

FALL 2021  
Leading **PRINT**

# DIFFERENCE

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Capital Printing's Impact Goes Well Beyond Print

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# MAKER

*Business Planning for the New Year • Money Matters  
Marketing is Critical to Success • Q&A with Mike de la Cruz*

A close-up photograph of a man with a beard and mustache, wearing a brown hat and a red sweater, playing a red acoustic guitar. He has his eyes closed and a serene expression. The background is a blurred natural setting.

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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

### FIRE IN THE BELLY

Desire is probably one of the most important factors in the pursuit of success. It is up to the individual, however, to create that desire. In other words, you cannot simply take a pill to create desire, nor is it something you are born with. Desire is cultivated through effort in the daily training of your mind. Managers can help lay the foundation for creating desire, but ultimately it's on us.

Have you ever been asked how bad you want something? It's a common question used to

motivate people to get them in the mode to succeed. We all want success. We all want to win, but desire is the most crucial tool for that success. You would think great skills—selling skills, managerial skills, data skills—would be the most valued asset for your endeavors, but it's the mental game that matters most. It is desire that will catapult us to an enriching future.

***We must use this moment in time to recall our sources of inspiration to help stoke the fire within us and make it grow.***

Desire is what will catapult us to an enriching future but we cannot just want to succeed. If we asked people who wanted to succeed, a lot of hands would go up, but the reality is we don't always get what we want, but most of the time we get what we need. When you need something, you won't quit until you get it. When you're hungry or thirsty, you will always find a way to get something to eat or quench your thirst. We're all driven like this because these are the things we need to survive. So, when we can change wanting to succeed to needing to succeed, we will work harder than ever to accomplish it.

We must use this moment in time to recall our sources of inspiration to help stoke the fire within us and make it grow. We hope that your desire for success has not waned and that you have the fire in your belly to serve with passion and succeed beyond your wildest dreams.

Enjoy this issue of LeadingPRINT. It is chock full of inspiration, including a wonderful article about a progressive group, Capital Printing, who are full of desire to help their clients and do the right things.

Warmest wishes,

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Publisher: APTech

LeadingPRINT® magazine is published four times per year by the Association for PRINT Technologies.

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Association for PRINT Technologies.

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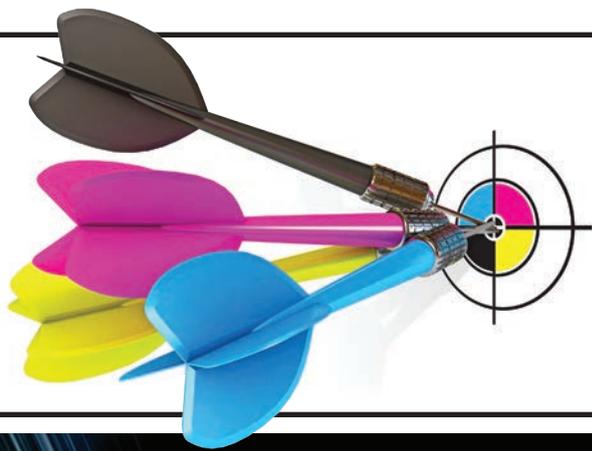
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# REGISTRATION MARKS

**"BUSINESSES HAVE WEATHERED MANY STORMS OVER THE PAST YEAR, DISPLAYING IMPRESSIVE LEVELS OF CREATIVITY AND ADAPTABILITY AS THEY SHIFTED TO NEW OPERATING MODELS, DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS AND TECHNOLOGIES. THE CHALLENGES AREN'T OVER, BUT THEIR TENACITY HAS HELPED SUSTAIN ECONOMIC MOMENTUM AND OFFERS OPTIMISM FOR RECOVERY."**

— Jim Glassman, Managing Director and Head Economist for Commercial Banking at JPMorgan Chase & Co., on the outlook of businesses' futures

## THE RACE FOR TALENT

Businesses sprint to attract new employees

And they're off! Businesses are racing neck and neck to bring new employees on board, with nearly three in four (73%) saying they are having difficulty attracting employees. That's nearly three times the number (26%) that reported difficulty last year—and up from the 56% that reported difficulty in the first half of 2021. Leading global advisory, brokering and solutions company Willis Towers Watson conducted their "2021 Talent Attraction and Retention Survey" in August 2021 to see what businesses are doing to outpace the competition for new hires:

**43%** Raising starting salaries

**39%** Improving the employee experience

**36%** Making changes to health and wellbeing benefits

**33%** Increasing workplace flexibility

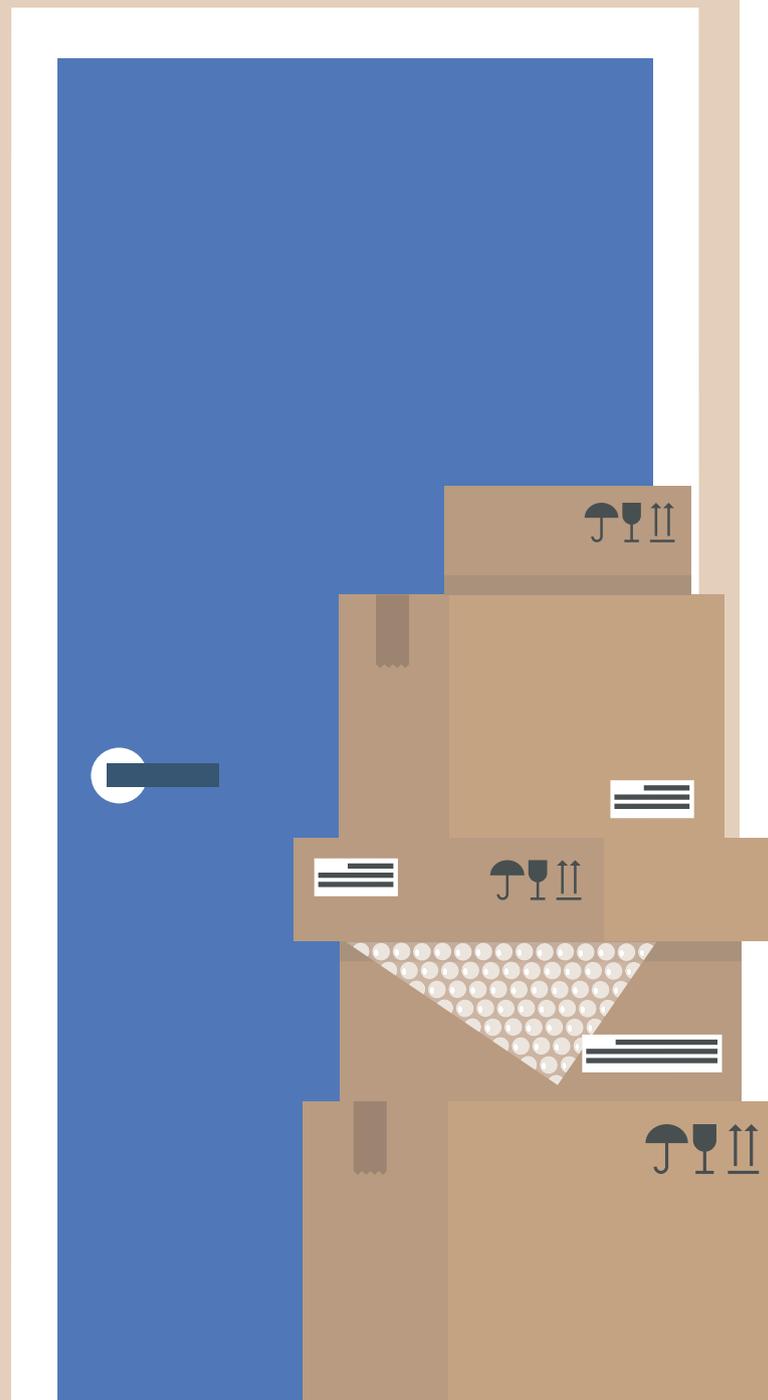


# SUSTAINABILITY AT YOUR DOOR

## Consumers prefer paper-based packaging

The boom in online shopping, spurred by brick-and-mortar stores closing their doors, resulted in record numbers of packages arriving on consumers' doorsteps. While consumers love receiving packages, they are also concerned about the materials used to package and ship products, as well as the impact those materials have on the environment. The "Paper's Place in a Post-pandemic World" survey, commissioned by Two Sides North America and conducted by international research firm Toluna, found that U.S. consumers believe paper-based packaging is better for the environment than other packaging materials. Here are some other findings from the study:

- 50%** believe paper-based packaging is better for the environment than other types of packaging.
- 39%** would consider avoiding a retailer if they were not actively trying to reduce their use of non-recyclable packaging.
- 36%** believe 'the individual' has the most responsibility to ensure we reduce our use of non-recyclable packaging.
- 41%** are actively taking steps to increase their use of paper-based packaging.
- 52%** prefer products ordered online to be delivered in paper-based packaging.



