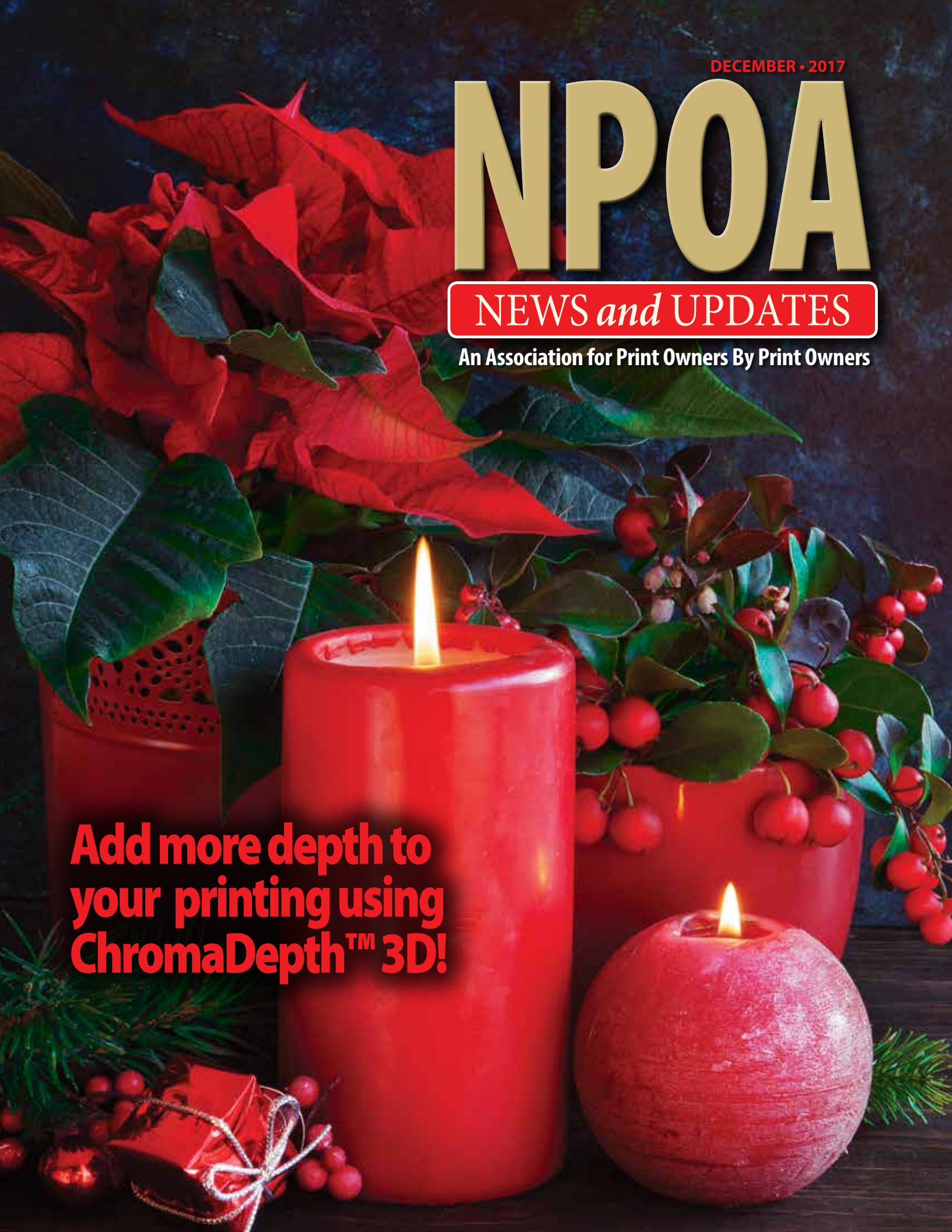
DECEMBER • 2017

NPOA

NEWS *and* UPDATES

An Association for Print Owners By Print Owners



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And a Special Thanks to Paul Strack for coming up with the idea of using ChromaDepth™ 3D on this month's cover!

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"Having been involved with seeing NPOA start from an idea and a few emails and phone calls early in 2012 to an organization that continues to evolve has been a rewarding and sometimes challenging endeavor for me . . . Along the way, friendships have been formed and I believe a good organization has grown out of this effort. I look forward to watching the progress and journey of NPOA as others step in the leadership."

Chairman's Letter

Dear fellow printers,

As year 2017 is rapidly coming to an end, so is my term as Chairman. In January 2018 Randy Heron will begin his term as your new Chairman. Having been involved with seeing **NPOA** start from an idea and a few emails & phone calls early in 2012 to an organization that continues to evolve has been a rewarding and sometimes challenging endeavor for me. I remember calling Jace Prejean and discussing a possible informal meeting of printers at his shop. This discussion lead to engaging David Handler to facilitate a group of interested printers in forming a core group of people who outlined a vision for what is **NPOA** today. Along the way, friendships have been formed and I believe a good organization has grown out of this effort. I look forward to watching the progress and journey of **NPOA** as others step in the leadership.

On October 30, 2017 the Board of Directors of **NPOA** met for their annual planning meeting in Pittsburgh, PA. At this meeting a slate of nominees was presented to the board for approval to fill three positions. The Board of Directors is pleased to announce that the following members have agreed to serve and will take their places in January 2018.

Michelle Manor – *Interior Graphics & Printing, Fairbanks, AK.*

Bradley Krantz – *Tampa Print Services, Tampa, FL.*

Scott Schoppert – *Printing Impressions, Martinsburg, WV.*

The Board at the request of our members made a four year commitment to nine Comprehensive Industry Studies and Surveys. Beginning in 2018 **NPOA** will engage the services of Dr. Ronnie Davis to conduct and prepare these studies for our members. Following is a list of studies and the schedule that we are committed to:

- **1st half of 2018** – ***Quick Printing Digital & Offset Pricing Survey Report***
- **2nd Half of 2018** – ***Industry Profile and Key Financial Metrics Survey and Report***
- **1st Half of 2019** – ***Sign and Wide Format Pricing Survey and Report***
- **2nd Half of 2019** – ***Human Resources Metrics Survey and Report***
- **1st Half of 2020** – ***Quick Printing Digital/Offset Pricing Survey Report***
- **2nd Half of 2020** – ***Industry Profile and Key Financial Metrics Survey and Report***
- **1st Half of 2021** – ***Sign and Wide Format Pricing Survey and Report***
- **2nd Half of 2021** – ***Human Resources Metrics Survey and Report***
- **1st Half of 2022** – ***Quick Printing Digital/Offset Pricing Survey Report***

NPOA BOARD MEMBERS. *From Left to Right: Nathaniel Grant, Barry Martin (Kneeling), Randy Herron, Michelle Maynor, Dennis Trump, John Henry and Dan Fiatt*

We will look to our members for their continued support of these important studies. Your completed survey will entitle you to a free copy of the surveys.

