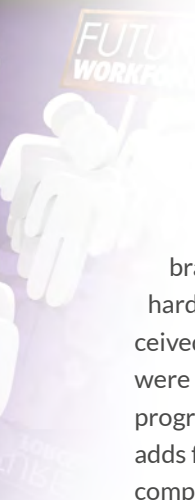
For the most part, print and packaging service providers today are busy again. In fact, some of those I have spoken with say they are too busy. Is that a thing? However, they all seem to have the same two problems; available paper and available personnel. These problems were already gaining some visibility under the surface pre-pandemic, but became severe and more obvious post-pandemic.

The current printing and writing paper shortage can be attributed to the significant uptick in print demand post pandemic coupled with mills having

closed and/or retooled to focus on higher value and volume media. However, this will eventually stabilize as mills come online and inventories are replenished.

The personnel problem is going to be more difficult to fix. While in the short term, wage stabilization needs to happen, there are more substantive issues. The biggest issues are branding and education, and in some cases they are the same.

Somewhere along the way, probably beginning with the introduction of online media and commerce, the luster of the print brand was lost.



Concurrently, during this period, printing technology and processes changed along with newly required skill sets.

Fixing the Brand

One of the effects of a lackluster industry brand is that engaging new talent becomes much harder. There was a time when printing was perceived as a valued craft and profession. Candidates were selected to be a part of an apprenticeship program to grow skills. I can remember posting ads for employees for my printing and prepress companies in the 70s and 80s and having lots of potential candidates to choose from.

The upcoming generations of talent are looking for high-tech professions like those you may see in Silicon Valley, and interestingly the fields of print and packaging today can offer much of that. However, as an industry we have not done much to promote that image, and most people still picture “an operator in blue coveralls with ink on his hands.”

Some of this needs to be addressed by the individual print service providers. If the inside of their plant looks like it hasn’t changed since 1990 or earlier, even with new equipment, it is not presenting a welcoming image to new prospects or even conducive to optimal manufacturing processes.

Most of what we hear presented comes from hardware and software manufactures, and it is more marketing than education.

According to Deborah Corn, the branding issue is “a deeper problem than just promoting new print technologies,” it is an “institutional problem.”

Corn is the founder of the Print Media Center, which is also the home of Project Peacock, GirlsWhoPrint, PrintLife, PrintChat, Elevate Print and International Print Day. To those of you who haven’t heard of any of these programs, you should make yourself aware. They are all focused on raising awareness of the printing industry to printers as well as the wider field of graphic communications, including designers and print buyers.

Speaking with high school and college students who were already enrolled in graphic arts programs, she was surprised to find that many didn’t fully understand the depth and breadth of a career

in printing and graphic communications. And they were already somewhat engaged.

Education

“Graphic technology and the process of printing and packaging have radically changed their image, role and meaning in recent times,” said educational industry expert, Dr. Raša Urbas of the University of Ljubljana. “Once a classic, traditional industry, it now fits into and follows the trends of global digitalization. And yes, the graphic printing and packaging industry is also characterized by rapid technological development, management restructuring, production process planning and the use of various innovations, the main indicators of which are the integration of basic and applied research in many areas of graphic technology.

“As a result, education plays a key role today more than ever. Knowledge that used to focus on specific skills has greatly expanded - expertise should include knowledge of modern, technologically advanced, interdisciplinary content that is part of the entire, not just partial, production scope of the graphic process, as well as knowledge and ways to add value to the development of new graphic products. Existing knowledge of materials, methods and forms of presentation as well as procedures and guidelines for digitization need to be complemented by practical elements and experiences to enrich the profession.”

Industry education needs are diverse, since they really have many different audiences to address. Printing management education is usually addressed by colleges and universities. Many of those that historically specialized in printing management expanded their programs to graphic communications and in some cases removed printing management degrees as the printing program enrollment dropped.

Currently, according to U.S. News, there are 97 schools offering a graphic communications major. Most of them don’t offer degrees in printing management.

Trying to find colleges that specifically offer



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printing management degrees in the U.S. is a bit elusive, but it appears the number may be under 20. Of course hiring a college graduate and asking them to work as a production apprentice is probably a non-starter, so finding entry-level production employees is going to require a different tact.

Vocational high schools in the U.S. have existed since the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917, the law that first authorized federal funding for vocational education in American schools. It was designed to prepare students to work in an industry for careers not requiring a degree. These vocational schools still exist, although in many regions, enrollment dropped along with funding and forced them to either integrate into mainstream schools or close. There is now a resurgence of vocational schools, some offering printing programs.

As an aside, the first thing I did when I started a new printing or prepress company was to go to the local high schools, vocational schools and colleges to introduce myself to the educators, and welcome them to come visit. I also shared excess equipment and supplies, and importantly, asked them to look out for good prospective employees I could interview and intern. Once on board it was fairly easy to get them to introduce their friends and classmates to increase the potential pool.

Communication

One of the benefits of having the students/new hires communicate to their peers was that they shared a common language. In fact, the GWG (Ghent Workgroup) recently started a program that uses college students to “translate” our existing technical and instructional documentation into the language of their peers. The GWG has a large selection of educational white papers, presentations, instructional videos and webinars freely available on its website.

In an effort to expand the reach of the educational platform and offerings, it is working with educational member universities including the University of Ljubljana, led by Dr. Raša Urbas, as well as Dr. Živko Pavlović from the University of Novi Sad to develop targeted messaging for the creative

communities as well as the industries’ student populations.

The GWG is also developing training and testing materials around design and prepress production.

The GCEA (Graphic Communications Education Association) is “an association of educators in partnership with industry, dedicated to sharing theories, principles, techniques and processes relating to graphic communications and imaging technology.”

Their mission is to work in partnership with industry and share principles and practices relating to graphic communications. They “exist to help our members become better educators.” They have outreach and educational programs for colleges as well as high school educators and students.

SPC (Specialty Print Communications), headquartered in Niles, Ill. has been proactive in education and engagement of prospective hires with formal internship and apprenticeship programs. They have also developed a “Growing Print Forum,” which brings together industry representatives as well as leaders of premier collegiate print programs in North America.

Market outreach and education is an important requirement, and it is the shared responsibility of the manufacturers, print service providers, suppliers and industry associations. Ultimately it will require some coordination so that we are all sending the same coherent message targeted to the wider audience.

More to Come ...

I would like to address your interests and concerns in future articles as it relates to the manufacturing of print, packaging and labels, and how, if at all, it drives future workflows including “Industry 4.0.” If you have any interesting examples of hybrid and bespoke manufacturing, I am very anxious to hear about them as well. Please feel free to contact me at david@zwang.com with any questions, suggestions or examples of interesting applications. ●



David Zwang specializes in process analysis, and strategic development of firms involved in publishing and packaging across the globe. Contact him at david@zwang.com.

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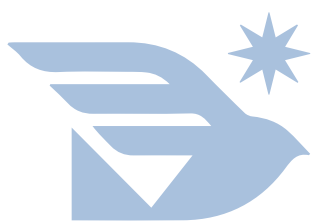
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THE MARIANO RIVERA FOUNDATION

The bridge between under-served students and the printing industry workforce

By Heidi Tolliver-Walker

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In the United States, more than one in five children lives in poverty. In the printing industry, finding qualified employees and maintaining the pipeline of new talent into the workforce remains one of the top challenges. A bridge between the two is the Mariano Rivera Foundation.

Founded by Yankees Hall-of-Fame pitcher Mariano Rivera, the foundation provides youth in under-served communities with one-to-one mentorship, vocational training, college preparedness and STEM learning. Its flagship training program,

“Print, Design, and Packaging Development,” is run out of a church property in Gainesville, Fla.

The Foundation launched the print program in 2021. Students aged 16 to 20 were selected from local high schools to receive training and certifications in copier technology, color management, workflow and digital design. In addition to one-on-one mentoring, etiquette training and college preparedness, the program exposes students to multiple career paths, and prepares them for local employment opportunities.

EFI became a sponsor of the Foundation in 2021, and at the EFI Connect Conference at the Wynn Las Vegas in January, EFI Chief Revenue Officer Frank Mallozzi hosted a special keynote session with Rivera.

“We are so honored and privileged that we found you,” he said while moderating the keynote. “We are looking forward to an incredibly bright future for the youth.”

Rivera’s passion for these students is indeed contagious.

“If we don’t provide for this under-privileged, under-served youth, who will?”



A local professional associated with Atlantic, Tomorrow’s Office provided a student trip to the Konica-Minolta Customer Engagement Center in Ramsey, NJ, and a plant tour at DG3 in Jersey City, N.J. EFI sponsored four students to attend EFI Connect at the Wynn Las Vegas in January.

“We have been so humbled by the outpouring of support,” said Lisa Vega, executive director of the Foundation.

“For these students, this type of opportunity is life-changing. It has widened their world-views as they see just how much potential the printing industry offers.”

Local print shops visited these young men at the end of February to discuss job opportunities. One has already been hired by Atlantic,

Tomorrow’s Office as a copier technician.

From a Fishing Village to the MLB

This is the culmination of Rivera’s mission of serving at-risk youth. He was born in a fishing village in Panama, bullied in school for smelling like fish. He had to walk past the fish flour plant on his way to school, and the smell penetrated his clothes. He dropped out of school rather than succumb to the emotions of violence.

While working with his father in the fishing business, an opportunity opened to try out for the New York Yankees. Rivera was recruited, and his life was forever changed.

Wanting to give the same type of opportunity to other disadvantaged kids, Rivera started the Mariano Rivera Foundation in 1998. Initially, the goal was to financially support other nonprofits serving this community. But after his retirement, he realized he wasn’t satisfied with just supporting the programs of other organizations. He wanted to establish his own.

Rivera took on an ambitious project to build a 40,000-square-foot learning center in New

Rivera asked. “They need someone to believe in them. They need someone to say, ‘I’m investing in you. I trust you. We believe that you can accomplish anything you want.’”

The first six students to participate in the Gainesville program were identified by their school guidance counselors and interviewed by the Foundation before being invited to participate. They began online learning through donated laptops and smart TVs. Technical support, online training modules and certifications were provided by Konica-Minolta, Ricoh, EFI and Idealliance.

Rochelle, N.Y., where his wife pastors a congregation. In the meantime, the Foundation set up the pilot program in Gainesville. It is also working with a local college to house the New Jersey program until the learning center is completed.

It All Began When...

As all of this was happening, Luis Villa, vice president of production print - CIP of Atlantic, wanted to develop the company's own youth training program. Through a connection at Yankee Stadium, he learned about The Mariano Rivera Foundation and saw the potential for partnership.

Not only did Atlantic invest in the program, but Atlantic President Larry Weiss and Villa leveraged their relationships in the industry to bring in other heavy-hitters, including Konica-Minolta, Ricoh, EFI and Idealliance.

Konica-Minolta trainers set up and trained foundation volunteers on its Field Service Technician modules. Ricoh offered students its Digital Literacy Program. EFI and the Idealliance provided their Fieri Professional and Color Management Professional (CMP) certifications, respectively. Villa incorporated certifications in Lean Six Sigma taught by two black-belt-level certified trainers. Adobe certifications are in process for next year.

"All these certifications, ranging from design and production to color management to applications



From right to left are: Frank Mallozzi, Chief Revenue Officer EFI, Mariano Rivera, Luis Villa and Larry Weiss of Atlantic Tomorrow's Office.

and business principles, make the 'Print, Design, and Packaging Development Program' very different from other training programs," Villa said. "When these kids graduate, they have cross-training and certifications that even many people in the industry don't have. This makes them more marketable and able to command a higher starting wage."

Villa calls these graduates "entry-level plus."

"These modules are the same as we offer to our dealers, customers and educational institutions," Pedro Da Silva, director of EFI's Fieri Certification program, said. "What makes this program different is that the students are able to go on and get professional-level certifications, as well."

There are about 4,000 EFI-certified professionals in the printing industry. These young men are among that distinguished group.

"Most certifications are now people already in the industry," Da Silva said. "It's unusual for a first-jobber to have one, so it's really an advantage."

What They Think, Printing United Alliance, and Printing and Graphics Scholarship Foundation (PGSF), have jumped on board to support the program, too.

"We have worked with EFI for a lot of years on Connect, and when they approached us about supporting Mariano's mission, we didn't hesitate," said Eric Vessels, president of What They Think,



which both donated to the foundation and will offer students free access to WTT's premium content. "This industry is still one of the largest manufacturing sectors in the country, and diversity has been relatively rare. This program could strengthen the industry. It was a really compelling thing we wanted to be involved in."

PGSF, which also provided a monetary donation, is deepening its partnership with the Foundation, as well.

"Beyond providing financial support, we are really excited to provide scholarships for those students who want to continue their educa-

tions at two- or four-year schools," said Jeff White, director of development for PGSF. "The more people donate to PGSF, the more we are able to bring scholarships to students like these."

Nothing Less Than Life-Changing

The impact of these programs has been nothing less than life-changing. The students had an opportunity to share their stories at EFI Connect.

They were asked, "In one word, can you tell me what this program means to you or how it has impacted you?" One 16-year-old said, "manhood." Another said, "revitalization."

"As young as they are, they are really grasping what everyone is trying to do for them," Vega said. "The impact isn't just in the vocational training and career path, but also in the support and mentorship they are receiving. Most of these students don't have father figures in their lives. Mentors come alongside them and provide that father figure and guidance that they need."

What's next for the Mariano Rivera Foundation? In addition to its main learning center in New Rochelle, which will eventually house a full, working print facility, it is looking for additional sites, including Houston, Texas and Carlstadt, N.J.

"The goal is to replicate this program in as many cities as we can," Vega said. "We are focusing on areas where there is a great need for this level of mentorship and programming."

In Carlstadt, the Premium Color Group is donating space in its manufacturing building to house one of these programs. This proximity will allow students to gain hands-on experience in every aspect of the printing process, from design to finishing.

Atlantic is also working with its instructors to become Adobe-certified, adding expertise in InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator to its curriculum. Atlantic also plans to fly students from Gainesville to the Premium Color Group location so they can get the same hands-on experience as their peers.

Even those already committed to the programs are expanding their commitments.

EFI is expanding the modules offered to students and adding ride-alongs with its professional technicians. PGSF is guiding students to industry careers and encouraging them to apply for scholarships. Printing United is launching a new platform offering access to a broader curriculum and more certifications.

"It was super cool to see these young men filled with energy and excitement," Vessels said. "That wonder is something that many of us take for granted. For many in the industry, that wonder wears off. For them, it was fresh. It was such a thrill to see. If there is going to be growth, it will come from that type of new energy and new thinking. These kids represent what the future of this industry could look like."