# DIFFERENCE

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Capital Printing's Impact Goes Well Beyond Print

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# MAKER



By Deidre Acord

**P**eople love to ask leaders what it's really like to be in charge. What are the traits required to direct an organization's people and resources, to be the one tasked with improving efficiencies and achieving goals. It's a tough question. When you take leadership as a whole, you find there are so many different traits that define the true essence of the person leading the charge. Not only that, but everyone handles the mantle of responsibility differently.

Effective leaders provide clarity of purpose, motivate and guide their organizations and people to realize their missions and goals. Good leaders continually work to develop their skill sets, knowledge and experience in themselves and others. They are objective, fair and reasonable. Above all else, they must assume responsibility for their own actions as well as the actions of others.

What I have found in my place of leadership is that people want to be seen. They want to be acknowledged and heard. The path I try to follow each and every day is to treat people with respect, be respectful, listen and try to be encouraging. It's not easy—not by a long shot. Full

transparency, I have failed many times over the years. Often, it is the person you least expect who shows you the way to being a better leader—a better person.

Every moment for me is big when I can keep my clients. My moments are having relationships with my clients that have spanned over 20 years, helping them grow and be a part of the changes that occur in their business. It is fun when you get to be a part of the process, when you're asked to be a part of the solution or be in the think tank, creating a print plan. I love those moments because they don't happen often.

**"AS A 90-YEAR-OLD  
PRINTER, CAPITAL  
PRINTING HAS A  
LONG HISTORY OF  
LEADERSHIP—A CHAIN  
OF COMMAND THAT  
HAS PUSHED OUR  
LEGACY THROUGH A  
SERIES OF CHANGING  
PRINT LANDSCAPES."**



As a 90-year-old printer, Capital Printing has a long history of leadership—a chain of command that has pushed our legacy through a series of changing print landscapes. Each time, each leader has responded to the needs of our clients and the ever-demanding, ever-changing whims of the marketplace.

As one of Austin, Texas' first female-owned businesses, I hold the responsibility of leadership to not only succeed, but to do so with thoughtfulness, inclusion and empathy. Today, I am following in the footsteps of some really great women in our industry, including Faye Edwards, the previous owner of Capital Printing, former owner of Ginny's Printing Elizabeth Bradshaw and McCarthy Print owner Terri McCarthy.

With that responsibility comes an even greater effort from the people I have surrounded myself with—a team that is as committed to the wellbeing of our company, our clients, our

**"HERE, EVERYONE IS IMPORTANT. EVERYONE HAS A JOB TO DO. EACH ONE OF OUR TEAM MEMBERS HAS AN EXPERTISE THEY BRING TO THE TABLE. WE RELY ON EACH OTHER."**

community and to each other. And my husband, Steve, who technically is my behind-the-scenes "sales manager." His amazing spirit helps guide me, even when I'm wrong. These are, by far, the most vital resources any leader can have.

At Capital Printing, nobody is more important than anyone else. In the old days of the printing industry, the mantra used to be that sales were the kings and queens of the company. Not anymore; not here. Here, everyone is important. Everyone has a job to do. Each

one of our team members has an expertise they bring to the table. We rely on each other.

When we tell our customers that, they not only hear it, but see it. They see a team atmosphere where everyone is included in the process. And let me tell you, when you have a team that is willing to take ownership in what's at stake, you have winners.

## **LEARNING, GROWING ALONG THE WAY**

I started in the print business in 1984 after I moved from Garden City, Kansas, to Austin. While looking for a job, I saw an ad in the newspaper for a receptionist at Austin Printing and Mailing, which was owned by the Wiswell family. I ended up working there for six years, until they sold the company to a group from Houston. It was not a good fit, so I searched elsewhere.