A Strategic Planning Session was led by Michael Makin. He reviewed our SWOT analysis from 2017 and we developed a new one for 2018. This provides a blueprint for the board to follow. We developed the following committees and are looking for members willing to serve on these. If you have interest, please contact one of the committee chairs.

Membership Committee – **Dan Flatt**
Marketing Committee – **Nathaniel Grant**
Education and Events – **John Henry**
Vendor Relations – **Dennis Trump**

We are also looking for members that would be willing to have their shop profiled in the NPOA News as a Member Spotlight. If you are interested in being interviewed for this, please contact Nathaniel Grant.

The Board of **NPOA** has a goal of continuing to provide value and benefits to our members which is the motto that we have followed since 2012. We wish you and your families all the best for the Holiday's and the New Year. I also wish to acknowledge the support and encouragement that many of you have shown to me during my time as Chairman.

Thank-you and God bless!

Barry D. Martin

Barry Martin
Chairman, National Print Owners Association

Embracing Your 'Word of the Year'

By Mardra Sikora
CEO Pocket Folders Fast

You may be thinking about your New Year's Resolutions, getting in order the mental inventory of what you and your business have accomplished and what you're hoping to achieve in the New Year. Sometimes, New Year's resolutions shoot high then fizzle out amid the gray winter months.

"Take a few minutes and jot down all of your hopes and ambitions for now and the New Year"

The past few years I have switched from a resolution list to the "Word of the Year" concept. I've found it has helped me to better focus on what my hopes are for the New Year, and during the year focus my energies and priorities. The One Word concept is positive for work environments, too. It can help the whole culture to adjust and grow.

According to *Fast Company Magazine*:

"Popular choices include "integrity" and "character," said Rachel Olsen, co-author of My One Word: Change Your Life with Just One Word (Zondervan; 2012).

One company chose the word "honor" and displayed it in the office. "Choosing 'honor' instead of something like 'profit,' ended up paying dividends in all kinds of ways," says Olsen. "They found that employees were going to meetings, getting to work on time, and treating customers differently. It had a wide impact, and they were surprised at the end of the year how many things it had touched."

Olsen reminded that the One Word differentiator over resolutions is: "As soon as you fail, you've broken the resolution. A word can't be broken. It serves as a reminder; a filter. It's who you want to be instead of what you regret."

Some years I have chosen a verb, this helped me to determine, if ever in doubt, what to do next. The year I re-entered the print industry, I chose the word, Purpose. I decided: "I want to have purpose and to serve a purpose. I want my actions to reflect this. I want my next steps to be chosen on purpose. I don't want to slip and slide through the days, I want purpose to show in every interaction."

But how to choose one word? The Word. It may be the word comes right to mind, like "Breathe," or "Momentum," but if not, one way is to start a word cloud. A word cloud allows you to see what concepts rise to the top, to see a theme. There are a few online word cloud aps and programs, like WordItOut.com, wordclouds.com, or wordle.net. Take a few minutes and jot down all of your hopes and ambitions for now and the New Year, use active verbs, words that have an emotional connection, and words that move you. Be honest with your ambitions. If you want to add emphasis to a word, repeat it. Then, paste these notes in to a word cloud and see what happens.

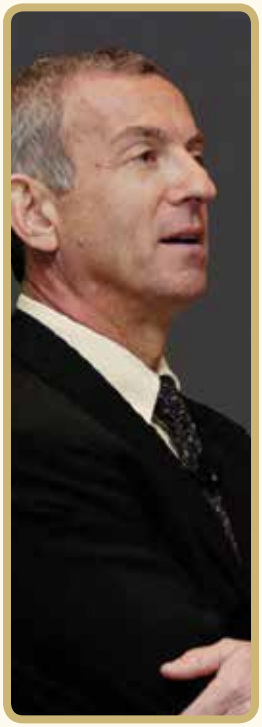
Happy Wording!

Make Sure You Have Happy Customers!

By Dave Fellman

Last month I wrote about business planning for 2018, and I want to continue on that topic this month, but from a different perspective. Last month was about developing new business. This month is about the defensive component of an intelligent sales/marketing/business plan.

You probably won't like hearing this – you might not even believe me! – but I would be willing to bet that at least one of your Top 10 customers is thinking about changing printers right now. You know that your competitors are calling on your customers, and you also know that some of those competitors are quoting lower prices than you are. Even if your performance over the past year has been flawless, you have to expect that at least some of your customers are wondering if they'd get equal performance from a lower-priced printer. And if you haven't been flawless, that's another story altogether!



On one hand, it's a victory every time you gain a new customer, or increase the amount of business you're doing with a current customer. On the other hand, it's only a limited victory if it doesn't improve your total sales and profit picture, and that's often what happens when the new chunk of business you gain is offset by "old" business you've lost.

The "high level discussions" that I wrote about last month give you both an offensive/new business development and defensive opportunity. If you have any problems with any of them, it's better to learn that now – while you still might have a chance to do something about it! – than to find yourself realizing a few months down the road that you haven't heard from "ABC Company" for a while.

So how do you add this defensive element to your high level discussions? It's really pretty simple. "My goal," you might say, "is to meet or exceed your expectations. I think we've done a pretty good job of that, but I don't want to presume. I want to know for sure, and if we have any problems, I want to fix them. So, have we let you down in any way over the last year or so? Is there anything you would change about our relationship if you could?"

Obviously you're hoping to confirm that you have happy customers. Beyond that, you're hoping to identify and solve any problems that might have cost you a customer. Both of those are positive results!

One final thought for today. Planning is important, but it's equally important to make the transition into doing. Please don't fall victim to the old "best of intentions" syndrome. Many millions of Americans will be making New Year's Resolutions for 2018, and if history is any guide, the vast majority of those resolutions will fall by the wayside before first official day of winter. That's not who you want to be, is it?