Want to get involved? The Mariano Rivera Foundation is looking for members of the printing industry willing to serve as mentors and trainers, hosts for apprenticeships and tour locations, as well as financial donors to help fund these programs. Learn more about the Mariano Rivera Foundation at <https://themarianoriverafoundation.org/>. ●



Jeff White and Mariano Rivera at the Wynn Las Vegas



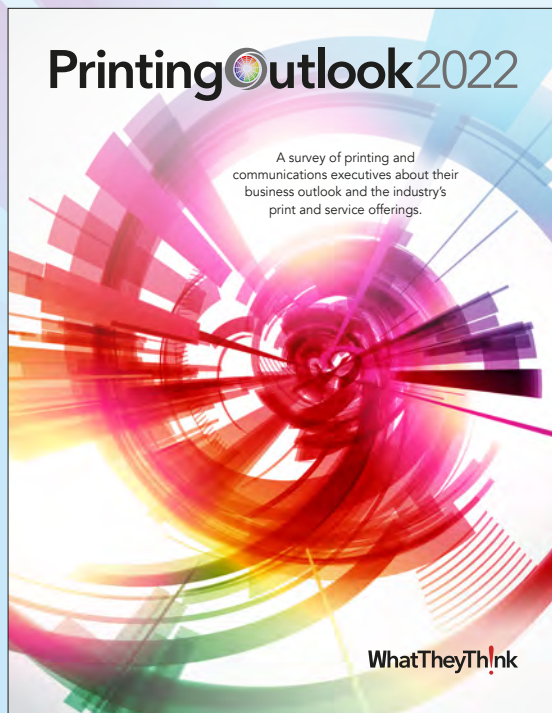
Heidi Tolliver-Walker has been a commercial and digital printing industry analyst, feature writer, and author for more than 20 years. Her industry commentary can be found in national printing publications, blogs, and marketing publications.

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WhatTheyTh!nk

Printing Outlook 2022

The Printing Outlook 2022 report provides detailed analysis of the latest WhatTheyThink Printing Business Conditions Survey, the latest industry economic data and macroeconomic trends, and the trends to look out for in 2022 and beyond.



The report offers the latest data on:

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- General economy
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Print business owners will find the report:

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- Put the marketplace and strategic actions in realistic perspective
- Industry suppliers will benefit from the insights into printer decision-making processes
- Non-economic trends also offer ideas for what to pay attention to in the new year.
- Larger cultural and technological trends indicate where marketing professionals and brand owners will likely be focusing their promotional dollars



The report is available now to purchase scan or visit:

<https://whattheythink.com/outlook>

Printing Outlook 2022

Back to the Future or Groundhog Day?

By Richard Romano

Think of it perhaps as the “Great Rebounding.” Last year was the exact opposite of 2020 (mercifully). I have often described our entering 2022 as being like the movie “Groundhog Day,” in that it’s our third attempt at starting the year 2020 after 2019’s “Great Renaissance” of print. It could also be seen a kind of “Back to the Future,” as we go back to 2019 and try to correct our business strategies. (Both analogies are pretty dodgy.)

Digging into the results of our “Fall 2021 Business Outlook Survey” for the

our annual “Printing Outlook 2022” report, they showed an industry that has largely recovered from 2020, but faces some new challenges and some older challenges now writ large. We’re not exactly back to normal, but we’re closer than we thought possible in a long time.

Business Conditions

Seventeen percent of print businesses surveyed said that 2021 revenues had increased more than 25% over 2020—almost offsetting the 28% who last year said revenues had decreased by more than 25% compared to 2019.



In the next 12 months, which of the following will be your biggest business challenges?



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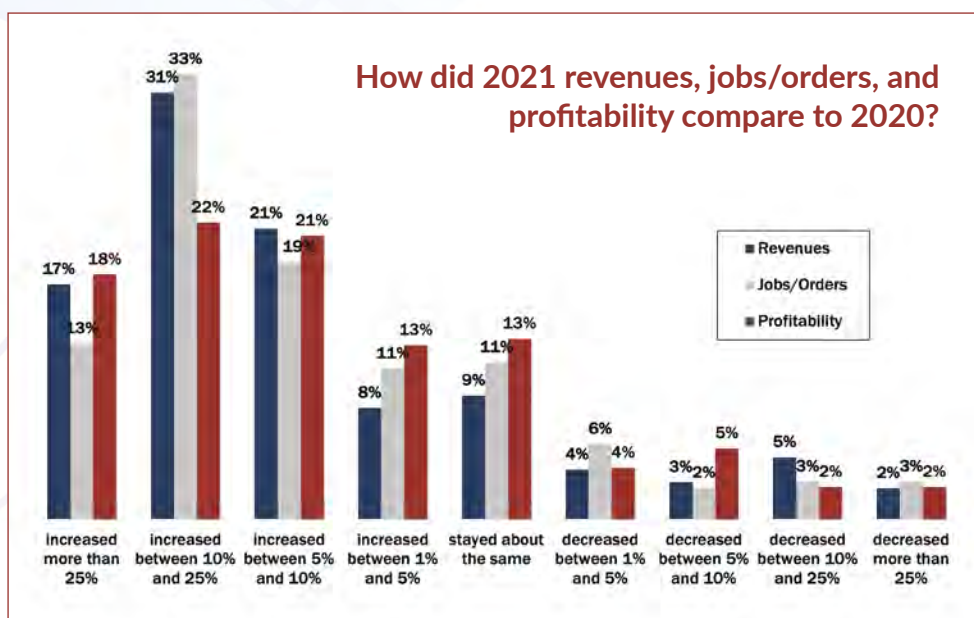
We calculated an average change in revenues of +10.6% from 2020 to 2021. Thirteen percent of print businesses said that jobs/orders for 2021 had increased more than 25%, and we calculated an average change in jobs of +9.5% from 2020 to 2021. Profits in 2021 were also up over 2020: 18% reported that profits increased 25% or more, with the average change in profits being +9.4%.

The general expectation is that 2022 will be a reprise of 2021, with about the

making it harder to get jobs out the door, but has also led to the number-two challenge: “pricing,” selected by 41% of respondents, up from 29%. Finding employees and increasing productivity are also top challenges this year.

New Business Opportunities

“Improving economic conditions” is again the top opportunity in this year’s survey, cited by 40% of respondents,



same level of growth in revenues, jobs and profitability. Respondents were a little more conservative compared to past surveys, and compared to the actual growth they did experience.

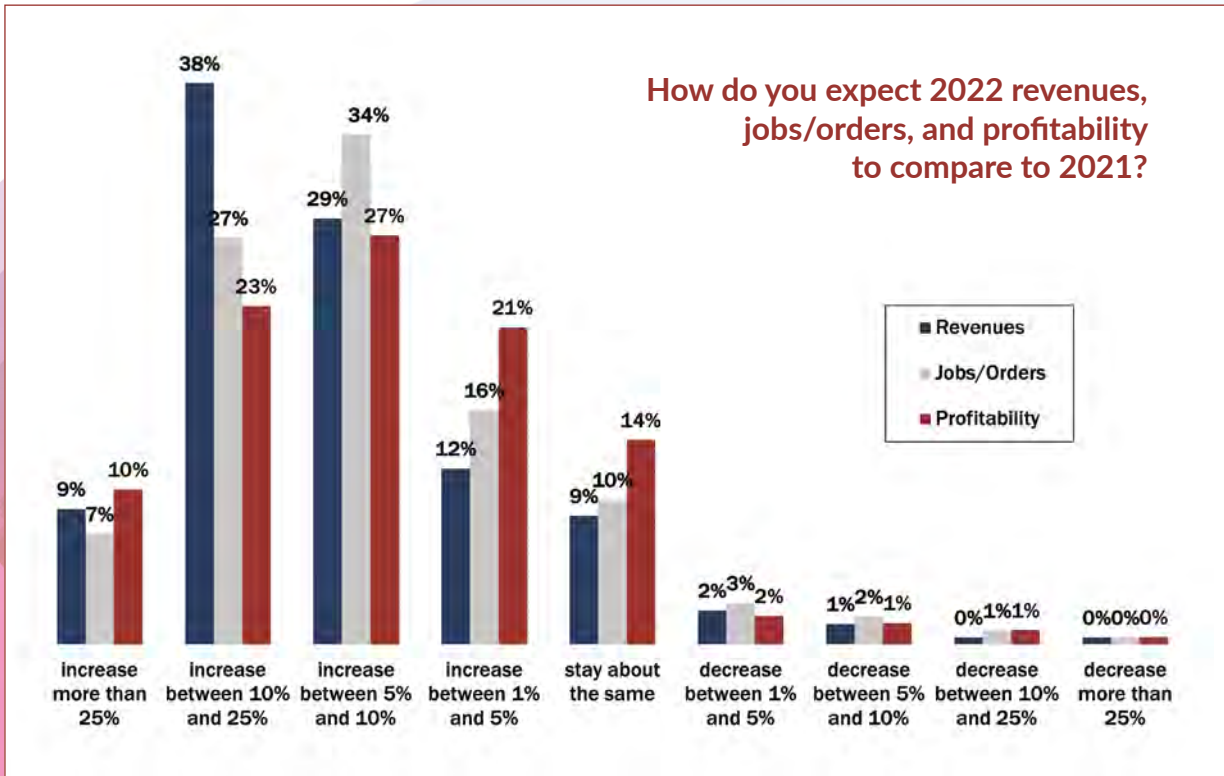
Business Challenges

Ripped from the headlines! One formerly low-ranking item leaped to the top of the challenges list: “consumables and supplies pricing,” selected by 56% of respondents, up from 14% last year. The supply chain disruptions have made many consumables and other materials (especially paper) very hard to come by and/or more expensive. This is not only

down from 50% last year. At number two is a return to normalcy: “customers outsourcing more work to us,” 2019’s number-one opportunity. “Adding digital printing equipment” is also at a higher-than-usual level in this survey.

Planned Investments

Nearly 23% of our respondents have no planned investments, but the top items are “finishing/bindery equipment for digital production” (19%, up a tick from last year) and “high-speed production inkjet printing equipment” selected by 11% of respondents, an all-time high. Lest we think inkjet rules the roost,



“toner-based color digital press” is also at 11%. So shops were serious when they said they were expanding digital printing capabilities.

New Application Areas

Every other year, we gauge the extent to which print businesses have added various kinds of new products/services,

	Added more than 2 years ago	Added in past 18-24 months	Plan to add in next 18-24 months	No plans to add	Don't produce in-house but outsource/plan to outsource	Don't know
high-speed production inkjet (like HP PageWide, Canon Océ ProStream)	13%	6%	17%	46%	8%	11%
wide-format printing (like signs, displays, banners)	38%	11%	5%	34%	9%	3%
textile/fabric printing for soft signage	8%	3%	2%	63%	16%	6%
textile/fabric printing for garment printing/decorating	3%	1%	2%	70%	16%	8%
direct-to-garment printing	1%	2%	6%	71%	14%	6%
specialty or industrial printing (like coffee mugs, golf balls, smartphone cases)	3%	3%	3%	66%	19%	6%
corrugated packaging printing	3%	6%	4%	66%	13%	8%
folding carton printing/converting	6%	4%	8%	58%	15%	9%
flexible packaging printing/converting	1%	4%	6%	66%	13%	10%
3D printing	2%	0%	2%	75%	10%	11%
printed electronics	0%	0%	1%	81%	9%	9%

and, if they haven't, if they planned to— or if they were even on their radars at all. Generally, the only things that piqued our respondents' interest this survey were production inkjet and, to a lesser extent, certain kinds of packaging (corrugated, especially). Textiles, 3D printing and printed electronics were all pretty meh.

Hiring Plans

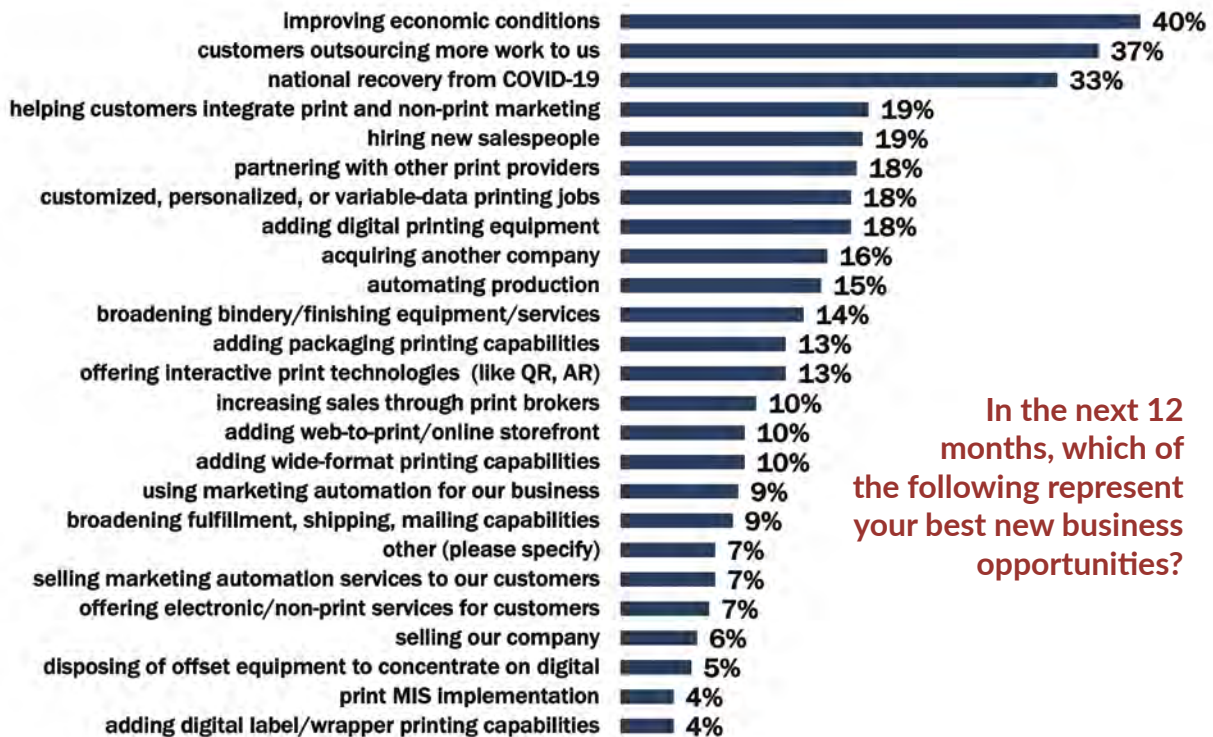
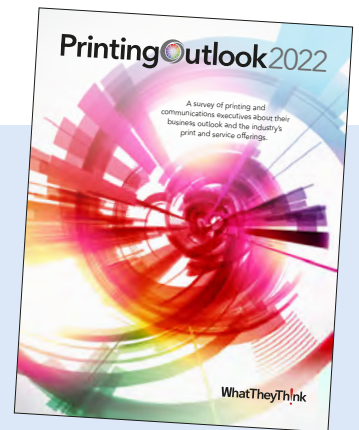
Seventy-one percent of print businesses are hiring staff in the next 12 months (up from 50% last year). Top positions sought are “postpress/bindery/finishing” staff (47%), “press operator” be it offset or digital (43%), and “outside sales representative” (42%). We also asked where they are looking for employees, and the majority are relying on “general online recruitment sites,” “word of mouth” and “general job recruiters.” Few are reaching out to industry associations, and even fewer are reaching out to

specific graphic arts programs like those at RIT or CalPoly.