I eventually landed at CSI, which was a larger company that offered

more opportunities. Digging into my new job, I honed my customer service skills. I also found myself surrounded by some of the best salespeople around. The owner, John Gray, had created his own print software, which he housed in a facility that included state-of-the-art mailing equipment, prepress and pressmen. It was a tight team.

After six years there (my magic number), I moved over to Wallace Engraving, where I began my training in color, color separations and the advent of Photoshop. Bob Vallilee was the one who believed in me, promoting me from customer service to outside sales. His mentorship helped me transfer from a “job” to a “career.” The experience changed my life.

By the time I came to Capital Printing Company, I was ready for the next phase of my career. I immediately met Faye Edwards, who led me through one of the toughest interviews I have ever had. She was tough, but so was I. Twenty-one years later and I am still doing what I love with people I love.



The Capital Printing way showed me the importance and power of the people you surround yourself with. They were loyal and committed, which was an easy path to follow. I know that is why I am still here—why I work and teach and lead the way I do. Through people like Lori Carlson, our prepress manager, I learned what was needed to manage projects and sales prospects. I further learned about the power of customer service—a tenet that is not just about doing what your customer wants, but teaching and making them part of the experience.

In 2005, when Danny Stockton bought our company, he set out to teach us the finer part of the sales process, honing in on the unique personas each of the salespeople possessed. When Michael Martin came along, he saw that we were one of the print industry’s hidden jewels. As Chief Customer Officer, he continues to bring our family together by making us feel like this is not just a place to work, but a place where your voice matters. We have a suggestion box that encourages our employees to tell us what we can do better. We celebrate and honor birthdays, sales milestones and personal accomplishments.

When people hear about the good things you do for your employees, it creates a buzz. Yes, we work hard. But we know how to have fun, too. And we know that we can only go as far as we can together—by respecting each other’s principles, space and commitment to the job.

Recently, our company approached the \$3 million mark in sales—the first time in the history of our company. As I received the news, I was on my



way to get donuts. It was donut day. After a span of putting out fires, hitting deadlines, and dealing with the daily spate of headaches, backaches and frustration, I was driving to get donuts. I thought, “Why am I doing this?” I am so busy and moving in 100 different directions. And donuts?

Why, you ask? It is similar to the first question about leadership. The why is in the fact that with everything going on, everyone could use a break. Donuts. Sure, it is about serving others—showing them that what they do matters.

Everything makes a difference.

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*Deidre Acord is the VP of Sales for Capital Printing Company. Founded in 1929, the Austin, Texas-based printer offers a wide variety of services, including pre-press, offset and cutting edge digital printing, custom finishing, mailing, fulfillment and distribution.*

A stainless steel pot sits on a wooden surface. From the pot, a variety of fresh ingredients are splashing upwards into the air against a black background. The ingredients include sliced red tomatoes, white onion rings, green herbs, and other vegetables. The scene is captured with high-speed photography, showing water droplets and splashes around the ingredients. The text 'Recipe for Success' is overlaid in a white, cursive font.

# Recipe for Success

# YOUR BUSINESS PLANNING GUIDE FOR 2022



Everything has changed—everything. In today's new business landscape, with no rulebook on what values will motivate your clients to act, profound shifts in attitudes, mindsets and daily routines are redefining the way every business draws up their strategic plans. Not only that, now more than ever, what constitutes business success seems to be up in the air.

But hold on a minute. That statement is not as wild-eyed as it appears. Simply broken down into context, it just means that in order to formulate some plan for success, you must learn the ins and outs of how to adapt to what is happening today. For example, Bill Blair, VP of Business Development for Lithographics Inc., says that means printers must be committed to thinking about change and new value propositions.

"Regardless of the pandemic, working remotely is here to stay, and those of us in sales better figure out how to deal with it," Blair says. "If you are not working on new ways to develop relationships, establish trust and ultimately provide value for your clients and prospects, you will be left out."

**"If you are not working on new ways to develop relationships, establish trust and ultimately provide value for your clients and prospects, you will be left out."**

— BILL BLAIR, VP, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT,  
LITHOGRAPHICS INC.

If you want to read a little between the lines of what Blair is saying, it might be best to start with one of the main tenets of surviving (and thriving) in a changing landscape—be flexible and stay open to change. “If you have always done it that way it’s probably wrong,” Blair says. “Our world changed in early 2020, and we are never going back to the way it was. In business, we have only two choices—change or die.”