As I wrote to you last month, don't just hope good things will happen, make 2018 a good year!

Work is Actually Good for You

In a study published online at **Social Science & Medicine**, researchers at **Penn State University** found significantly and consistently lower levels of cortisol, a hormone released in response to stress, in a majority of subjects when they were at work compared with when they were at home. It was true for men and women, parents and people without children. Most subjects had lower levels of cortisol at work. It made no difference what their occupation was, whether they were single or married, or even if they liked their job or not.

How to Answer the "Where's My Mail?" Question

By Kristen McKiernan
President, AccuZIP, Inc.

A key to continued success with mailed communications is the ability to gather and use data effectively. All print and mail service providers are looking for ways to "add value" to the mail they produce for clients. In almost every case, data will be the source of that value.

Often overlooked as a data source are the scans the **US Postal Service** performs on barcoded mail. These scans provide the status of every mailpiece as it travels from entry point to final destination. This information is helpful to both mail service providers and their clients, in different ways.

Mail Service Provider Benefits

CLIENT INQUIRIES

Every vendor of mail services has fielded client calls asking if their mail has been delivered. These calls frequently happen when the client isn't seeing the campaign results they were expecting. The clients are already stressed. Mailing companies typically handle these inquiries by calling **USPS** representatives and waiting for a response. The quality of the information, and how long it takes to receive it, depends on the **USPS** employee and the postal facility.

Responding to clients in this manner is inefficient. Delays and inconsistent information heighten client anxiety. Service provider staff time is diverted from profitable work as they chase after mail they already finished.

Service providers who dependably set up tracking as part of their mailing jobs have a huge advantage over their competitors who do not use this tool. They can access the scanning information and instantly provide clients with reports showing which mail has been delivered and when. The best mail tracking solutions allow mail service providers to give clients access to the tracking information through a web portal. The mailer may not get those disruptive phone calls at all!

DELAYED MAIL

It doesn't happen often, but sometimes mail gets stuck. For some reason, trays of mail don't move along in the **USPS** distribution network like they should. By monitoring the progress of client mailings, a mail service provider can proactively intervene with the **Postal Service** before the client even knows anything is wrong. What an excellent way to add value! Rescuing a client from an impending disaster, without being asked, can have a stunning effect on customer loyalty.

MORE ACCURATE IN-HOME DATES

Print service providers can help their customers plan campaigns more accurately by analyzing delivery performance reports generated by their mail tracking solution. Delivery performance history can guide the provider in scheduling mail drops so the material arrives in homes on the desired days.

VISIBILITY

Clients want more visibility into the processes their print and mail service providers offer them. Mail tracking provides verification their jobs were

completed and their pieces made it into the mail on time. Widespread consumer use of real time location apps to hail a rideshare car or have a pizza delivered have raised the bar for mail. Clients now expect accurate and timely information about their mailed communications. Mailpiece tracking isn't real time, but the **USPS** scans give clients a much more accurate picture of their mail's location and reasonable estimates of when it will be delivered.

Client Benefits

CAMPAIGN MANAGEMENT

Retail establishments may schedule extra staff or stock the shelves anticipating an influx of shoppers responding to a direct mail campaign. Monitoring mail delivery times will allow stores to avoid expensive over and under staffing situations. The same is true for allocating staff to handle incoming phone calls or fulfilling orders. Armed with precise information about direct mail deliveries, organizations can make the better business decisions.

Comparing delivery dates to responses can also aid organizations in determining the best timing for future promotions. Did a higher percentage of customers redeem coupons delivered on a Friday than Saturday? Did delivery on a payday for a large local employer make a difference in response rates? The **USPS** scan data can answer these questions and make future mailings more profitable.

TRIGGERED COMMUNICATION

With accurate delivery information, marketers can issue precisely-timed reinforcement messages. Email or text messages are often used for this purpose, encouraging consumers to check their mailboxes for a special offer, watch a compelling demo or testimonial video, etc. An accurate delivery date can also start a timer for follow-up communications which may be by phone, mail, or digital delivery.

ROI CALCULATION

Return on investment for a direct mail project is usually based on the number of pieces mailed. Without tracking, mail that was not delivered or was delivered late can lead to inaccurate conclusions about the offer, the presentation, or the list. Mail tracking solutions allow marketers to compare campaign results to the volume of mail pieces that arrived in homes within the targeted delivery period, resulting in a more accurate calculation of the campaign's performance.

INBOUND TRACKING

For some applications, tracking inbound mail can be extremely valuable. Billers can anticipate cash flow by tracking payments as they are mailed by customers. Forestalling expensive processes such as account cancellations or dunning notices can be an advantage for some companies if they know the check is truly in the mail. The **USPS** scan data on incoming mail will tell them what mail is en route.

The Next Step in Tracking

Multi-channel marketing campaigns often use techniques such as Quick Response (QR) codes to connect physical and digital promotion elements. Most QR codes lead consumers to a single web site – a landing page or a shopping site. Marketers may know how many customers scanned the QR code, but the identity of each responding customer is a mystery.

The best mail tracking solutions can show marketers which individuals on their mailing list scanned QR codes included in tracked mail. Integrated with mail delivery data, QR scans supply a wealth of information delivered via reports and real-time notifications. Captured data includes the date and time, location, and device type. Besides an opportunity to nurture responding customers more aggressively, information about customer interactions via QR codes can be used in the future to design effective multi-channel campaigns.

There are many ways to add value to mailed communications. Tracking the mail after it has entered the mailstream is one of the easiest to implement. It requires no extra effort or modification from clients but delivers a great deal of benefit. Mail tracking is no longer a nice-to-have feature used only for selected jobs. Failing to give clients on-demand access to mail tracking data can cause them to look for other vendors better prepared to fulfill their business needs.