Looking Forward

Yes, we are looking forward to 2022. 2020 was rough, but 2021 largely recouped what we had lost. Virus concerns have taken a back seat to employee and consumables pricing and availability. It's always something, right? But despite these challenges, we expect 2022 to continue along this same upward trajectory toward a full return to something akin to normality. ●

The new Printing Outlook 2022 report provides detailed analysis of the latest WhatTheyThink Business Outlook Survey, the latest industry economic data and macroeconomic trends, as well as industry and cultural technological trends to look out for in 2022. Purchase the full 117 page report at <https://whattheythink.com/outlook>.



In the next 12 months, which of the following represent your best new business opportunities?

CORE PUBLISHING SOLUTIONS

A dramatic shift in application mix enables ongoing business growth.

By Cary Sherburne

Every month we recognize a team or teams that have improved our operations through their continuous improvement efforts.

Recognizing the relentless pursuit of operational excellence through





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Back in November of 2016, I had the pleasure of visiting Core Publishing Solutions, a Thomson-Reuters Company, in Eagan, Minn. At the time, the organization had just installed a sheetfed inkjet press, adding to its base of roll-fed toner and inkjet presses, along with web offset presses and an extensive bindery.

Today, Core Publishing Solutions offers publishers the convenience of seamlessly switching titles between offset and digital runs, and has installed two sheet-fed inkjet presses and three wide-format web-fed inkjet presses, having nearly four billion pages on its digital presses.



Todd Roth

As with many publishing segments, print in this professional space was declining due to the availability and convenience of electronic versions of these subscription-based documents, books and updates.

“Legal and tax professionals are in transition,” said Vice President of Operations Todd Roth. “We provide content any way our customers want to consume it – in print, online with our Westlaw product or in tablet format with our e-reader, ProView. This electronic migration affords us the opportunity to make our printing capacity available to other publishers, and we have taken advantage of that.”

Roth notes that Core Publishing Solutions has retooled its web press platform, consisting of six conventional presses, five of which are wide format and three of which are zero-makeready. All the presses are crewed all shifts. And the company is now producing, in addition to legal publishing, YA books, trade and educational publishing, as well as faith-based books. In fact, the company produced its first Bible in 2016, marking its entry into the Bible production and spiritual printing market. Its expertise in printing and binding very lightweight papers for the legal industry was an advantage here.

While the company had historically produced some color printing on older 16-page web presses, it exited the color business in the 1990s.

“It’s really fun to bring color back into play with inkjet,” Roth said. “And in February, we are added PUR binding, which will better support customers with coated color work options”

A hybrid Mueller Martini binding line that does both conventional and inkjet was installed in 2017, and an additional binder for digital work has since been added. This spring they will add a high-speed binder for longer run web work. The binding platform is rounded out with new sewing capabilities that add more flexibility for customers.

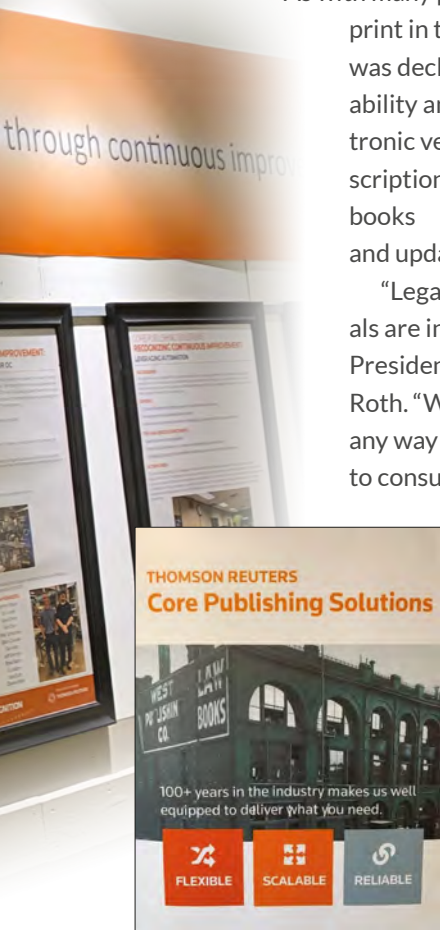
The result? Since 2016, the company has transitioned from primarily legal publishing, to 70% for the broader publishing market. Unit output has more than doubled. Roth credits his talented and dedicated team with making this shift possible, as well as the company’s long-term focus on lean manufacturing and continued process improvement.

“We do a variety of different work, including a lot of high page-count printing on lightweight paper, which has a certain ‘fluff factor,’” Roth said. “When it comes off the printing line, you need some time for the pages to compress to make a quality book, making in-line finishing not really an option.”

Roth also sees significant advantage in having both web offset and inkjet formats.

“We can be there for the transitioning of a title,”

Continued on page 62



SELF-SERVICE RESISTANCE IN THE PRINT INDUSTRY

Don't get caught up in the status quo.

By Jennifer Matt



If you've been paying attention at all, self-service is a critical trend in almost every industry. We are doing things for ourselves that our parents would never have dreamed of.

Complex financial transactions, complex real estate dealings, and complex ordering of expensive and custom manufactured items - all online, all in a self-service fashion. It's starting to look like we might only interact with software to procure just about anything.

The print industry seems to be trying to hold on to the synchronous, full service interactions (phone and email) in customer service, insisting that each order has to be handled by a human. Print is not more or less complicated than other procurement events that are all online today.

Moving to self service is a strategic move. It can't be done without

leadership. I've been interacting with lots of customer service departments lately. Without leadership, customer service will continue to process orders like they have been processing orders in the past.


The status quo is a very compelling option. Change is hard. Change introduces uncertainty. Change makes humans feel uncomfortable. Change can be even more difficult the longer your employee has been doing their job or the more experienced the humans are. If you've mastered your job responsibilities over the last decade or so, it's hard to back up and be a "beginner" for a while when changing to a new process or software system. Often process changes take more time in the beginning and are open to criticism.

Naturally customer service feels they add value to every transaction. If they are manually processing every transaction,



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CUSTOMER JOURNEY



they do of course add value (by processing it), but real value add is in the form of upselling or collaboration. Having the majority of your customer service team simply processing orders vs. software that allows the customer to submit orders themselves, is slowing the process down.

A certain percentage of your orders can be done online. There are patterns in orders. There is the equivalent of taking cash out of an ATM machine in a certain percentage of your business. You do not need to speak to a bank teller to get cash out of your account. You should not have to interact with a human to order more product labels using the exact same artwork you used last time.

Our industry has spent most of its time and effort on optimizing the production floor, at the expense of time and effort that could be focused on the carpeted area of your plant.

Where does a job spend more time? If

you're a digital shop, most of the time is spent in what I call "chasing agreements." You chase the agreement for order specifications, artwork approval and pricing/estimating. You chase the agreements to these things using rudimentary tools like email, phone and fax. You spend your customers' time chasing in an inefficient way.

I ordered a few products from a local printer for an event I was putting on (pre-COVID). I archived all the email communication I received from the printer over the course of the three projects I did with them. I received over 70 emails and eight phone calls. That is ridiculous.

Self-service leadership starts with defining objectives. What are you trying to accomplish?

My favorite language around objectives and metrics comes from John Doerr's book "Measure What Matters." Simply put, create real business objectives (numbers and time constrained), and then define the key results that you are going to measure to make sure those objectives are met.

Self Service Business Objective

- Increase the capacity of our customer service department by 20%

CUSTOMER JOURNEY



Jennifer Matt writes, speaks, and consults with printers worldwide who realize their ability to leverage software is critical to their success in the Information Age.

in the next quarter without adding any new staff.

- Move 10% of all jobs to self service over the next quarter.
- Introduce 20 customers to self-service ordering in the next quarter.
- Flag every order coming in as self-service or full-service to start identifying patterns.

The leadership required for moving to self-service has to be diligent. You cannot state the goal and walk away. You have to stay in the leadership seat until the new way of doing things becomes their comfort zone. This can take a lot longer than you think it should. If you get a group of people to change and then walk away, getting them to change again will be even harder. You have to explain the objectives. You have to get buy-in on the key results that are going to be measured. The best way to get buy-in is to have them create their own key results.

Self service is already a differentiator in the industry. If your order entry strategy is email, think of yourselves as behind and at risk of being replaced by a printer who cares more about how they spend their customers' time. ●



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AR

HAS ARRIVED

How to use augmented reality to generate revenue

By Heidi Tolliver-Walker



Augmented reality has hit a milestone. It is no longer a niche technology used primarily for entertainment and brand-building. Thanks to simple games on fast food packaging or the ability to take selfies with virtual celebrities and share them on social media, it has evolved into a true revenue-generating tool. For printers looking for opportunities to build new revenue streams, AR has arrived.

Why AR and why now?

AR has moved to a web-based environment. While app-based AR offers the most robust experiences, most consumers don't want to download a new app or launch an app every time they want to engage with an AR experience. WebAR allows people to engage with AR scenes by clicking links or scanning QR codes. This makes AR readily accessible to anyone with a mobile phone.

And AR tools have become easier and more affordable. Creating AR scenes used to take significant resources and expertise. Today, depending on the solution, capturing the assets needed to create AR experiences requires only a mobile phone or, for AR portals, a consumer-level 360 camera. With some AR platforms, converting the video into an AR experience is as easy as drag and drop.

Take creating a holographic "twin" using BLUairspace, the AR creation platform from RealityBLU. Any type of video capture device, even a cellphone, can be used to take a video of that person speaking in front of a green screen. The PSP uploads the video to its BLUairspace account and follows the prompts. Within seconds, it receives a QR Code or hyperlink that leads to an AR scene.

"Once the video is shot, it takes a matter of minutes — through our platform — to create the actual AR experience," said MJ Anderson, chief experience officer for RealityBLU. "Then, once printers and agencies have the QR code or the link, they can add it to their clients' print or digital marketing pieces, and they're done."

With so many advances in AR technology, the ability to create a new revenue stream by

offering in-house video production for AR experiences has become a practical reality. Products like Ricoh's Theta 360 camera, which can be purchased for a few hundred dollars (and a full business set up for around \$1,000), let printers and agencies get into video production at a very low cost.

With popular features such as "try before you buy" and "view in room," AR has become a normalized aspect of the shopping experience. Althority, for example, has found that products using AR can boost conversion by 40%. If the experience allows shoppers to inspect the product more thoroughly—turning it around, zooming in to see details, and changing colors or features—this gives shoppers a better sense of the product and dramatically increases conversion to sale.

According to MADE.com, customers who view a product in 3D are 25% more likely to make a purchase, and Forbes found that shoppers engaging with 3D images are 40% more likely to convert than those shopping in 2D images. Since adding AR's "view in room" feature, Ikea Place has actually seen its conversion rates double.

Not only this, but according to AR Insider, AR-guided shopping reduces returns by 25%. Build.com, for example, is seeing a 22% lower return rate for shoppers that use its AR product visualization features. This ability to reduce returns has become a huge selling point for printers and agencies looking to show that AR truly benefits the bottom line.

AR Experiences That Sell

What types of AR experiences translate into hard sales? Those in which interaction and engagement are critical to the sales process. CB2, a mid-range furniture store using AR's "view in room" feature, reports seeing a 13% increase in order size per visit thanks to AR. Ikea Place has seen its order sizes increase by 10%.

AR is also being used by PSPs to help colleges and universities "close" on key recruitments for



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their sports programs. One nationally recognized football program is working with its print provider to deploy AR scenes of its coach delivered to recruits through email or text messages. By scanning a QR code or clicking on a link, athletes can listen to a pitch from their prospective college coach right in their homes.

You can check out one of Harrison's training videos here:



Do you have clients who offer training? Training organizations are increasing their reach and offering free samples with AR training videos. Lacrosse legend Kyle Harrison, for example, recently retired from professional play and is using AR to promote his youth lacrosse training organization, Team Eighteen. Athletes drop an AR portal into their bedrooms or living rooms and “walk” right onto the field with Harrison. There, they can turn around, get a 360-degree view of the field, and watch Harrison demonstrate techniques as if they were actually there.

Nonprofits are capitalizing on the power of AR portals, as well. Instead of sending a link to a video, nonprofits are encouraging donors to drop portals into their homes or offices, then walk “through” them into the location where the work is being done. There, they can experience the sights and sounds of the people, communities and environments supported by their donations. Other nonprofits are adding “donate now” buttons



to holographic twins to drive donations directly from AR experiences.

The key to AR is finding those opportunities where the ability to handle a product, visualize the product in someone’s home or office, or to “be there” dramatically enhances sales and acts as a closer. Why? Because experience sells, and as AR technology increasingly streamlines and simplifies the process of creating these experiences, these are salable products that can be in the toolbox of even small to mid-sized shops. ●



Heidi Tolliver-Walker has been a commercial and digital printing industry analyst, feature writer, and author for more than 20 years. Her industry commentary can be found in national printing publications, blogs, and marketing publications.



DID WE LEARN? ANYTHING?

It's all about quality, not quantity, when it comes to human resources.

By Dave Fellman

A recent New York Times story

made the point that the “just-in-time” manufacturing strategy has been very good for companies since Toyota first pioneered the concept in the 1960s. It stopped being good when COVID stopped the flow of raw materials, which stopped the flow of component parts, which stopped the flow of finished products. In the printing industry, we had supply

Continued on page 63

HOUSTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

An education in-plant success story

By Cary Sherburne

Chuck Werninger is a well-known name in in-plant circles as a successful in-plant professional and evangelist for print. We had the opportunity to speak with him on a wide range of topics regarding in-plant operations, how he has been able to drive change within the Houston Independent School District, and on the value of print in general.

Werninger moved to Houston from Little Rock in

2013 after running Printing Services at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock for over six years. Prior to that, he worked in various commercial printing operations.