For Lithographics, that means crafting a 2022 business plan leading with some of the focuses, programs and tactics that are succeeding this year. Sitting at the center of the Nashville, Tennessee-based multi-service printing and graphics company’s strategy is the commitment to trying new ways to connect and making customers feel comfortable in a socially distanced environment.

At the top of its 2022 playbook is to focus on expanding business with existing clients and putting a renewed emphasis on referrals. In both areas, Lithographics is ramping up its efforts to meet customers via technologies like Zoom and Microsoft Teams, as well as continuing its content efforts in social media, website SEO, blog posts and email marketing. “Communication, education and excellent client experiences,” Blair says. “We must continue to find new ways to add value.”

With significant growth in areas like higher education, healthcare, manufacturing, packaging and book printing verticals, Blair says the Lithographics’ team will seek ways to provide value for their existing clients, as well as find and attract new clients.

## NEW YEAR, NEW PLAN, SAME GOAL

When the pandemic hit its fever pitch last year, Kevin Cassis did what everyone else did and shifted his work acumen to a home office. During his time in new digs, Cassis, VP of Technical Operations for Hatteras Printing, also took on new responsibilities, including running reports on operational performance, and providing detailed analysis and dashboards to directors and plant managers.

From his new role on the operational side, he was able to gain a different perspective and analysis into what lies ahead for the Plymouth, Michigan, printer and the industry at large. “There will be continued challenges with supply chain and staffing,” Cassis says. “We’re still unsure about the market activity, but we remain hopeful, as we are somewhat protected by the nature of a segment of our clients, whose businesses have been unaffected or positively impacted by the pandemic.”

# YOUR 2022 PLAYBOOK HERE

## 1 TRUST, REPUTATION AND OTHER INTANGIBLES DRIVE BUSINESS VALUE

Today, the real value of the enterprise is hard to measure, and it cannot be found on a balance sheet. Reputation, trust, the ability to attract and retain talent—these are the things that drive business value.

## 2 COMPANIES SERVE MANY PURPOSES BEYOND SHAREHOLDER VALUE

A company’s purpose is revealed through how it operates and makes decisions, not by slogans. This purpose signals long-term goals, and helps a business prevail over short-term pressures.

## 3 CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY IS DEFINED OUTSIDE THE GATE

Responsibility is about more than your carbon footprint. In the social media age—when both employees and change agents identify with concerns that defy easy answers—you must play offense, not defense. Use your employees to identify both risks and opportunities.



# The 6 new rules of business

## 4 EMPLOYEES TODAY ARE MORE THAN STAKEHOLDERS; THEY ARE THE BUSINESS

Employees hold the business accountable, connect social and environmental issues to business priorities, and give voice to risk and competitive advantage in a culture of growing inequality and social unrest. And they must be valued as such.

## 5 CULTURE, NOT CAPITAL, IS KING

Business news continues to be dominated by stock performance and quarterly earnings. But financial capital is not where the action is now. What matters is culture—competition for talent, innovation and the human element are what take precedence.

## 6 CO-CREATE TO WIN

This is about the need for business collaboration—for co-creation over competition. When the system is at risk, value creation requires partners along the supply chain to raise the bar for the industry at large. Inaction is not a choice. Everyone has a role.

Source: "The Six New Rules of Business: Creating Real Value in a Changing World"



As far as areas Hatteras is honing in on for 2022, targeted direct mail and variable direct mail remain strong areas (although the latter has been challenged by long times required by equipment manufacturers and a tight paper market). Cassis says that because getting the message into the hands of decision makers is proving to be challenging with email box clutter, direct mail seems to be making a comeback.

**"Planning ahead is critical due to the conditions we are facing with material supply chain challenges. The key is to keep talking to your customers so that you can understand their needs and how you can fulfill them by being flexible with your offering."**

— KEVIN CASSIS, VP, TECHNICAL OPERATIONS, HATTERAS PRINTING

Like anything else, the Hatteras brain trust will stay committed to laying out their plans ahead of time. "Planning ahead is critical due to the conditions we are facing with material supply chain challenges," Cassis says. "The key is to keep talking to your customers so that you can understand their needs and how you can fulfill them by being flexible with your offering. By continually monitoring your performance, you ensure you are getting the most out of your team."