- **Not convinced?** Read "Top 10 Reasons to Track Mail and How to Turn Tracking Analysis into Profit"
- **Watch this Three-Minute Video on Mail Tracking and How It Works:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcf-p_ux0fE&t=1s

Kristen McKiernan *is President of* ***AccuZIP Inc.*** *a provider of feature rich solutions to manage Contact Data Quality, Address Hygiene, USPS Postal Presorting and Compliance and Mail Tracking and Reporting. Their AccuTrace product allows print service providers to track mail and QR codes, plots them on maps and gives clients access to branded portals to retrieve scan data and reports. Learn how to add AccuTrace to your service offerings HERE, or reach Kristen directly at* ***kristen@accuzip.com****.*

Managing the Blur, Volume Two

By Dan Marx, *SGIA*

Nearly twenty years ago, I wrote an article called "Managing the Blur" for one of **SGIA**'s publications. At that time, interesting things were happening in our print segment, and the long-understood lines between industries were beginning to erode. Wide-format inkjet technology was the new kid on the block, and early adopters in the screen printing, sign and photo industries had already established footholds with the technology. In a short amount of time (let's call it a few years), it was becoming increasingly difficult to define the differences between a printed graphic, a sign or a photo. As more companies used a similar technology to produce their intended products, what was once defined became undefined, and what was once a definitive process category became" wide-format" writ large.

Today, two decades later, the influence and success of wide-format inkjet has profoundly changed our industry. For instance: In **SGIA**'s recently-released **Industry Survey Report**, 0% of graphics and sign producers reported using entirely analog processes. Sure, regardless of the segment you serve, there is a lot of analog printing being done, but the revolution is complete in our core segment, and as inkjet print speeds incrementally increase, so also do we see an incremental decrease in the use of analog technologies.

So, why is this article Volume Two? The evidence for an additional blurring of the printing industry is now everywhere we look, and digital printing technology in general (and inkjet in particular) is pushing that change at a rapid pace. Any commercial printer can easily understand the influence digital printing has had on production (full color, shorter runs, versioning, shorter lead times, etc.). This, coupled with the recent introduction of high production sheet-fed inkjet printing systems from **HP**, **Fujifilm** and others, only speaks to the possibilities of greater change. The capabilities of these systems serve to blur the boundaries of what commercial printing can be, and in some cases, puts commercial printing companies into direct competition in "traditionally" wide-format product areas.

"The evidence for an additional blurring of the printing industry is now everywhere we look, and digital printing technology is pushing that change at a rapid pace."

The coming change is also profound in the printed packaging segment, where new, digital machines with novel, exploitable capabilities are changing the boundaries of what can be done. Until now, printed packaging has been a realm of massive print runs: The cost and complexity of significant package variation or versioning was not generally cost-advantageous. In today's changing packaging environment, however, digital printing is allowing product producers to increase the number of SKUs they offer. Further, it is allowing small producers – tiny craft brewers are an excellent example – to sell a professionally-printed product, even in micro-batches. So digital printing is not only changing the way the package can be printed – it is also changing the variety of products we, as customers, can acquire.

And the blur continues. **SGIA** represents a wide and highly-diverse group of print industry segments, all of which have been directly affected by the influence of digital technology and the confluence of segments and opportunities. The ways industrial printers produce and mark their products is changing; the way t-shirts and garments are printed has moved from a single, monolithic, process (screen printing) to a wide array of choices, many of them using digital technologies.

Print producers from across all segments are surely aware of the profound effect digital printing has had, and they have, in most cases, surely taken advantage of new opportunities. But the oncoming blur of industry convergence will lead them into new territories, and require them to bid against new competitors from segments they likely do not understand. The remedy? Research. Take time to look outside the boundaries of your core competencies. Look not just where you are today, but also to the horizon. Study up, see what' s coming, don't be surprised. Manage this blur carefully, and your company could emerge transformed, prepared to fully compete in the future of print.

*This is part of an ongoing series of articles produced by **SGIA**, addressing the needs of printing companies using or considering wide-format inkjet. For deeper information, visit **SGIA.org**. To see the widest range of wide-format technologies, visit the **2018 SGIA Expo in Las Vegas** (October 18-20).*

Studies Say 'Smart Phones' Drain Your Brain

As phones get smarter, people get dumber, at least that is what recent studies conclude. Smart phones make people less capable of focusing, learning, and problem solving. People are relying on the phone, and not their brain, to store and analyze information, according to a recent **ABC News** report.

Attention is a precious commodity for the human brain and a study in the *Journal of Experimental Psychology* showed that hearing a phone's buzz or beep while engaged in a challenging task causes people to lose focus and produce sloppier work. **Apple** says their users unlock their phones an average of 80 times per day.

Further studies, like one in the *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, showed that hearing a phone ring without the ability to answer it caused a spike in blood pressure, quickened pulse and a decline in problem-solving ability. These findings support the claim that phones can diminish focus, logic, learning and problem solving by distracting users even in the background.

A big part of the reason for this mental decline, according to the *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, is that phones force the mind to work harder at paying attention. When a person tries to suppress the need to check a smart phone it actually diverts cognitive resources from the task at hand.

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Dealing with that Pesky Click Charge Shuffle

By Paula Fargo
Curry Printing, Baltimore, MD

If you have a shop similar to mine in the print-for-pay industry, you probably have multiple digital output devices ("copiers" we quaintly used to call them in the olden days). Possibly, you get lots and lots of invoices from your various manufacturers and equipment service providers? I know I do. In the past, every time I used to see one of those dreaded window envelopes from **Konica**, **Xerox**, **Canon**, **Ricoh** et al, I used to cringe, looking over my shoulder imagining someone pointing at me and laughing, mouthing SUCKER while I desperately rummaged through previously paid invoices, absolutely POSITIVE that this humungous invoice couldn't possibly be accurate.

Well, my friends, those days are happily behind me thanks to a very simple procedure I set up, that I would like to share with you.

First, something about me. . . I'm not quite a technophobe, but we are certainly kissing cousins. Example: I recently discovered the joys of scanning checks at my desk and transmitting them to my bank. I fought against it long and hard, but the cold reality of risking life and limb in big bad Baltimore City carrying a bank deposit on my person was enough to push me over the techno edge. When I got said scanning device shipped to me, it sat unopened in my office for almost a month, mocking me in its silence, daring me to open it and try to get it running. Once I finally took a blade to the carton and called the 800 number for technical support to help me set it up, I prevaricated a bit and told the poor woman on the other end that I was 94 years old and had never used a computer before, so she had to go SLOWLY. And she did, and it worked! Voila, finally stepping into the 21st century, go me.