Printing News: Chuck, thanks for talking with us today. You started out in 2013 at Houston Independent School District (HISD) running the print



Chuck Werninger

operation; but today, you have much broader responsibilities. Tell us about that.

Chuck Werninger:

Today, as Senior Manager of IT Administrative Services, I direct and

oversee the records management, document imaging, printing services, graphic design, mailing services, district post office and 1,300 fleet copiers for the Houston Independent School District. We provide outstanding services for the nearly 200,000 students and their families who attend the district's 280 schools and support the 25,000 principals, teachers and support staff in the fourth largest city in America. My





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current office is about 11 miles away from the print shop, but my happiest times are when I can visit the shop.

PN: Tell us about the configuration of the print shop.

CW: To be honest, it is part museum and part high tech. We have five older duplicators that we still use almost every single day. And we have a four-unit Didde web which is used for high volume, high speed, lower quality printing. With that press, we can do 4/0 or 2/2. The quality is very 1990s, and we have a hard time getting any roll paper that is not 60-lb offset, so that's mostly what we run on that press. And that's the work that is less valued and is going online, except for when they legally have to distribute a piece of paper. And we also have a Presstek 52DI.

PN: What about the higher tech side of the business?

CW: That's the exciting part. We have a Canon i300 sheetfed inkjet press we have had now for seven years. And we have two Printware iJet digital envelope printers. We also have a Canon VarioPrint

6270 Titan, which I think is the finest sheetfed black and white toner printer ever made. And, of course, we have all kinds of finishing gear to support that, including a Duplo slitter/cutter/creaser, mail sortation equipment, inkjet addressing, inserting, metering, etc. We also have wide format, three Canon Colorado 1640s, a Fotoba XY cutter and a Colex cutter.

PN: What types of things are you doing in wide format?

CW: That's an exciting and high-growth area. We serve 280 schools and 50 business offices. Often we will be called on to produce posters, and they might want two for each building.

They might say something about a new gun law or some kind of compliance document. That's a 600 run which is too big for conventional inkjet but not long enough to justify large format offset. So it's perfect for our wide format devices. We can do 600 24x36 posters printed on paper and cut to size in about two hours. One Fotoba can handle the output from three Colorados.

PN: So the Colorados are roll-fed. Any thoughts about getting a flatbed for direct-to-rigid?

CW: That's in the game plan. We currently do a tremendous amount of yard signs, poster boards and things like that. We print on vinyl and affix that to the substrate, and then cut it with the Colex. We are doing lots of contour-cut yard signs that might have the school

Continued on page 60





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Gaby Matsliach

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Jim Rosenthal

PDC Graphics' Jim Rosenthal on His Business and EFI Connect

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David Bentley

EPS's David Bentley on Midmarket Print Suite

David Bentley, GM, SMB Print, talks about the Midmarket Print Suite, which was one of the EFI products that spun off into eProductivity Software.
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Lisa Vega

Lisa Vega on the Mariano Rivera Foundation

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Scott Schinlever

Scott Schinlever on EFI's Inkjet Business

Scott Schinlever, COO of EFI's Global Inkjet Business provides an update on the EFI inkjet business.
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PIM Launches Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Accreditation Program

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Tim Greene

Tim Greene Talks About Trends in Wide-Format Printing

Tim Greene, Research Director for IDC, talks about what is happening today in wide-format printing.
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Randy Herron

Randy Herron on Pivoting to Survive the Pandemic

Randy Herron, Owner of Herron Printing & Graphics, talks about the advantages for his business in attending EFI Connect.

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Tiffany Hua

Lux Research 2022 Foresight Report: Implications for Textiles and Apparel

Lux Research Senior Research Associate Tiffany Hua discusses the Lux Sustainable Innovation Model.

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GUTENBERG ONE

The book-of-one produced on site

By Ralf Schlözer

Entering a location, maybe a book shop, and having the book you want printed and bound within a few minutes — this is the promise of Gutenberg One.

The Gutenberg One is a compact and fully self-contained printing and binding unit for books, which is small and affordable enough to be placed in a wide range of locations. If the idea sounds somehow familiar, you might have heard from predecessor projects like



the Xerox Espresso Book machine.

So far, these book-on-demand on-site printers have had a very limited impact on the market. France-based Gutenberg & Co promises to change this with the Gutenberg One. To fit in a limited retail space, the Gutenberg One has a footprint of about 4 m² (43 ft²) and is able to produce a book in under five minutes.

Gutenberg & Co was founded in 2019 by Hubert Pedurand, who is now president of the company. Gutenberg & Co has several partner companies in the field of robotics, print and software that support the development.

The Technology

To produce a complete book on site, the device needs to combine a front-end, a printer for book block and cover, as well as options for binding and trimming.

In the Gutenberg One, the printing unit is based on a RISO inkjet printer. The printer produces 120 monochrome or color A4 pages per minute. Printing

two-up effectively doubles the output speed. Full color covers are produced on an OKI LED toner printer, as the color quality of the RISO printer is somewhat limited. Although most books are likely to require monochrome print only, color is an inherent option and can be helpful. RISO's oil-based inkjet technology does not require active drying, which helps in keeping the device compact.



The innovation in the Gutenberg One is a robotic arm that can take the book block from stage to stage, apply the glue, place it in the trimmer and finally into the delivery. Even at first sight this is a huge improvement



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on the belts and levers used before.

The patent of Hubert Pedurand is in a 3D glue gun. The robotic arm can grab a glue gun to apply the required amount of glue to the spine. This avoids having an open reservoir of glue, which can deteriorate over time or needs considerable time to heat up.

The robotic arm also feeds the cover into a creasing unit, places the book block on the applied glue, feeds the trimmer and finally places the book in the delivery. An interesting aspect is that the arm can grab and rotate the book block multiple times, therefore only a single knife trimmer is needed.

There are some format limitations set by the hardware, but they give a fairly wide range. Book sizes from 100 x 150 mm (4" x 6") to 200 x 280 mm (7.9" x 11") are possible. Page counts can range from 32 to 800 pages.

In the first presentations a touch-screen panel was used as user interface for the Gutenberg One. This is going to be replaced by a browser-based interface that can be operated by hand-held devices or PCs.

All the Titles

Theoretically an unlimited amount of books is accessible with an internet

connection and access to libraries of publishers and rights owners.

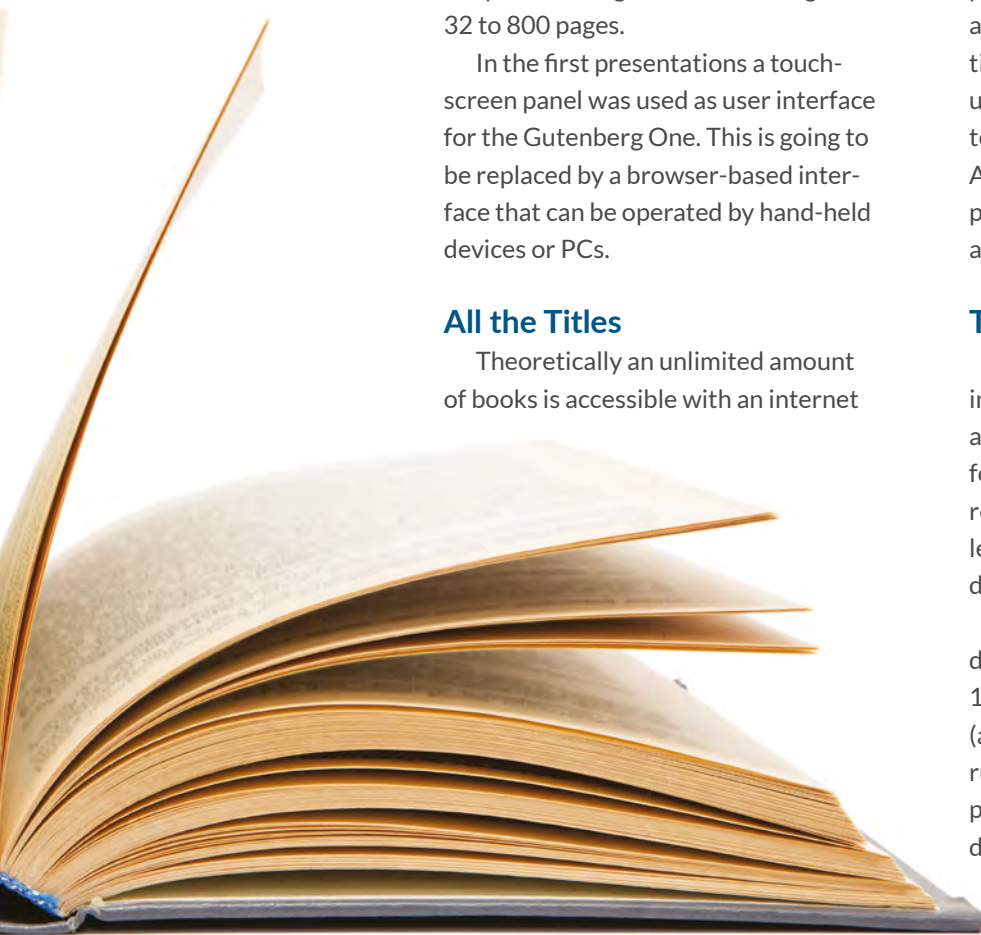
In practice, the rights situation requires negotiations with publishers. Gutenberg & Co made good progress in France with enlisting major publishers and having about 45,000 titles in the catalogue already. In other countries the start-up nature creates a chicken-and-egg problem. Publishers are likely to grant print rights with a fleet of devices installed, but without enough books in access there is little incentive to install a machine. The business case for publishers would be easy, especially for back catalogue titles: publishers would get a 22% royalty of the face price for every book printed and sold (based on the agreement with French publishers).

Gutenberg One installations in public places such as book-shops would require a large selection of titles. There are locations where this could be less required. A university could set up a device to print textbooks, thesis and research reports. An organization could print their self-published literature, or a publisher use it as on-demand reprint station.

The Use Case of Gutenberg One

The ever increasing number of books, including self-published titles, result in a mushrooming backlist of books. Even for actual titles, publishers are trying to reduce stock to lower their risk. This all leads to even shorter runs and more on-demand production.

Not all books can or should be produced on a Gutenberg One. With about 10 books-per-hour production capacity (and the double as two-up in A5 format), runs of more than a few copies are better produced on a centralized print-on-demand line. Also centralized book-of-one printing concepts (Amazon, BoD in Germany) capable of delivering



books overnight to a bookshop or to the home of the reader, pose some competition. Yet there is some convenience in having the book produced right away.

Obviously, there are technical limitations in color quality, size and page count as well, which would exclude certain types of books. However, with the specifications as planned, most published books can be produced on the Gutenberg One.

The business model for the owner is simple. The breakdown of the cost of a book is as follows:

- Production cost (including the investment): 55%
- Publisher and author: 22%
- Gutenberg & Co royalties: 17.5%
- VAT (for France): 5%

This is based on a machine cost of €120.000 and a production cost of one cent/page, plus a small fixed cost depending of the volume produced locally.

The Gutenberg One could be a great solution for remote locations or developing countries. Where the traditional model of centralized book printing and distribution is falling short for some reason, a local production unit can help readers.

Another opportunity would be bringing the Gutenberg One to environments where consumers shop and browse and don't mind waiting for five minutes.

Rolling Out the Solution

Despite the lack of adoption of previous device generations, Pedurand is confident to have the right mix now. He bought six Espresso Book machines for his R&D with five installed in schools and one in a book shop, all in France. This



Ralf Schlözer has over 20 years of experience in the Graphic Arts and Graphic System Manufacturing industries. He has extensive knowledge of traditional and direct imaging presses as well as non-impact printing technologies.

gave him the opportunity to study the concept and technology. He points out that the patents of the Espresso book machine were filed back in 1993, while the Gutenberg is able to benefit from all kind of technological progress so far.

The first machine has been in production since November 2021 at l'Harmattan, a publisher-bookstore in Paris with 38,000 titles available on the Gutenberg One. A second device is being installed at a publisher in the North of France needing an instant reprint capacity for runs of one to balance out current supply chain interruptions. This installation is planned to run in a two-shift operation to produce 50,000 to 60,000 books in the length of one per year, with a 68% lower carbon footprint compared to traditional production.

While in discussions with prospects for a Gutenberg One, Gutenberg & Co is looking for investors to scale the roll-out and ideally set up a network of devices. A wider roll-out could kick-off a domino effect as more devices installed will get more titles listed, and this would improve the attractiveness.

For the future success a lot will depend on access to a wide range of titles, how easy the Gutenberg One is to service, and the overall reliability. In any case, the Gutenberg One is a solution to increase the potential audience of printed books around the world. And as studies show, reading printed books improves the grades of pupils, improves the understanding of texts and increases the enjoyment in reading in general. I fully concur to the latter. ●



Fisher Textiles Adds Artificial Turf to Lineup for Events and Retail Environments

Fisher Textiles, the leading supplier of fabrics for digital printing, has added artificial turf to its lineup of materials for trade show and retail advertising environments.

Made in the USA and available in three weights and pile heights, applications include event and retail space flooring, backdrop walls and recreational zones for putting greens, cornhole games, children and pet play areas and more. Roll sizes are 15-foot wide by 100-foot long.

www.printingnews.com/21158954

Super Web WEBJet 2100P Printing System

Super Web Digital, Inc. is announcing the full launch of the newly engineered WEBJet 2100P production inkjet printing system, powered by Memjet's DuraLink pigment-ink based writing system. The WEBJet 2100P provides dramatically improved head life over prior generations, among the highest resolution output in the market and the unparalleled simplicity enabling operator servicing to maximize uptime. Super Web Digital has paired the Memjet DuraLink technology with a state-of-the-art scalable drying system from Adphos and inline scanning from Mitsubishi to enable the most challenging of graphic-rich, variable-data output for print service providers across a broad range of industries. The WEBJet 2100P is easily paired with the full range of proprietary slit & merge, perforating, punching, cutting, folding, and/or stacking solutions that the WEBJet 200D platform has successfully delivered over the past 7 years.



The first WEBJet 2100P has been running at a Midwest customer location since early 2021 with over 40 million pages printed. Super Web Digital is taking orders immediately.

www.printingnews.com/21158985

Hybrid Software Group's GLOBAL GRAPHICS SOFTWARE Granted US Patent for PrintFlat Technology

Global Graphics Software, a Hybrid Software Group company, has been granted a US patent for "Systems and methods for printer density compensation and stability" (Patent 11,167,549) by the United States Patent and Trademark Office.



