



## THE FUTURE OF PRINTING SALES

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### **Abstract:**

*How many times have you heard someone say that print is dead? It may be a tough time for printing industry, but we all know the world of print is much bigger than the average person understands ... and it is certainly not dead.*

*The paper seeks to dispel that myth and to help our industry find its meaning and purpose once again through the development of innovative printed products. From author's perspective, we need to think about new ways to use the equipment we have on our pressroom floors, new markets to serve, and new ways to get the attention and talk to prospective customers.*

*This paper is not a business theory or "insider intelligence" for sales people – instead it showcases unique, creative, and innovative products that make print practical. It shares concrete examples of how real world business looked to markets outside of their normal customer base, harnessed change, and come out on top.*

*The paper describes how you can conceive, design, research, test, market and launch new products from within your organization. With these steps it is possible to learn how to enhance sales and productivity by breaking into and existing markets through the development of product that reinvent the purpose and uses of printing and get the salespeople into offices where they can share ideas instead of waiting to "get the order".*

### **Keywords:**

*Keywords: marketing, print sales, graphic communication business, innovation*

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

Since the invention of movable type the printed word has been the foundation of the Western society. Print communications accelerated the exchanges of ideas and enabled the modern organization of human society. In this "Age of Information" we speak Print as an Original Information Technology, yet printers' profit margins are trending downward.

## **2 CHANGING PERCEPTIONS, CHANGING FOCUS**

If all that we know – high-volume print runs, mass-produced printed media, big money marketing collateral print production – has moved to the Internet, how do feed our presses? How do we regain that significant portion of business that provided us with our daily bread?

In retrospect, perhaps this change in consumer demand was induced by the colour of the very collars worn within our industry. Printing has always been portrayed as a blue collar, craft based



manufacturing sector united by a doctrine that encourages extended turnaround times, costly rush fees, and disdain for designers, marketers, and print buyers.

In fact, the predictions being cast by the pundits at the centre of the industry sometimes seem to suggest that just using the word “print” implies negativity within the community that purchase printed products. Apparently, the word that provides a more calming effect upon the masses – and better defines what it is that we actually do—is “communications”, which suggests that we are “communication providers”.

It raises the fundamental need to define what is the printer actually does. Is he or she a printer, marketing solutions provider or a communications provider?

### **3 TRENDS FOR SUCCESS**

Underlying specific analysis of where print competes well and where it doesn't are four megatrends which have been enabled and are propelled by electronic media and technology. That is, electronic technology makes these megatrends possible for print publishers by accelerating creative process. New media and new non print distribution channels make these megatrends imperative for print publishers if they are to successfully compete.

These megatrends have been in place for nearly fifty years. They are pervasive. They will continue to force change, and we ignore them only at our peril. If we can push them faster, we will profit from them. The four megatrends are:

- More colour
- More targeting
- Faster distribution
- Interconnectivity

#### **3.1 More colour – the first megatrend**

The explosion of web offset and high-end colour systems in the 1970s enabled an explosion of magazines and catalogs colour. By the late 1990s low-cost desktop colour systems made the colours universally available both print and online. Today, everyone can afford colour and everyone knows it communicates better than black and white.

Some may argue that this trend has run its course. In slower economic times there are pauses as people watch what they must to preserve their budgets. But economic cycles inevitably end and with next uptick colour will become more pervasive.

#### **3.2 More targeting is the second megatrend**

Direct marketing, including consumer catalogs has been the fastest-growing segment of print industry for twenty years – and for good reason.

Most forecast of print growth are consistent with two basic conclusions. First, on-to-one colour printed will grow explosively from a fraction of a percent of the total print market to perhaps a few percent over next decade. Second, more than all of the net growth in printing in the next decades across all segments of print media will be in colour for counts under five thousand identical copies. That conclusion speaks volumes about the need to focus on changeover costs and order transaction costs. In this arena, communications and electronic imaging technology are not threat but rather a strength for print media and for the printer.



### **3.3 Faster distribution is the third megatrend**

How fast is fast? – Mission: „Document solutions – Done right, Anytime, Anywhere.

What is the value in quick turnarounds?

We should reduce the time in every aspect of communication. What was acceptable today will not be in the future. There is always value in shorter schedules. It can be found in better inventory control, later merchandising decisions, more rapid response to customer needs, faster time to market for new product or offering, or more time for the creative process.

If we focus on uninterrupted flow and the cost of work in process, „faster” and „smoother” are frequently also more efficient and less costly.

### **3.4 Interconnectivity**

Today the conversation goes an additional step. Files are received electronically and logged in the production system and the customer has immediate confirmation. Proofs sent electronically to the customer, to be printed on printers that have been calibrated to match the prepress system. The customer can know the press schedule at glance and verify that all elements have been transmitted and that all elements and all proofs have been received. The customer can access job schedule progress information through every step from receipt of images and list of postal transmittals.

If this is your mode of operation, your customers feel well informed: they have confidence that you can and will deliver. You now know better about your customers think and what they expect. Your customers know better about how you plan and perform for them. Once customers have had this experience, they will not want to lose the information and control you have given them.

## **4 MEGATRENDS AND STRATEGY**

The four megatrends are descriptors of sea change in the entire range of communication media.

In looking at any graphic arts or publishing business the first measure of the health of the business should be to ask:

„How well are we equipped to lead in a world where competitive products and services will continuously have greater graphic and colour value, will be produced faster from inception delivery, and will be targeted with messages individualized to smaller audience segments?”

If the answer is not a resoundingly positive one, the first task is to reposition your strategy to win in this environment.

## **5 CONCLUSION**

It is time to begin searching our genealogical past, to rediscover the entrepreneurial roots that founded our industry and contributed to the greatest knowledge for change. But we are also a resilient industry comprised of bright, educated, and innovative people.

We can emerge an industry that changes the way it does business, no longer a lagging industry but a forward-thinking and progressive manufacturing industry. But to do so will require strong leadership-leadership that can leap the hurdles navigate the obstacles, manage the emotional barriers, and communicate the vision.



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