All that was an introduction to my **Simple Copier Invoice Tracking Procedure**. I'm sure many of you are very computer savvy and can write clever code to accomplish the least little feat until the cows come home. This tip is for everyone else.

I have set up a very simple spreadsheet in **Excel** to help me track all of my copier expenses for each machine. One simple spreadsheet, all the data you need all in one place, one of the best things I ever did to help maintain my sanity and keep the copier dudes honest.

Here's how it works. I have a tab in the spreadsheet for each individual piece of equipment. At the top, I have the manufacturer, model number, serial number, original cash price of the machine, copy click charges, a note about price escalators (dates and percentage), and the date I bought it (no leasing, you will understand why if you've read my other articles here). I have columns next. The first group of columns is for click or service charges. I have a wee little non-intimidating formula to enter the previous copy count, the copy count from the new invoice, showing the clicks I should

be charged for. Next is a column multiplying the copy counts by the click charge, showing the total amount due. Then there is a column for the date I need to pay the invoice. And the final column is for the check number, once I pay the invoice.

The remaining part of the spreadsheet is for lease or loan payments (if you bought the machine with cash, then you obviously don't need this section, and good for you!). For lease payments, you would have a column with the number of your lease payments (for example, if you have a 36 month lease, then have a column with rows numbered 1 through 36). If you have a loan, same deal, number the months of your loan obligation. Have a column for interest and a column for principal (if a loan), a column for your check number and/or date paid if done electronically, and a balance due column, which is a formula.

Each piece of equipment has all of this information on its own spreadsheet, with the name of the equipment in the tab at the bottom.

Here's how it works: you get a piece of equipment, set up a new tab in your spreadsheet (I have cleverly named my spreadsheet "Curry Copiers"), put all of the necessary information at the top, and set up the columns as indicated. Whenever you get an invoice, either service-related, lease or loan, you can confidently open your spreadsheet and simply input the latest copy count, or loan or lease payment from the bill. The spreadsheet should do the rest for service invoices. You can double check the total on the invoice you received to make sure the copier company hasn't "mistakenly" upped your click charge ahead of when they were supposed to. An error like that will be as evident as a turd in the punch bowl with this handy spreadsheet. It's easy to change the formula for the contractual escalators, so you can update that when the time comes. In my experience, I'll have negotiated a maximum 5% annual escalator after an initial term, and once that date comes, often the copier company's billing "default" is 10%. When they tried to invoice me for the 10% escalated click charge, the error was immediately apparent and I was able to confidently contact the vendor to get a revised, lower invoice. Without this spreadsheet, I probably would not have even noticed, especially given the enormous number of numbers on every invoice!

With monthly totals all in one place, you can easily see if a number looks odd or out of place. Most of us have negotiated one click regardless of paper size; however, it happens that service techs can "accidentally" reset machines to factory settings when they come in to service your equipment, and all of a sudden you're being billed two clicks for larger sizes. Again, without this spreadsheet, you might just think you must have had a really good month previously (by the time you get your invoice, so much time has passed, who even remembers what last month looked like anymore!). With the spreadsheet, it will be more readily apparent trend-wise if a number turns out to be double what it normally is.

Here's another benefit: When you are looking to sell or upgrade, you can easily see how many more payments you have to make, how much you owe, and how much you've spent. And nothing feels better than entering that last payment on a loan! It's a great feeling of accomplishment.

More benefits: when completing your Larry Hunt Newsletter questionnaires (you DO complete them, right??), you can easily compute your monthly average click counts for a particular piece of equipment. Also, you can total up all you've spent on the equipment (lease, loan, interest, service) and divide by the copy count in the spreadsheet to get your actual true cost per copy, a very helpful number when bidding high quantity jobs, or just feeling good about yourself knowing what your selling average price per copy is.

Still more: when you get a statement from your vendor showing open invoices, you can just jump on the spreadsheet, see the check number and date, and know that you already paid the invoice, and the person processing your checks is just either really slow, or someone is disingenuously trying to extract duplicate payments from you!

And more! When you are negotiating for additional equipment, you can simply go to the spreadsheet and see the terms you were able to get from one vendor or bank, so you know what you should be going for with the new equipment. Also, if you are leasing, you can easily see how many months of payments you have left so you have adequate time to provide your end of lease notices.

So, what are you waiting for? Go make your own spreadsheet today!

So Much for Those Wide Open Spaces

It's an idea that rang true: Open up the office. For thousands of startups and office remodels, egalitarian open offices have been in. No more stuffy cubicles. Instead, have large worktables. Let the CEO be accessible. Let the workers mingle and generate ideas together.

It sounded great, but workers may soon find a new, old idea in their work spaces: Offices with doors. Private spaces. And more inaccessible CEOs. It's not that they don't care; they just want a quiet place to think.

A British study of open work places found that, while some communication improved, open office spaces hurt worker motivation and focus. In fact, open concept companies have tacitly acknowledged this by creating 'focus booths' for employees who want peace and quiet.

Fall in Love with the Problem

By Jennifer Matt
WhatTheyThink.com

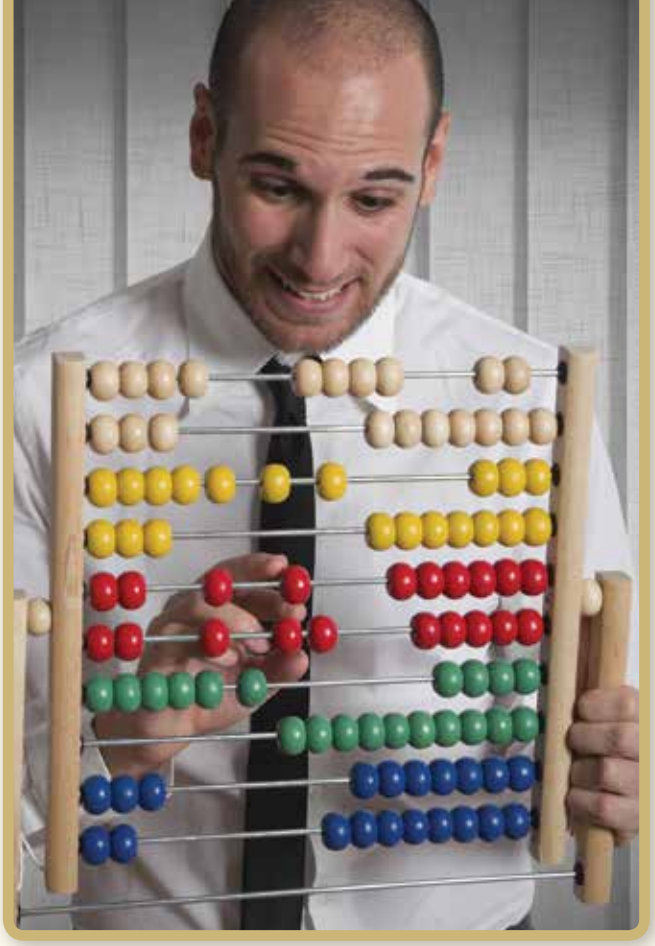
We are biased towards solutions when the most valuable thing we can do is clearly define the problem first. The tech startup world calls this innovator bias (falling in love with solutions) – there are always many ways to solve something, the more time you spend understanding the problem, the better chances of getting to the optimal solution.