The patent relates to the technology which underlies PrintFlat, Global Graphics' groundbreaking software that improves uniformity and removes unwanted banding from inkjet output, enabling digital production of a wide range of products including wide format graphics, flooring and décor, laminates, and packaging.

Global Graphics Software is a developer of innovative software components for digital print including the Harlequin RIP, the Direct range, and ScreenPro, the fastest solutions on the market for driving data through digital presses and ensuring high quality output.

www.printingnews.com/21159132

GEW Announces AeroLED

UV curing specialists **GEW** have announced the launch of AeroLED, a fully air-cooled, high power UV LED system for full cure, printing, coating and converting applications up to 60cm wide. AeroLED delivers power and reliability with a totally unique concept which eliminates many of the operational problems in existing air-cooled LED systems on the market.

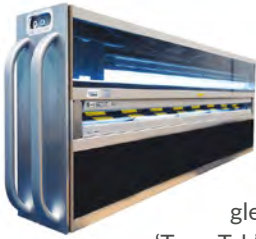


In an AeroLED system, the first significant innovation is in the air-cooling process. Cool, filtered air is distributed from a single centralised fan sited away from the press and exits through the UV lampheads, for quiet and reliable operation. The remote positioning of the fan avoids common problems caused by ink mist and dust ingress, while large air filters reduce the filter replacement cycle. AeroLED features the same LED chassis and core components as GEW's LeoLED lamphead.

As is the case with all new GEW UV products, AeroLED uses GEW's RHINO power supply and control range, for ultimate reliability with Industry 4.0 approved, IoT Remote Monitoring as standard.

www.printingnews.com/21158980

Meech International TakClean Ultra



The TakClean Ultra is an advancement of Meech's original TakClean system. With its compact, robust and visually appealing design, TakClean Ultra has been manufactured specifically for webs between 650 and 1,450mm in width.

The TakClean Ultra offers double-sided and single-sided web cleaning via Meech's specially formulated 'TransTak' technology. Elastomer contact cleaning rollers and perforated adhesive rolls work in combination with Meech's static control technology to remove loose contaminants and eliminate static charges.

The pneumatic technology present within the TakClean Ultra holds the elastomer cleaning rollers in place, allowing for even and consistent levels of pressure across the full width of the web and the lifting of dry and unbound contamination from its surface. The same technology is also used to hold the adhesive roller against the TransTak Elastomer cleaning roller – contaminants are subsequently trapped as they are transferred from the surface of the TransTak roller to the adhesive roller, which prevents recontamination.

www.printingnews.com/21159120

New Generation Xeikon Label Converting Units Support Scalability and Flexibility

Xeikon continues on its pathway to full digitalization with the launch of its new Xeikon LCU series (Label Converting Units), specifically developed and designed for the converting industries in high-end label production and manufacturing. Moving to the next technological generation, Xeikon's Label Converting Units are designed with modular and scalable architecture for added flexibility, cloud connection and full integration. They come in two models, the Xeikon LCU350 with its new modular platform for added flexibility and scalability to support business growth – and the Xeikon LCU33, a basic version and entry-level choice.

www.printingnews.com/21159133



Konica Minolta Launches AccurioJet KM-1e HD LED UV Inkjet Press

Konica Minolta announced the launch of its AccurioJet KM-1e High Definition (HD) model, an evolution of the AccurioJet KM-1e LED UV Inkjet Press.

The AccurioJet KM-1e delivers 1200 x 1200 true DPI output that rivals offset press quality. By incorporating new HD technology, improvements have been made to the quality of production for the AccurioJet KM-1e. These include the skin tones, uniformity of solid backgrounds and reproduction of textures, with a 'best in the industry' image quality. Photobooks, art books and digital package printing are all among the niche markets suitable for this new HD model.

www.printingnews.com/21159075

BOBST EXPERTFOLD 165 Folder-Gluer

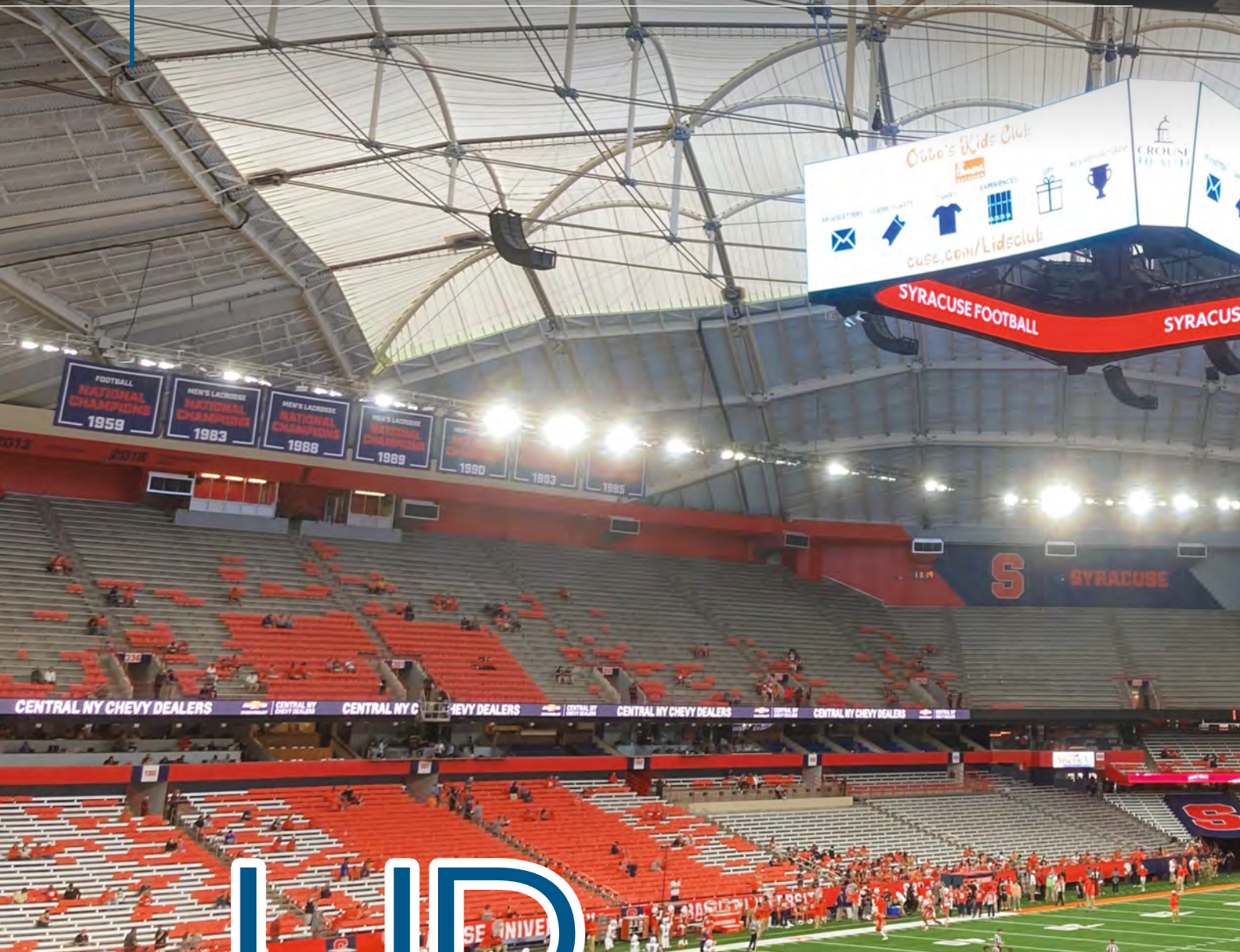
BOBST has revealed the latest addition to its lineup, the new EXPERTFOLD 165 e-commerce version. The larger version of the high-tech EXPERTFOLD 145 | 165 folder-gluer is now available with innovations for digital retail.

Two new modules have been added to the 165 version: POLYVACUUM and GYROBOX. Their objective is to add value under the pressures of e-commerce. Already available for the MASTERFOLD 170 and 230, these two unique modules have been customized for the EXPERTFOLD 165 and are now available on this flagship for the folding-gluing of litho-laminated boxes. The launch demonstrates the BOBST approach to product development, meeting the changing needs of converters head-on.

Able to support digital transformation for packaging converters, the machine is equipped with MATIC automation technology and remote control. The swift setups and changeovers are also due to the fact that the entire folder-gluer and the different modules are managed through an HMI, allowing users to save and retrieve settings on demand.

www.printingnews.com/21159006





UP WITH HIGHER EDUCATION

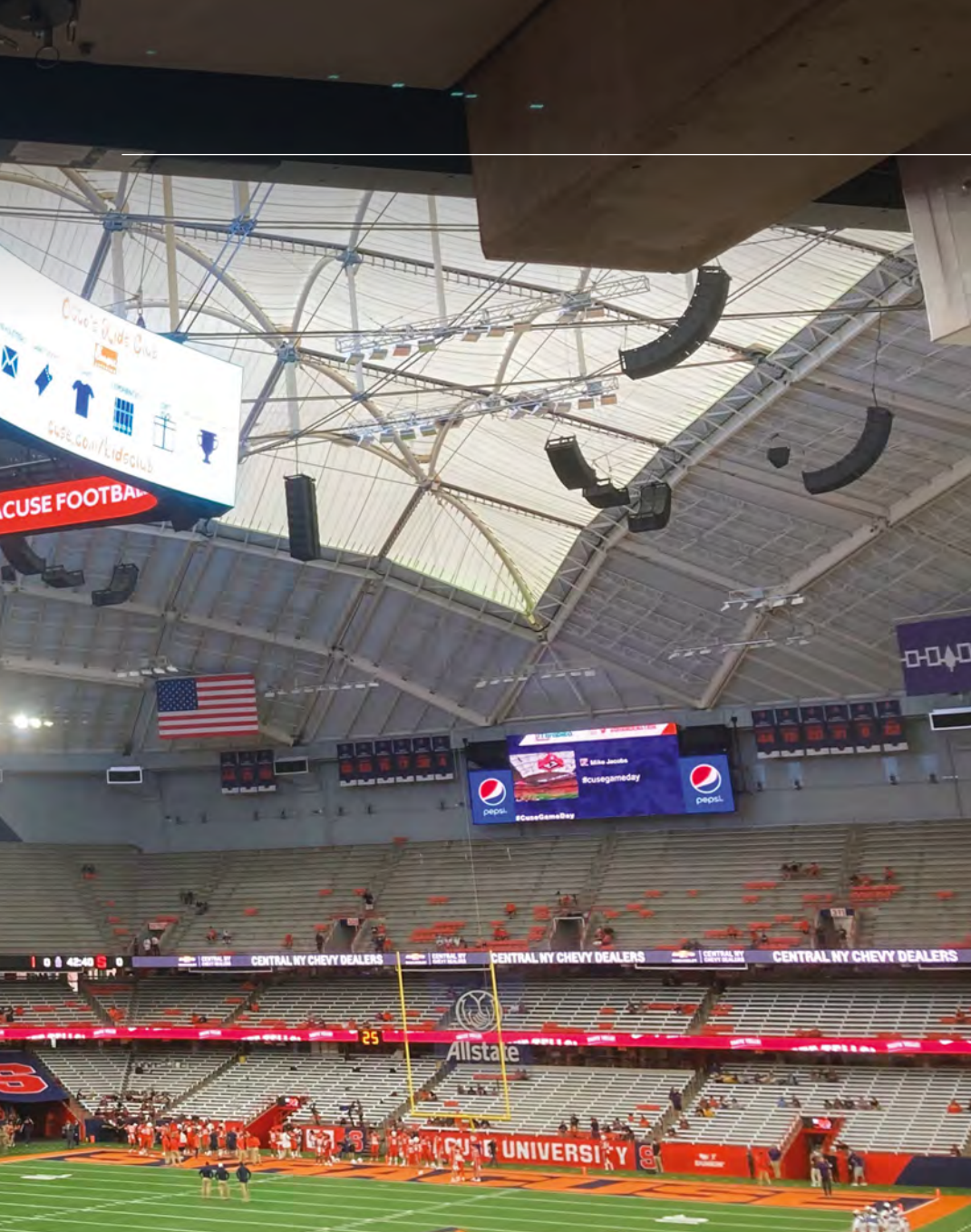
Finding signage opportunities in academic applications

By Richard Romano

It was just after sunset when I arrived at the University of Albany campus. I was there for a meeting to help a group of students form a university Toastmasters club, and, as I exited

the parking lot, I was struck by two things. There was no wayfinding signage indicating where any given hall was—and, in fact, all the buildings looked identical.

Wandering aimlessly in the dark for



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The center-hung digital display in SU's renovated Carrier Dome is the largest such display in college athletics.

a while, I finally had to ask a cluster of students where “X Hall” was, and fortunately I was not too late for the meeting. Rinse and repeat a couple hours later when I spent a good amount of time roving the campus like the Flying Dutchman trying to find the parking lot. (This was about 12 years ago, so the situation may have improved since then.)

We’ve all likely had similar experiences with “wayfinding fails,” but there is no doubt that clear, accurate directional signage is perhaps the most important element in signage for educational institutions—or at least should be. (See

Mark Vruno’s feature on page 46 for some design tips for wayfinding signage.) But while wayfinding is perhaps the most conspicuous element of signage in education (or perhaps its most conspicuous when it’s absent) there are many other opportunities for signage and display graphics providers to serve institutions of higher education.

Sporting Chances

Another highly conspicuous example of signage in education is sports-related graphics. In the feature on page 50, I write about the winner of this year’s

FASTSIGNS Project of the Year Award.

FASTSIGNS York (Pa.) did a complete overhaul of the graphics for the Shippensburg University football program. The project served a practical purpose. It was designed in part to attract athletes as part of the program's recruiting drive. FASTSIGNS York had performed similar projects for Shippensburg University's other athletic programs.

While colleges and universities have myriad signage and display graphics needs, the athletic department can be a good entry into a university and is often a voracious consumer of display graphics.

Many university sports programs can have very high-end display needs.

Syracuse University recently renovated its Carrier Dome, which included installing a wide variety of printed and electronic signage—including a center-hung video board from Daktronics that is the largest such display in college athletics.

Most sports projects will probably be on a much smaller scope, but this gives you an idea of what the possibilities are.

Championship year banners—assuming a team wins championships, which is not always the case—and other similar displays are good recurring projects.

Home Sweet Home

There can be some other inconspicuous educational signage opportunities.

For example, the third-place winner in this year's FASTSIGNS Project of the Year Awards was FASTSIGNS Eugene (Ore.), which performed a complete rebrand of the Flats @ Chase, a new student housing apartment community near the University of Oregon. Exterior building signs, address letters and branded welcome mats were all integrated into the décor, and wall murals were installed throughout the interior of the property. The goal was to make the housing complex appealing to students and attract them away from competing housing options.