I need a web-to-print solution, which one should I buy? I am in the market for a new Print MIS, which one should I buy? My profit margins are decreasing, and my head count is increasing – I need automation, what tool should I buy?

All those questions are about the software technology that could potentially be "part of" a solution to a set of undefined problems. I usually start with the following question as my answer to these questions; what problem(s) are you trying to solve?

"By defining the problem (not what you think would be a good solution), you open yourself up to learning about alternative ways it can be solved."

The clearer the answer the quicker the recommendation I can give. In some instances, printers have done so much thinking about what they want out of technology, their answer is readily available and organized. When a printer can clearly describe the challenges; I can almost always suggest one or more technologies they should consider as part of their solution off the top of my head. Then I always go down the path of "technology is only part of the solution" your success will be highly dependent on your team's ability at learning the best way to implement the toolset for your business and drive widespread adoption across your whole team.



Unfortunately, most printers haven't taken the time to think through the problems they are trying to solve. Their answers are more generic like; drive new business, remove touches, increase efficiency. Those aren't problems – those are phrases that can be found on every marketing brochure ever written - they don't really tell me anything about what you're trying to solve. The other common response I get is a list of features they are looking for in software. I had a printer say to me the other day; I need a drag and drop interface for ordering complex personalized products online. Features give me some clue as to what you might be trying to solve for but not exactly. It's way better to speak about your software needs by defining the problem – not listing the features. If you are defining the solution – you are limiting your choices. By defining the problem (not what you think would be a good solution), you open yourself up to learning about alternative ways it can be solved. Drag and drop might not be the best user experience for all software challenges.

If I had a magic wand, I would change every RFQ process on the planet to be a list of problems that you want the software / vendor to solve and then ask each vendor to describe how they solve that problem. Verses the current process which is a list of features – a description of how the customer thinks it should be solved and a checkbox saying if the vendor can do it implying it has to be done in this manner. These RFQ features can get very precise; I saw one

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the other day that dictated where the login button had to be on the page – what the heck? The problem to be solved is secure authentication of approved users; there are many ways of solving that challenge. The author of the RFQ is actually dictating that the solution be custom built if they want to decide where buttons appear. It would be WAY more interesting in an RFQ to ask the vendor how they solve it vs. dictating to them how you think it should be solved.

In the technology startup world, falling in love with the solution is often referred to as "Innovator's Bias".

"When we first get hit by an idea, the solution is what we most clearly see and what we spend most of our energy towards. But most products fail – not because we fail to build out our solution, but because we fail to solve a "big enough" customer problem."

Ash Maurya, "Love the Problem, Not Your Solution"

In running your print business, you understand the overall problem, so you start looking for technology to solve it. Our bias comes in when we see a specific feature in software that we like – suddenly we are stuck on that way of solving it. Business software implementations fail not from a lack of features (not even close – most printers use less than half of the available features in their software tools). Implementations fail because the software fails to solve the most important challenges it was purchased for. This is either due to lack of focus on solving those issues but primarily because those challenges were never fully defined before the purchase.

The sales process prefers features. The sales process likes to present more features because more is better right? Why do we create feature comparisons? We buy the one with the most? When in reality what we want out of software is the solution that solves our most important challenges the best. So, more isn't better. When you shop for software technology; shop with a list of the top five most important challenges you want to solve with this technology. Define the challenges clearly. Then when you are ready for a demonstration – ask the vendor to ONLY show you how their software solves for your top five challenges. Guess what you just did? You just saved ninety minutes of your life because you will not be sitting through a scripted demo where more than half the stuff is completely irrelevant to your business!

I first heard about this phrase when I saw Uri Levine, cofounder of **Waze** (the traffic app) speak at a technology conference. He was wearing a t-shirt that said "fall in love with the problem." His advice is more for the software vendors reading this article. Before you code the next feature into your software; define the problem you are solving? Is it worthy of your attention? Does it solve a problem that your customers need to be solved?

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Creating Success – Business Development to Generate Added Value to the Customer

By Randall Swope
Principal, Randall Swope & Associates, L.L.C.
Senior Consultant, Gimbel & Associates

The future of the graphic communication industry continues to be debated at all conferences, events, and in many publications. Industry leaders, consultants, and service providers are searching for the formula for success and how to succeed in a new paradigm. Advances in digital technology, new workflow technologies, variable data software packages, print processing, and the integral role of the internet are completely transforming the way providers of graphic communication services meet the needs of their customers. In the past, printing was the main product. Now, graphic communication companies must offer value-added solutions, such as design, data management and analysis, fulfillment and tracking and measurement services. Investing in additional capabilities is an important decision for owners and executives. ,

Technology alone solves nothing without a well-defined business strategy that considers: 1) **Customer markets**, 2) **Main applications**, 3) **Competition**, 4) **Organizational skills**, 5) **Financial analysis**, 6) **Workflow** and 7) **Printing technologies**. Unfortunately, many graphic communications companies spend most of their time evaluating technologies, but spend little or no time documenting a clear strategy. Too often, the focus is on the struggle to protect the business rather than looking for ways to expand. The main challenges that companies must address in a business strategy are:

- **Declining traditional print volumes**
- **Reduced margins for traditional printing**
- **Transformation of Information Technology**
- **Integration of multiple media**
- **Constant content changes**
- **Non-traditional competition**

To face the competition and expand the business, companies need to understand that the business is not about printing, but about communications. With this in mind, they need a strategy focused on the business of the customer, not the business of printing, which requires a broader perspective.

Customer Service

- **Treat each client in a unique way**
- **Increase customer loyalty and retention**
- **Make relevant messages reach the right customer at the right time**

Increase Revenue

- **Maximize cross-sell / up-sell**
- **Develop new customers**
- **Measure the effectiveness and ROI of marketing campaigns**

Reduce Costs

- **Controlling customer communications costs**
- **Manage multiple communication channels**
- **Improve productivity**

Technological advancements are transforming the world of communication. There is a wide array of media and distribution channels for consumers and businesses to receive and share information. Printing must be part of a broader communication plan, integrating content to various media, from web, mobile technology, e-mail, social media, video, online advertising, electronic billboards, and more. The most successful companies are offering services and support in areas well beyond printing.

"There is no doubt that the future of the printing industry is promising, and there are reasons to continue investing in the expansion and diversification of the business."

The traditional communication model is being rapidly supplanted by a paradigm in which the end user decides where, how, and when to receive information. In this new reality, companies that rely solely on traditional methods will not survive. The new approach involves:

- **Targeted communication with greater relevance**
- **Focus on the customer, not the product or service**
- **Multi-channel integration**
- **Measuring results**

However, the traditional concepts of creativity, innovation, continuity, and quality of product and service remain fundamental to a successful methodology of communication.

Where are companies focusing on communications investments? Where are the business opportunities? Which applications should have the greatest growth? Various studies show that the predicted growth of digital print is good among all categories of applications, led by books on demand and direct mail. Promotional material categories also show good growth. They are increasingly integrated with added value including special substrates, customization and personalization of materials, and transforming catalogs or manuals into direct marketing communication. Another strong trend is the use of the web for order and payment management. Web-to-print technology is transforming the way printers are integrating workflow to their customers. While standard web-to-print is a commodity, the way it can be strategically applied to customer needs can be visionary.

The business plan should formalize the organizational strategy. The profile of future leaders needs to include skills to create these strategies. . Today's leaders and key employees require additional knowledge and skills, along with expert advisors who understand the importance of making investment decisions, for success in the future..

The graphic communications sector will continue to flourish if these five critical areas of business development effort are considered:

1. **Business Plan.** Graphic companies must have a business plan for the future that supports their business and marketing objectives. Many companies lack the time and expertise to do so. Nor are they in the habit of seeking specialized advice in this regard.
2. **Associations.** Graphic industry associations should integrate efforts with their members to create policies, tools, programs and incentives for business development.
3. **Talent Development.** Graphic service suppliers should include talent development programs for both their channel partners and their customers as part of their business development strategy.
4. **Higher education.** Colleges and technical schools institutions should create and integrate programs for the future of the graphic communication sector, using alliances with graphic companies, service providers and associations.
5. **Public sector involvement.** Government should stimulate and support new investments in education and development, with incentives and budgets, to prepare for future talent; the graphic communications industry needs to take part.

There is no doubt that the future of the printing industry is promising, and there are reasons to continue investing in the expansion and diversification of the business. However, without business strategy and the commitment of everyone involved, the investment will not realize its full potential. Defining the fundamental knowledge and skills identifying future talent, and investing in the development of employees in new methods and processes are just as critical as technology investments. Industry experts can provide objective advice on all aspects of a business strategy and can contribute to the achievement of business success..

New Court Ruling on Medical Leave

Recently a federal court rejected the **EEOC**'s guidance that a long-term medical leave of absence is considered a "reasonable accommodation" under the **Americans with Disabilities Act**. The court determined that the **ADA** is not a medical-leave entitlement and that someone who cannot work is not a "qualified individual" under the **ADA**. This is the first time that a federal court has determined that someone who cannot work for multiple months is not covered by the **ADA** and must rely on protections of the **Family and Medical Leave Act**. The decision directly affects Illinois, Wisconsin and Indiana, but will influence other decisions in the U.S.

Our Hats Off to You!!

Enjoy the Benefits of NPOA Membership

Today's printer is also a brand marketer, a technological expert, a designer and a business strategist. No matter which hat you're wearing, you're out there serving customers and growing your business. **NPOA** can help push your shop to the next level.

You're More Than a Printer

Let's face it, being part of the printing industry means being part of something much bigger than putting down toner or ink. No matter which hat you're wearing today, **NPOA** has resources to help you succeed - industry statistics, analysis, expert advice, exclusive partnerships, and discounts - that make even the most hard-hearted accountants smile.

"This group is by and for the shop owner to give them the help they need in these changing markets. I remember the discussions that led to the founding of this organization. If you own a smaller company you need to belong!"

– Dennis Ewing, Ewing & Sons

Membership Benefits

All year long, **NPOA** keeps you up to speed on your industry, from techniques to technologies to the day-to-day tasks. Join and see for yourself.

Each **NPOA Owners Conference** is unique in its own right. We use print owner input to shape each annual conference, because after all, we're an association by print owners, for print owners.

By acting on the requests of our members, our conference consistently provides the best industry speakers, networking, workshops, panels, roundtables and vendors. We make sure to cover everything from new print technology to social media marketing to business management. Don't worry we always leave plenty of room for deserved leisure time.

Every month, **NPOA** brings you a new newsletter packed with essential information – from imaging technologies and business management issues to new laws and mandates affecting the community. We bring you an insider's view with behind-the-scenes articles and deals.

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- **Mike's Graphic Service & Supply LLC**
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There's not one reason to join.
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Our Online Discussion Group

THE NPOA PRINTOWNERS LIST

What is it? The **NPOA PrintOwners List** is a free online discussion group created exclusively for the owners of printing, copying, mailing, and signage businesses. We currently have more than 500 owner-members in our online discussion group, many of whom regularly ask and answer each other's questions using our email forum.

Who is it for? The **NPOA PrintOwners List** is not intended for employees, managers, vendors, sales reps, or printing consultants. This is solely for print owners: anyone who has at least a 5% share of ownership in a printing company, possesses hiring/firing privileges, and has complete access to the company's financial records.

Why should I join? The **NPOA PrintOwners List** is the place to turn when you are faced with a roadblock at your printing firm. Have a question about a piece of equipment, sales and marketing, or a complicated estimate? Ask your fellow print owners. The discussions are not approved by a moderator before they are posted to the list, so every topic is up for grabs.