Think Outside the Campus

College and university graphics may not be restricted to the campus itself.



FASTSIGNS Eugene (Ore.) did a complete rebrand of The Flats @ Chase, a student housing complex near the University of Oregon.

Depending how integrated a school is with the local community, there could be signage and display opportunities in other parts of town.

For example, in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., Skidmore College is very close to downtown, and it is common to find signage promoting the school or various school events throughout the downtown area.

And when thinking outside the campus, also think of local businesses that may serve the school, either directly or tangentially. Sports bars for example, may be “official” student and/or alumni gathering places to watch games. These are great opportunities for university-themed display graphics.



Work with the Inplant

As you consider working with colleges and universities, remember, too, that many schools have inplant printing departments that handle some portion of the university’s printing needs—including display graphics. High-end or installed signage may be beyond their abilities, so a professional sign provider may be able to partner with the inplant and fill in any gaps in their service offerings. It can be a highly symbiotic relationship. (Also, students who work at the inplant may be good potential employees.)

Graduation Day

The higher-education market can be a



lucrative one for sign and graphics providers, and there is no shortage of display graphics needs. As we saw, some are obvious, others less so. But finding them can provide many new opportunities. ●



Richard Romano has been writing about the graphic communications industry for 20 years. He is an industry analyst and author or co-author of more than half a dozen books.

SIGN DESIGN UX DO'S & DON'TS

Employ a functional graphic approach for positive way-finding user experiences, top designers advise.

By Mark Vruno



NIU hall of fame

Let's set aside print production for a moment and examine wayfinding signage from the designer's viewpoint.

Wayfinding refers to information systems that guide users through a physical environment and enhance their understanding of the space. User-experience (UX) design is the process design teams employ to create products that provide meaningful and relevant experiences to end-users.

UX generally is associated with the digital realm (think of websites and software). However, the Nielsen Norman Group consultancy notes that it encompasses all aspects of the end-user's interaction with a company, its services and its products – including printed exterior/interior signage. Because negative UX can diminish product usage, improving the overall user experience is important to most companies, designers and creators.

Wayfinding signage is particularly important in complex-built environments, such as urban centers, health-care and educational campuses and transportation facilities, according to the Washington, DC-based Society for Experiential Graphic Design (SEGD).

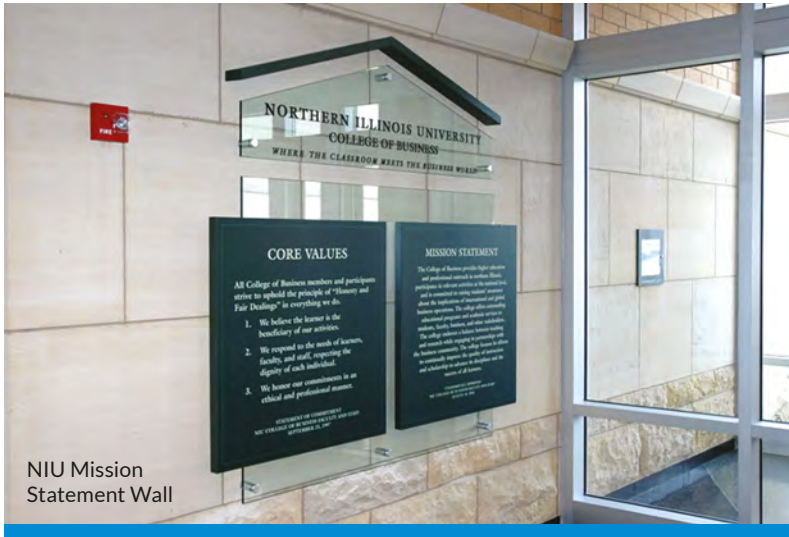
As architectural environments become more complicated, people need visual cues such as maps, directions and symbols to help guide them to their destinations. In these often high-stress environments, effective wayfinding systems can contribute to the overall UX: a sense of well-being, safety and security.

By way of example, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority is working to make Philadelphia's rail-transit network more accessible and easier to navigate. The wayfinding project is led by Anna Crider, principal of NYC-based Entro Communications.

Philly's Way

SEPTA's existing signage is inconsistent and often difficult to understand. Through extensive research, Entro conducted station walk-throughs and engaged SEPTA riders through surveys, workshops and interviews. The design firm gained insight into the needs and perspectives of the diverse communities that use the system. To create a more intuitive transit experience, the Entro team started with the brand and extended its focus to the development of a clear and concise visual vocabulary and information hierarchy.

"In experiential graphic design, branding is often an integral component of place-making and identity projects, wayfinding, exhibition and even public



NIU Mission Statement Wall

installations," said Cybelle Jones, SEG D's chief executive. "It is the focus on an increasing number of strategy/research/planning initiatives, particularly as it relates to return on investment (ROI) for brand investments.

"While branding often develops as a separate effort, experiential graphic designers collaborate in branding either by developing the brand identity itself or supporting it through communications and experiences in the built environment. These are among the most

powerful touchpoints for the brand."

"Brand consistency definitely needs to be a part of any wayfinding effort," said Curt Schultz, a seasoned designer in the Chicago suburbs. He has worked with clients ranging from trade groups, including the Water Quality Association, to state colleges, such as Northern Illinois University. However, he added that other design elements also should be considered, such as sign size, color contrast and so-called white space.

Graphically speaking, "if a sign features a 'busy' pattern in the background and has too much going on [visually], the message can get lost," Schultz said.

In other words, don't be too cute, because what looks good doesn't always work well in the wayfinding world.

Inclusive Design for All

When the federal government gets involved, sign design can



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Curt Schultz



Bickner Aquatic Center



Joel Gonzales

become hyper-functional.

“ADA [compliance] is inseparable from signage,” Jones said. “All signage must be accessible, and the understanding and interpretation of accessibility continues to evolve and be much more nuanced.”

“We have to ensure that our clients’ signage meets ADA compliance,” said Joel Gonzales, a 16-year veteran of the sign industry. “We advise them as to what is acceptable.”

According to Gonzales, when creating signs for people who are blind or visually impaired, spacing becomes critical for printing braille and pictographs. Such specifications often are inspected in the field.

More recently, the ADA added digital-printing guidelines, including “the ‘proper way’ to add images to colored backgrounds,” Gonzales said.

Half of Gonzales’s career has been spent as associate design manager/technology consultant at ER2 Image Group, a full-service, grand-format printing firm in Hanover Park, Ill., a suburb situated some 34 miles west of Chicago.

“Some clients come to us with files in hand, while others have general templates that we lay out copy in,” said Gary Schelleher, Jr., ER2 VP and partner.

Inclusive Design in Practice at the Smithsonian

SEGD’S “LAWS OF WAYFINDING”

Analysis Phase

- Consider the user group and type of space to determine signage scale, location, content, frequency and urgency of information. Ask questions such as, “Is it leisure (a museum or casual shopping), or is it an airport or a hospital?”
- Study the architectural flow of the building, group of buildings or site -- including vertical and horizontal transportation, entry and exit points, required access to other spaces, egress paths, etc. -- to help inform primary, secondary and sometimes tertiary decision points.

- Determine the total possible destinations for the wayfinding, and identify the permanent destinations as well as potentially changeable ones.

Design Phase

- In general, less is almost always more.
- Design the signage to physically, visually integrate with the architecture/site wherever possible, whenever possible (unless the design intent is to contrast, to be bolder).
- Keep refining the content and the design all the way through to design intent.

WQA Isle Banner Template



2nd Surface Print, 1st Surface Tactile

“Some lean on us to help determine appropriate copy.”

ER2 Image Group has six full-time designers on staff who “offer as much or little help depending on our clients’ needs,” Schelleher said.

The company, which employs 74 people, reported total sales of approximately \$15

million in 2021. Two of its more recent sign jobs were executed for United Airlines and Uber Freight, the latter of which has set up shop in downtown Chicago’s iconic Old Main Post Office. Work for both big-name clients has included ADA elements.

ER2 prints braille signage in house on flatbed, UV LED printers from Direct Color Systems. To facilitate the tactile reading/writing system, the ultraviolet devices raise up typographic characters to an acceptable height that meet ADA standards. The manufacturer’s Direct Jet printers come bundled with typesetting software that translates into braille.

Before this advanced technology became available, the ensuing emulsion process was outsourced -- and could take from three to four weeks, according to Gonzales.

“Now we set up the file, pre-cut the media to size, and can be done by the end of the same day,” he said. ●



Mark Vruno, a Chicago-based business publishing professional, has reported on the global commercial print industry for more than 20 years.

FASTSIGNS/WIDE FORMAT & SIGNAGE PROJECT OF THE YEAR

FASTSIGNS York (Pa.) scores a touchdown with Shippensburg University's football facility.

By Richard Romano

The winner of this year's FASTSIGNS/Wide Format & Signage Project of the Year is FASTSIGNS York (Pa.), whose major rebranding of the Shippensburg University football team's training facility caught the judges' eyes.

FASTSIGNS York was founded in 2004, when owner Jon Toy and his wife relocated to the area from Texas. Early on, Toy decided he wanted to focus on the higher education market.

"We circled a radius of about an hour-and-a-half from where we were located and identified



what colleges and universities were in the area and started literally cold-calling them," Toy said.

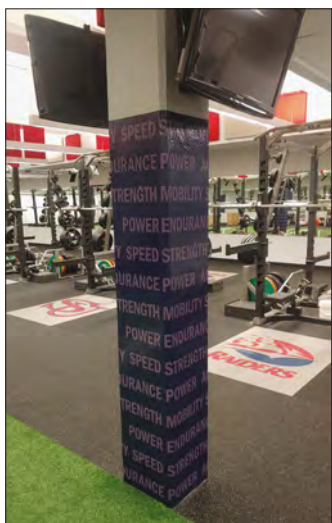
It was a strategy that bore fruit, and one early cold call was to Shippensburg University, located about an hour's drive from York.

"We developed a good relationship with the athletic department and have been working with the athletic director and assistant athletic director," Toy





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said. “It started with something simple and just grew into more and more.”

Although FASTSIGNS York specializes in higher education—they also do work for York College of Pennsylvania and Penn State York (which won FASTSIGNS Project of the Year in 2017)—they also do work for the warehouse and distribution industry, as well as healthcare.

But colleges and universities are where they shine.

The first projects FASTSIGNS York

did for Shippensburg University involved hanging banners in the gym to highlight championship-winning years across all the university’s sports teams.

“Then it evolved into, ‘Hey, can we do this? Can we do that?’ So we’ve done work for the football stadium, the softball field, the baseball field and the locker rooms,” said Toy. “They just trusted us as we’ve gone along for creative ideas.”

The current project came about as part of the football program’s recruiting drive.

“Five or six years ago, we put some murals up in the football coaches’ offices and they loved it,” Toy said. “It was right where the recruits walked in, and it was a beautiful picture on a wall of the stadium.”

Fast forward to 2021, when the football program started remodeling its

athletic facilities and locker room.

“They wanted us to help design stuff from scratch,” said Toy.

The football program worked closely with FASTSIGNS York’s Visual Communications Expert Kelli Grim, who made multiple site visits and reviews with the client.

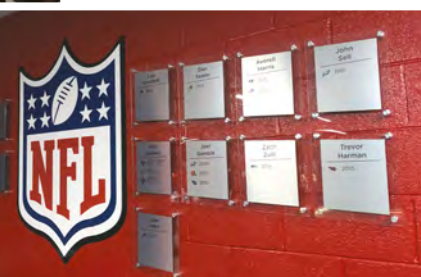
Starting from rough drawings and construction images of what the renovated facilities would look like, the FASTSIGNS York team started brainstorming ideas.

FASTSIGNS York’s Creative Director Corey Fahnestock took the ball and ran with it. There were a few tweaks and changes and finally they had a set of photos and designs that everybody was happy with. Installation started the second week of June and was completed by the end of the month.

The project included a mix of printed materials and constructed signage. Dimensional Dibond letters on the outside of the football locker room identified the building, while inside the locker room vinyl covered the concrete walls. They applied perforated vinyl to the windows in the tunnel area and IJ180 vinyl to the red walls in the locker area.

One element the athletic director was eager to include from the get-go was an “honor wall” to highlight Shippensburg players who had gone on

Continued on page 67





MUTOH Introduces the New ValueJet 1628MH

The new **MUTOH ValueJet 1628MH** hybrid printer combines upgraded features and new technologies designed to produce vibrant output with smoother gradations and a wide color gamut using MUTOH's own VerteLith RIP software.

The VJ-1628MH is the most versatile printer on the market and offers the flexibility of printing on roll or rigid media using MP31 multi-purpose inks in up to 8 colors, including CMYKx2 and CMYKWhWh. A new built-in circulation system for white and magenta inks provides improved color stability and consistency while a new custom roller selection function offers diverse media compatibility and the ability to set each pressure roller independently for various types of substrates.

MUTOH's new VerteLith RIP software is bundled with FlexiDESIGNER MUTOH Edition 21, a \$2,199.00 value. VerteLith includes MUTOH Clear Tone and CMYK technologies, two preview functions and auto-generation of named Pantone spot colors. The VJ-1628MH outputs packaging prototypes, indoor/outdoor signage, banners, posters, and thermoforming prints easily and efficiently with high heat and stretch tolerance, and produces a smooth and natural finish, preserving the texture of the print substrates.

The VJ-1628MH is a direct replacement for the VJ-1627MH. www.printingnews.com/21159042

Promotional Advertising Products Available Now with FLEXcon Air Egress Liner

FLEXcon's most popular out-of-home product line, FLEXcon FLEXmark Promotional Advertising Films, is now available with an air egress liner in wide web and pre-slit rolls.

WPAE (White Opaque Vinyl with a high-performance permanent adhesive and air egress liner)

WRAE (White Opaque Vinyl with a high-performance removable adhesive and air egress liner).

These 3.5 mil flexible white opaque polymeric vinyl films now feature the air egress liner which reduces air bubbles / air entrapment during application to the surface.

Benefits of FLEXmark vinyl base films:

- Good opacity for covering existing graphics.
- Good resistance to scuffing, tearing and abrasion.

Benefits of air egress liner:

- Provides enhanced performance for novice installers.
- Reduces air entrapment and makes installation of large-format graphics easier.
- Reduces the need for the wet method for installation.
- Provides total-applied cost savings for graphic installation.