Quick – Who, What, Welcome – Folders!

What, You May Ask, is a Welcome Folder?

By Mardra Sikora
CEO Pocket Folders Fast

Typically, a Welcome folder is a smaller format. 6x9 or even 4x9 folder with one or two pockets. It often includes inserts (which are sometimes stacked for tabbed reference points). The Welcome folder serves as a quick introduction to the organization, and possibly includes instructions as to how to get involved, where to be and when, or what services are offered.

Who uses a Welcome Folder?

We see Welcome folders across a few specific markets:

- **Churches**, welcoming new or prospective members.
- **Banks** and **Credit Unions** have small welcome packets.
- **Surgery/Medical** procedure centers will provide a welcome folder that includes standard or customized details for the new patient.

How many times have you taken a sample to a client and heard the phrase, "I didn't know you did that?" It's a bittersweet moment, isn't it? A 4x9 folder fits nicely in a #10 envelope, consider sending a sample with a quick note, or dropping one off on your next visit. If you have any business with a church or bank/credit union, it's very possible they use a small sized welcome folder already. Shouldn't you be providing that?

Also, don't shy away from medical with the assumption of conglomerate buying. Not every procedure center is linked to a huge medical facility, in fact many specialists (like plastic surgery, dermatologists or oral surgeons) are running their own shop, from top to bottom, and can really use your print expertise.

Most Common Processes

Although nearly every option, from dimensional UV effects to custom cuts, is available on the small format folders, we most often see these introductory folders come in with simple, clean designs. Whereas banks/credit unions may use two-sided print and include a lot of information on every piece, conventional foil stamping is the most popular process for church folders.

Every client has unique needs, but knowing these basic and common options may help you welcome these markets into your client mix.

Solution for Time-Wasting Random Voice Mail

Rambling voice messages. Incoherent voice messages. Useless voice message. Send a text, for crying out loud! Tech to the rescue. YouMail.com answers calls, greets callers by their name, then transcribes voice messages into text. It also tracks and blocks junk call numbers.

Sales Tips: Creating an Effective Email Campaign

Small businesses can use email to drive sales, but competing for customer time and getting past spam requires five basic strategies.

1. **Marketers must assume that customers will open an email on a mobile device.** According to **CMSwire.com**. This wasn't always true. Just seven years ago or so, customers probably viewed email first in their computer email client like Outlook. But all that has changed. Today it is essential that emails be optimized for mobile viewing.
2. **Email is a more intimate form of communication than pay-per-click advertising** since prospects have already expressed interest in a product or service. Marketers should treat email as a way to forge new connections with prospects, offering special access to information or unique deals.
3. **Subject lines must be lively.** Don't overpromise. Don't create click bait that leads to a phoney result. Instead create calls to action to engage the audience. Email newsletters are part of this. The worst possible subject line for an email newsletter is "November Newsletter." Tell people why they should open it.
4. **Take note of open rates over time** and use the information to plan your campaign.
5. **Compare open and click rates to the campaign objectives.** Open and click rates for emails intended to generate sales will be different than those intended to reinforce brand identity. Be sure to segment your email list to identify those prospects who are interested in a sale.

Selling Tech . . . Door to Door

Best Buy and **Amazon** plan to find business that percolating just under the surface by doing what brush salesmen used to do: Go house to house. With thousands of gadgets and add-ons available for communication and tasks inside the home, consumers may not even know what they need or what's available. But suppose you could get a high tech person to come to your house, review your needs? **Best Buy**'s in-home salespeople hope to do just that. The new program is aimed at 'unlocking latent demand,' **Best Buy** CEO Hubert Joly told the *Wall Street Journal*. The house-to-house program will let consumers know what they could have and how it would help them. Plus, salespeople can schedule installation.

Amazon's program sends employees to home to provide free 'smart home consultations' that let people test out voice controlled devices and other gadgets like smart switches. Unlike the traveling salespeople of yore, these consultants aren't paid on commission and don't press for an immediate sale. They just tell you what you could have. The two-year-old **Amazon** program is currently offered in six cities.

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Now You Can Pay for All that Stuff with Gold

Gold is one of the world's oldest currencies, and according to the **World Gold Council**, gold coins were first used around 550 BC as a way to purchase goods and services. Even long after governments and banks started producing their own paper money, it was still tied to the "gold standard" which affixed a value to the notes at a set price per ounce of gold. These paper notes were just a promise that you actually had gold stored in a secure location. Today, paper notes are not based in gold but trust.

But trust can be fleeting. If there were an economic collapse, all paper money could be worthless overnight.

Now some companies, such as **Gold Money**, have figured out a way to let people pay for things with gold just like they could with any other bank card. According to *Business Wire*, **Gold Money** works by purchasing some amount of gold at the going rate through the company. The company then holds that gold in a secure location and issues a prepaid **Mastercard**. When a transaction is made, the price is deducted from the gold amount at the current exchange rate.

There are more than a few skeptics. According to **coinlink.com**, this simply functions as a collateralized credit card. If your trust in the financial system is so low that you want to buy with gold, you wouldn't want to buy gold and then put it into the financial credit system. You also trust that someone somewhere actually buys the gold and stores it securely.

On the other hand, if you have gold and you want to spend it, and you aren't worried about shipping it, then this might be one answer.

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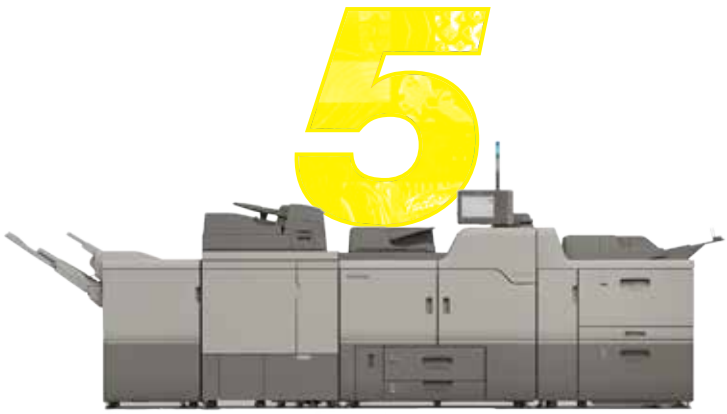

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