Applications:

- Barricade, vending, counter, window, wall, and floor* graphics.
- For floor graphic applications, FLEXmark WRAE base film must be used with FLEXmark CP or FLEXmark OV6602 overlaminate for UL 410 Classification standard for slip resistance.

www.printingnews.com/21158913



Nobelus Launches Sustainable Unsupported Film

Nobelus, known for its specialty line of laminates for the print and packaging trade, announces the launch of cellulose-based EcoElement CLS Film.

As part of its continued commitment to sustainability, the Nobelus product team expands the EcoElement line with an unsupported, 100% plastic-free film. Manufactured from PEFC-certified wood pulp from sustainably managed forests, EcoElement CLS Film offers an eco-friendlier alternative to standard coatings which are largely derived from petrochemicals. The thin, 80-gauge film is available in both matte and gloss finishes.



EcoElement CLS Film passed rigorous testing criteria and is certified industrial compostable per ASTM D6400/D6868 and holds an OK Home Compost certification from TUV Austria.

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Fisher Textiles Amplifies Offering with Backlit and Pillow Case Display Fabric Media

Fisher Textiles presents its newest backlit fabric for SEG (silicone edge graphics), GF6050 Super Sonic, and frontlit pillow case display fabric, GF8860 Silver Back. Both are prevalent in the trade show and retail industries and are compatible with dye sublimation transfer printing.

GF6050 Super Sonic is a soft, sueded knit fabric that produces excellent vibrancy of print, amplified when backlit. It is wrinkle resistant and can fold to save on shipping and storage costs. A treated version of this fabric, DD6750 Super Sonic, is available for direct and UV-curable printing and there is also a super wide option, DD6650 Super Sonic, which is 197-inches wide. This is one of the few 5-meter-wide backlit fabrics on the market.

GF8860 Silver Back is a soft signage fabric that has a unique knit construction with white yarns on the face of the fabric and blended white/black yarns on the back that give it a silver appearance. It is an opaque fabric that is 100% polyester with no coating on the back, which allows the fabric to keep its natural stretch while introducing an enhanced blackout construction to all pillow case displays that utilize aluminum tube frames. Other applications include frontlit SEG, and Step & Repeat backdrops.

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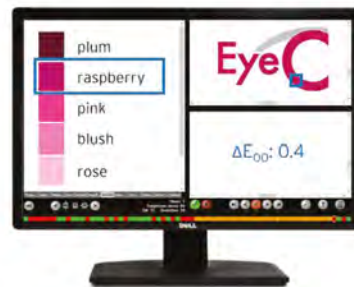
Kodak Launches KODACOLOR Film-to-Fabric Ink System

Film-to-Fabric ink systems can be used with most modified inkjet printers and involves three simple components: powder, film, and ink. The benefits of DTF, like Kodak's FTF (Film-to-Fabric) system, include the ability to print on a wide variety of fabrics (e.g. natural fabrics, polyester, nylon, rayon, blends, and cotton); less investment in hardware for startup; and more flexibility to accept customer printing projects.

Kodak's film-to-fabric ink system includes KODACOLOR powder, KODACOLOR film, and ink specially designed for use in a film-to-fabric application. Customers with existing Direct-to-Garment (DTG) printers have the option to use KODACOLOR DTG inks with KODACOLOR film and powder to add Kodak's FTF to their offerings.

For fabric print shop owners wanting high-quality fabric prints without the expense of a full-fledged DTG fabric printing system or wanting to offer additional print projects on fabrics other than cotton to their customers, Kodak's FTF ink system is the ideal solution.

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EyeC Introduces New Update for EyeC Profiler

EyeC announces the availability of an update for EyeC Profiler featuring integrated color inspection and support for digital color libraries. Also new is the EyeC Color Book Editor which supports the management of digital color books and individual color references, while enabling a smooth inspection process.

The new EyeC Profiler software update ensures integrated color measurement without the addition of an external measuring device. Any number of color patches can be measured randomly in the sample and previously defined measuring points can be reliably checked. Colors are evaluated during the measurement as CIE Lab color values, which are then specified as ΔE color differences compared to the reference color values. Measurement can be done on a PDF (PDF-to-PDF comparison) or on a scanned, physical sample (PDF-to-scan or scan-to-scan comparison).

The new update also includes the EyeC Color Book Editor. This user-friendly program enables even more efficient and faster input of the most suitable reference colors by importing customer-specific color books, Pantone libraries as well as the manual input of CIE Lab reference color values.

www.printingnews.com/21159071

CHANGE IS COMING TO THE **TEXTILE** **INDUSTRY**

How to educate the next generation in apparel.

By Cary Sherburne





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The U.S. January jobs report was surprisingly strong, adding 467,000 positions. In addition to the “Great Resignation” phenomenon, it was expected that jobs numbers would be more in the 150,000 range. In addition, average wages rose 5.7%. This has led some pundits describing the trend as “The Great Upgrade” – many employees leaving existing jobs not to stay home, but rather, to find jobs with higher pay and a better work/life balance.

But the job growth is not equal across all industry segments. And many in the textiles and apparel industry still struggle to find enough workers. There is a lack of skilled workers in North America due to

the outsourcing to Asia and other parts of the world that began in the 1970s.

Now, with new technology in place and increased pressure on the industry due to sustainability and supply chain issues, brands have become more interested in reshoring at least some of the production.

The good news is that while there is a shortage of skilled labor, there is also an increase in programs designed to train those workers and to attract new talent to an industry that still gets a bad rap from potential employees. These perceptions are remnants from the days when factories were highly manual, not particularly clean and classified as sweat shops.

We spoke to a few of the organizations that are working to grow the textiles and apparel presence in North America.

Fashion Revolution

A significant issue for the fashion industry is treatment – or mistreatment -- of workers and suppliers. Fashion Revolution, a global organization with a very active U.S. chapter, is working to change that, campaigning for a clean, safe, fair, transparent and accountable fashion industry through research, education, collaboration, mobilization and advocacy.

The organization was formed in response to the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh, which killed 1,138 people and injured many more on April 24, 2013. Every year, the organization hosts a global Fashion Revolution Week during the week of April 24 to bring more visibility to continuing issues in the fashion industry, as well as to highlight the positive developments within the industry.

“What we are all trying to do is bring education about what’s happening in the fashion industry and how, when we pay \$5 for a t-shirt, somebody else is paying with their lives,” said Kathleen Grevers, head of the U.S. program.



The organization is autonomous and does not align itself with any brands or receive funding from them, although it works to educate brands and provide guidance about improving conditions in the industry. Their advocacy work also extends to government and regulatory agencies. This includes helping to pass the California Garment Worker Protection Act in 2021, intended to result in fair wages and improved working conditions for garment workers.

Education in the Sewing Trades

A great example of a program designed to add talent to the sewing trades is Detroit-based Industrial Sewing and Innovation Center (ISAIC) headed by Jennifer Guarino.

The organization trains people on traditional skills as well as skills that are required for advanced competitive manufacturing. It includes a full-scale manufacturing facility where apprentices do on-the-job training. They manufacture for brands, but they also pilot innovation on-site, partnering with innovators to try their ideas in a use-case facility. This is designed to align the commercialization of innovation with the skills that are needed to deploy new technology and approaches into the marketplace, as well as to find new ways to scale.

The Center also positions industry careers in a different way than they were in the past. There is a starting point, of course, but there is also a path forward in what are now high-tech jobs. Historically, the industry did not invest in the careers of people making the products, and those were largely women and people of color.

“What we do from the get-go is to understand their interest and develop career paths for them,” Guarino said. “On Fridays, we don’t do any production; we do continuous training.”

In addition to on-site training, ISAIC also has partnerships with a variety of post-secondary educational institutions enabling apprentices to take classes that are aligned with their interests.

“We are preparing them to become business owners,” she said. “Our model is to eventually have for-profit, worker-owned factories, where we can

flip the power pyramid so that it’s really positioning workers to truly benefit from growth, and to also set them up to be the masters of advanced manufacturing.”

Another approach to making worker training more accessible is Shimmy, an AI-powered mobile app designed to upskill and reskill garment manufacturing workers. In addition to training sewing talent, founder Sarah Krasley has also introduced training modules for sewing machine repair personnel. It features game-based learning that drives better engagement and retention.

BMC Fashion: Modern Apparel Manufacturing in Action

In addition to workforce development initiatives, the students in these programs ultimately need places to work if they are not choosing to start their own businesses right away. There are a number of innovative factories popping up in North America that offer careers to these folks and/or take advantage of existing skills based in their respective areas.

One example is SAI-TEX America in Los Angeles, a cut-and-sew shop focused on denim products that leverages the LA-area skills base and has implemented sustainable technology in its manufacturing processes.

Kirby Best, located in Arizona, is a long-time proponent of on-demand manufacturing, who ran Lightning Source for a time, an innovative on-demand manufacturer of books. He recently turned his attention to the fashion industry and launched Bespoke Manufacturing Company, or BMC Fashion, in February 2022.

From his experience with a previous on-demand manufacturing plant he operated in Alabama, Best takes the process to an entirely new level. It provides a clean, sustainable work environment and an opportunity for employees to learn



new skills and contribute to the fashion manufacturing model of the future.

Accelerating, But Never Fast Enough

Driven by consumer demand for more sustainability and brands working to mitigate the supply chain challenges, change to the fashion industry is coming. On the brand and retailer side, innovative digital shopping experiences and made-to-measure technologies are reducing inventory risk, improving sustainability and becoming more responsive to

rapidly changing market demands. However, skilled labor continues to be a barrier.

We hope that the programs highlighted here, and many others, will begin to address these shortages and attract new talent to the industry. It is the only way the textiles and apparel industry can truly move into the 21st century. It must drive change to create happier, healthier and more rewarding careers for its workers, while reshoring a growing volume of manufacturing to North America and doing its part to address the climate crisis. ●

A CREATIVE JOURNEY IN FASHION

Meet textile designer Lucy Swann.



(Image courtesy of Textintel.)



such fun. Maybe this is where the inspiration to go into kids' wear began.

I was approached at my fashion show to work on women's leisure-wear and outerwear, and this was my first job. I was there for 12 months before I then got my first kids' wear job, and then continued to specialize in that area throughout my career.

DM: How has the manufacturing industry changed?

LS: It has changed enormously since the days before computers became an everyday essential! Sketching my designs by hand and coloring them in with markers! We also had our own sample rooms, so we gener-

ated a lot of designs inhouse—and we had our own UK factories—so everything was done locally. We did our own patterns, too. Then sampling/manufacturing was switched to overseas—I remember faxing my designs to the factories and sending swatches out. It was a longer process, for sure.

Then computers came in and our lives were made so much easier and quicker.

It's continuing to evolve, and I am really excited about what 3D

Lucy Swann has been designing beautiful surface patterns for the fashion industry for many years and has an extensive knowledge of the sector, particularly children's wear. She is living the dream and doing what she loves. Having recently diversified to launch her own scarf collection, here she shares her inspiring creative journey and what the future holds.

Debbie McKeegan: How did you begin your design journey?

Lucy Swann: I always wanted to work as a fashion designer; and for as long as I can remember, I was always drawing stick people with ornate, patterned dresses. I dabbled in graphic design for a bit but realized that it was fashion I wanted to do.

DM: What inspired you to focus on children's wear?

LS: I actually wanted to specialize in kids' wear at Uni, but I was discouraged from doing so, so I opted for women's wear. I remember working on a project for Mothercare while I was studying, which was

All over prints



technology can bring. The great thing is that the industry is now very mindful of waste and working smarter, much more than it was when I started out. Long may this continue.

DM: Can you tell us how you create your designs?

LS: I always start with comparative shopping: looking at ladies and menswear, seeing what trends are coming through from there and seeing how they can filter down into kids' wear. I

then work with mood boards and create looks from there. Like most designers these days, I work with Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop to design.

DM: How has the design process changed over the few years when working freelance?

LS: The design process does vary from client to client, but with the same basics, though. I sometimes work with a tight design brief, and other times I am given a free range from the beginning. I do find working freelance more liberating; and overall, it allows me to be more creative.

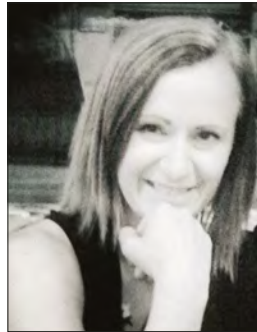
DM: Has digital technology (both design and print) accelerated your creativity?

LS: I think digital technology has accelerated my creativity when it comes to print. During lockdown, I decided to brush up on my Photoshop skills, and it has revolutionized the way I design printed textiles. I just started to experiment with it, and I loved what I could do with it!

DM: Tell us about your new scarf collection?

LS: My scarf collection really came about through loving what I could create with Photoshop. I have always been interested in textile design, but never pursued it. It really just came about through expanding my Photoshop skills. I have always loved a scarf;

I always wear a lot of black and found that adding a splash of color in a scarf really did help to complement an outfit. Also, they



Lucy Swann

make a great face covering. My scarf collection itself is inspired about what is around me, from graffiti on a wrought iron bridge on the Regents Canal, to formation of shapes in nature—such as trees, fauna and flora—in the countryside around me.

DM: Why did you decide to diversify?

LS: I accidentally diversified, really. It wasn't particularly conscious, I just wanted to do something that I loved. I recently moved to the countryside; and two minutes from my home, there is a factory which has been printing scarves for over 100 years, so I also took this as a sign that I should be doing this. I still love working in kids' wear, but I find designing my scarves liberating.



Scarves

(Image courtesy of TextIntel)

DM: What's next for Lucy Swann?

LS: As I have recently moved, I have started to design a range of homewares such as cushion covers and wallpaper, and I am looking at re-covering a 1930s cocktail chair in one of my fabrics. So the plan is do bespoke design for my own home, and then these designs will be incorporated into a new collection.

DM: What advice would you give to an emerging designer?

LS: Life is short—do what you love. ●

Learn more at www.textintel.com.

Debbie McKeegan is the CEO of TextIntel. As a multi-disciplinary creative and renowned digital print pioneer, she holds over 25 years' experience within the Textile manufacturing industry.



Continued from page 33

name and logo, for example, Austin High School, and their Mustang logo is cut out in the shape of the horse. We have known that going direct-to-board is a better way to produce these, but we couldn't do everything at once. We also believe that direct-to-board printing will be a real growth opportunity for us, especially when we can print and finish ADA-compliant signage in house

PN: How did COVID affect your operation?

CW: COVID actually reversed a kind of sliding trend downward for us, in that we printed a lot of course packs, especially early on when there was mostly remote learning. And for the first time, our kids got full-color learning

materials. The quality was great and the price was low. They really loved it.

PN: I know you are a long-time and vocal advocate for learning materials customized to each student – taking materials you have bought, paid for and have access to use, and selecting the parts of those materials most applicable to each student. Have you been able to implement that at HISD?

CW: Still a work in progress. I don't have a doctorate in education, so not everyone believes me. I think math is the most likely area for this to develop. The math department at most schools seems to really stick with print, and I think it's because you kind of need to learn math with pen and paper. Personalized, customized print

is harder to produce but more meaningful. I think that the printers who get behind high-value print will still be standing a few years from now. And the ones who are committed to high volume, static, throwaway, low-worth print will suffer.

PN: Your district covers quite a large geographic area. How do people submit their print work?

CW: We have EFI's Mid-Market Suite which includes the MarketDirect storefront and PACE as the MIS. We also use ProcessShipper. We have a catalog of thousands of items in MarketDirect, everything from forms, business cards and stationery to signs and display graphics, plus people can upload their own designs or use our graphic designer to create custom





artwork. We also do special things, like student-designed holiday cards that parents and students can order from the storefront in quantities as low as 10. Another example is for the art department. We found that students were paying a lot to have their artwork reproduced on canvas, and we let the art departments know that we can do that for them faster and with much less cost.

PN: You mentioned *ProcessShipper*. I understand you promise fast delivery, often next day. Talk a little about the shipping process. You must have intra-district mail services.

CW: We do, but not all print projects can easily be distributed via internal mail, and mail is only delivered twice a week to schools, along with custodial and office supplies, etc. And the exact destinations are not always convenient for the recipient. So what we have done is capitalize on the contract the State of Texas has with FedEx.



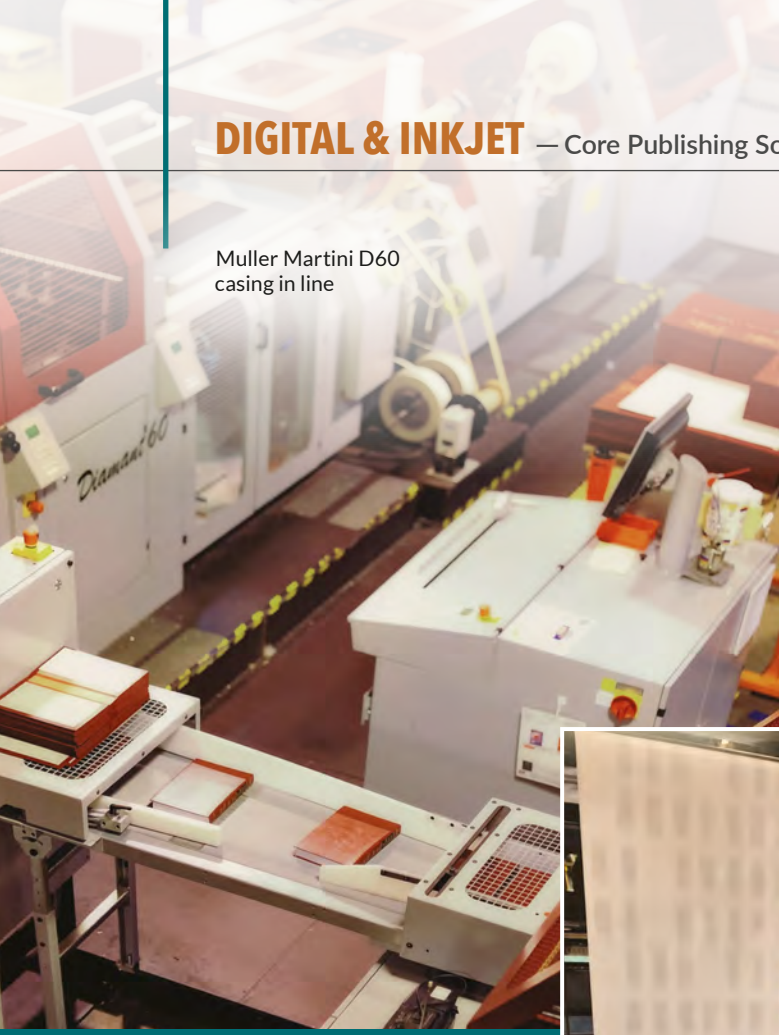
We ship FedEx Ground, and it is typically a next-day delivery right to the school that has requested it, rather than perhaps ending up in the business office or some other centralized location. It's efficient and very cost effective.

PN: Anything else you would like to highlight?

CW: Report cards and progress reports. These are each sent out every six weeks. Our previous process was that each school was printing their own report cards, not always even on a quality school letterhead, and manually folding, stuffing and affixing the stamp. Very labor intensive. So we now have

about 30 of our schools using our shop for this process, and we hope to grow that. We take their data stream out of the report card system and securely print it in one pass with high-quality color branding, and then we use our automated folding, inserting and metering system to get them ready to mail. We also print the school's full-color logo and return address on the envelopes, where before they were often handwritten, or the return address was applied with a rubber stamp, that kind of thing. It's much more efficient and probably more secure, so that's something we want to continue to grow. ●

Muller Martini D60 casing in line



Continued from page 23

he said. “Where we tend to do well is midsize runs in the 500- to 10,000-unit range, and we are focused on efficient changeovers. Another unique capability we have is that because we are a subscription-based business for our legal work, we know how to provide automated solutions for kitting and packaging product for our customers, and we have all the distribution logistics in place. I don’t know a lot of book manufacturers that have that side of the equation on site.”

Core Publishing Solutions has not been immune to the effects of the pandemic and the “Great Resignation” trend that has made it difficult for many types of employers to source and retain talent.

“If you think of a book manufacturing plant, it’s people, paper and postage,” Roth said. “How do you care for your people? And paper is tough to come by today. And postage prices continue to increase. Beside the three Ps, we are now adding an

‘I,’ which is inflation, and that’s a tough one for all of us. The challenge is how we navigate through all of that. On the people front, especially during the pandemic, how do you keep your people safe and how do we not wear them out? We have to create a balance.”

Roth said that Core Publishing Solutions has hired more than 150 people in the last 30 months to fuel growth. To do that, they have implemented both signing and referral bonuses at a level higher than he ever thought he would see. One thing that helps in the hiring process, according to Roth, is

bringing candidates into the plant so they can see the equipment, meet the people and get a sense of how things are organized.

“Early in the pandemic, like many other companies, our hiring process was virtual,” Roth said. “But as soon as we could, we began to get people back in for a walkthrough. Oftentimes you also learn more about a person when you begin to talk about equipment, and they can see things and ask questions. So we are finding it more and more important to have the hiring process be in-person whenever possible.

“Book manufacturing is an exciting space, and it’s exciting to see the way books have gone up in popularity, in 2020 and 2021. Questions remain on whether this growth can continue and what it will look like as we exit – or learn to live with – COVID. Many, for a long time, have predicted the demise of printed books, and it just hasn’t been the case. Books are inspiring, they are valuable. I’m very bullish on books. We are committed to exploring growth to better service our publishing customers’ book manufacturing needs, while also continuing to service our own legal and tax customers.” ●



Timson's ZMR Web Press



Cary Sherburne is a well-known author, journalist and marketing consultant whose practice is focused on marketing communications strategies for the printing and publishing industries.

Continued from page 31

and demand issues with ink and paper and other substrates. Not to mention the difficulty in finding people to do our work, which is what I really want to talk about today.

Cost Focus

Low cost is a contributor to high profit. That's inarguable. But it's not the only way to achieve high profit. Also inarguable is the old adage that you have to spend money to make money. Here's an observation. Printers love to invest in equipment. But, on the other side of the coin, printers tend to be reluctant to invest in human resources. "Keep payroll down" is the mantra, and it too often results in unexceptional people, compounded by not enough of them to get the job done. The other side of that coin is to pay premium wages to attract and retain premium people.

“ Keep payroll down is the mantra, and it too often results in unexceptional people, compounded by not enough of them to get the job done. ”

Here's a tale of two printing companies. Company A spends \$30,000 per month on 10 unexceptional people. The work mostly gets done. Company B spends \$35,000 per month on eight exceptional people. All of the work gets done, efficiently and effectively. Which company would you rather be?

There's definitely some irony to the COVID situation. Company A was admittedly in better shape when people needed to be laid off. But Company B was in better shape when it was time to bring people back. The fact of the matter is that many Company As can't even fill their open positions right now,

and when they can, it's with new people who have to be trained to some level of performance.

Many Company Bs were able to keep their good people on -- granted, sometimes with reduced hours and at reduced wages, but people were willing to suffer some to keep a good job. They were not as likely to suffer to keep a not-so-good job.

That has been compounded by the reality that many people with low-paying jobs could make more money through unemployment benefits than they could from working. And even when those benefits ran out, they could find higher-paying not-so-good jobs because of the demand situation.

Bottom Line

Here's what I hope you will learn from all of this. Everything starts with your human resources. The ink, the toner, the paper and even the machines are essentially the same. Oh sure, some machines are more capable than others, but across the competitive landscape, someone always has machine resources at least equal to yours. And in many cases, someone has machine resources even greater than yours.

But here's another fundamental truth. Machine resources will either be enhanced by or diminished by human resources.

Granted, it can be difficult to hire great people right now, especially if you're not willing to view your human resources as an investment rather than a cost. But that mindset does make it easier. What I'm hoping to accomplish today is an attitude change, and the first steps toward building a Company B team. It may take you all of 2022 to get from where you are now to where you want to be, but if you can accomplish that, you will be in much better shape in 2023 and beyond. ●



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Let's dissect some internet tropes.

I'm calling out some nonsense, and what better place to start than the internet? It is home of social media, which is unequalled for nonsense.

"I am not impressed by your money, your position or your title. I am impressed by how you treat others," or something like that, so a popular internet quotation/meme/slogan goes. I've noticed that the people who post such clichés also like to post quotations attributed to business celebrities, such as Steve Jobs.

In his book, "The Hidden Habits of Genius," Yale Professor Craig Wright dedicates several pages to examples of what an incredible jerk Steve Jobs was. According to Wright, Jobs treated his employees as minions and his so-called loved ones no better. Wright paints Jobs as a nasty, petty man who believed that he was not bound by ordinary rules of decorum, because his genius gave him a free pass to behave as he pleased.

Apparently Professor Wright agrees because, apart from those few pages meant to confirm his point that geniuses often aren't very nice, he spends the rest of the book gushing over Jobs.

Before any of us sanctimoniously declare that we are only impressed by good manners, we should probably stop to consider the behavior of those boors we watch on television or follow on Twitter. While we're at it we should probably examine our own behavior.

"Clients don't come first, employees do." This old internet snippet is often attributed to Richard Branson, although I don't know if it is accurate to blame him for it. The customer pays your paycheck. He provides the work that gives you a job. Without the customer you are toast. In business? You are there to serve the customer.

If you have to choose between customers and employees...say, there's the stupid part of these overly simplistic sayings! You don't have to choose between

customers and employees. You need them both. Prioritizing one over the other is like deciding whether the wheels or the engine are more important on your car. You won't go anywhere without both.

"Work/life balance" is another great cliché that has spawned garbage trucks full of bad advice, as though work is not a part of life.

Take a deep breath, folks. There, that breath proves that you are alive. Everything you do, including work, is a part of life. Want to be successful? Successful people are hard workers. Work gives meaning to life, a sense of accomplishment and purpose, and the satisfaction of a job well done. Not feeling it? Perhaps you should try putting more, not less, time and effort into your work.

Long ago, during a raft trip on the Rio Grande River, a guide succinctly explained his philosophy to me: "I figured out that if was willing to live in my car all summer I could go rafting every day." That's it.

Was that work/life balance? No, no matter how you look at it. You could say that he gave up all of life's amenities just to work. That's not balance. Ah, but he is spending every minute doing what he loves most, and getting paid to do it. That isn't balance either.

Do you really know anyone who is happy with their life who is balanced, whatever that means? Most are zealously dedicated to one or two ventures or causes about which they are passionate.

"Follow your passion." Now there's a cliché I can get excited about. ●



Steve Johnson is a successful print owner and digital pioneer. Each month in Johnson's World, he offers up his take on the day-to-day world of graphic communications.

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to the NFL. For this wall, they added a dimensional NFL logo made with brushed Max-metal and black acrylic, while smaller placards made of clear acrylic with brushed Max-metal and brushed standoffs, recognized the individual players.

They used vinyl to wrap a column and applied perforated vinyl to the office windows. In the gym, they hung fabric banners highlighting championship years.

Wayfinding PVC signs marked the office areas and doors. Near the locker rooms, they added spring-back banner stands with 10 oz. banners, and in the pool room, they used banners, Max-metal and perforated vinyl. In the weight room they wrapped columns with IJ180 vinyl, perforated vinyl, and acrylic with standoffs.

Finally, the windows on the front entrance of the building were covered with perforated vinyl.

It was finished in time for college football season, and the university was wowed by how it all came out.

“One of the prior projects we’d done that gave them the idea that we could do this was for the soccer and softball teams,” said Toy. “We kind of already wowed them once with some ideas, and this one just took it to the next level for them.”

In fact, they are now talking about another athletic facilities project, this time for the baseball team.

“I don’t think it’ll be this scope, but we’ll certainly be putting some new things in there to help them spruce it up a little bit.”

Runners Up

This year’s second-place winner was FASTSIGNS Manchester (Conn.), for their brand awareness campaign for South Windsor, Conn.’s TruNORTH Construction.

The owner of TruNORTH Construction wanted



to better showcase the growing construction business, improve brand awareness, and position the company for greater success in the future.

Joel Miller, Krissy Sullivan and the 396 Team at FASTSIGNS Manchester helped TruNORTH provide a unified visual message for the construction brand, with elements of the project including not just

signage and other display graphics, but also lawn signs, H-frames and posts, and panel signs at every project site, along with the vehicle graphics on his company fleet. Other elements include office wall graphics, helmet decals and foam boards for presentations. All of these elements helped boost sales and project interest.

This year’s third-place winner was FASTSIGNS Eugene (Ore.) for their branding of a college student housing complex.

The Flats @ Chase is a new student housing apartment community in Eugene, near the University of Oregon. They wanted to brand their property with signage and graphics that were as unique and modern as the complex itself in order to attract student residents away from the competition.

Led by owner Peter Knight-Sheen, FASTSIGNS Eugene undertook the project, which included a large monument sign incorporated into an outdoor concrete slab that identifies the property from a distance, exterior building signs, address letters, and branded welcome mats are all integrated into the décor. Wall murals were installed throughout the interior of the property transforming common areas with different designs, including vibrant murals displaying images from the University of Oregon. The signs and graphics showcase their modern branding and reflect the University’s heritage, while increasing awareness of the property to attract local students.

Congratulations to all the winners of this year’s Project of the Year! ●

SIGNS³⁶⁵

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