As the print industry looks forward to 2022, printers constructing focused, practical and collaborative approaches to their business planning strategies will stay one step ahead of the curve in a time when change is ever-present.



# MONEY MATTERS

PRINT LEADERS  
SHARE INSIGHTS ON  
BUSINESS STRATEGY

LeadingPRINT sat down with a few industry leaders to talk about sales strategy, compensation and business development—all issues that progressive print leaders must wrestle with. Manny Cuevas, Vice President of Almaden Press in Northern California; Tom Moe, President & CEO of Daily Printing in Minneapolis; and Bill Gillespie, an industry leading consultant from Atlanta, all shared some insight that should be some wonderful food for thought.

## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES YOU SEE WITH REGARD TO COMPENSATION PLANS THESE DAYS?

**Manny Cuevas:** There are too many changes that communicate “company first” and the employee does not comprehend them. They may understand and tell you so, but the reality is that they go home and curse the process. You must be explicitly clear when it comes to compensation.

**Tom Moe:** I think balancing the need for new business/ business development and the nurturing and maintenance of existing accounts is a major challenge for all of us. It is difficult to do this with a single compensation plan. In my opinion you need to have a flexible comp plan to cover both situations. And I think you need to be able to create and measure your metrics for each layer of the plan while creating compensation that drives the behavior you want from your team.

**Bill Gillespie:** The largest challenge I see is designing a plan that provides a proper runway for new hires, makes room for strategy which is focused on desired verticals and remaining viable as sales mature. Owners and managers seem to want different plans for different services too. And based on my experience, I would discourage cross selling.

**"Your new business development should be fresh and directed toward the sales folks that embrace that style of selling."**

— MANNY CUEVAS, VICE PRESIDENT, ALMADEN PRESS



## WHAT ARE SOME GREAT WAYS TO BALANCE KEEPING THE SALES TEAM HAPPY AND MANAGING THE MARGINS OF THE TRADITIONAL BUSINESS?

**Cuevas:** Utilize technology, thought leadership and be prepared to make difficult decisions that affect production, accounting and your ERP systems.

**Moe:** Great Question. We tend to focus almost exclusively on keeping the current sales team happy. With that being said, as the margins recede from traditional business, they typically make less. If you create a flexible plan that rewards for new business development, you can offset the declining margin with accelerated pay for new business.

**Gillespie:** In my opinion the ideal plan pays a consistent rate on services performed by the company. Flexibility in compensation and pricing is addressed by paying a consistent rate or percentage on the markup added. In this fashion a rep that discounts work earns less than a rep that is more profitable on the same set of specifications. Within established boundaries, put the markup added in the hands of sales. In that fashion they set their compensation and the company is always protected.

## AS PRINTERS EXPAND THEIR OFFERING, HOW SHOULD THEY INCORPORATE MARKETING?

**Cuevas:** As a line item on the PnL.

**Moe:** Marketing needs to be a cost of doing business and included in the overhead recovery part of your costing structure. You can have sales people who sell marketing services as a product offering, but your own company marketing is a cost of doing business. You still need to have measurable results/metrics to judge your marketing effectiveness by, and how many social media posts you push out or page followers you have may not be the correct metric.

**Gillespie:** In today's selling environment, marketing is critical. Whether it's social media, outbound activities,

in-house events, white papers or educational, the company story has to be told. Without it, sales is vulnerable to becoming a "quote and hope," RFP activity. The size of the company (resources) will dictate whether it's a full-time employee, a dedicated staff or outsourced. Regardless, the cost has to be recovered exactly like any other company expense. The hourly rates of the company must be burdened with this cost. Rates reflect rent, insurance, heat and air. As those things change, rates do too. It's exactly the same for marketing expenses.

## "In today's selling environment marketing is critical."

— BILL GILLESPIE, CONSULTANT,  
BILL GILLESPIE CONSULTING SERVICES

## CAN YOU SHARE SOME ADVICE ON HOW TO HANDLE NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF CURRENT BUSINESS?

**Cuevas:** With everyone's "current," there are NBD opportunities; focus your sales team on horizontal selling and market to your current accounts—it's dangerous not to. Your NBD should be fresh and directed toward the sales folks that embrace that style of selling, go after larger accounts that frightened you in the past, startups and expand space and geography.

**Moe:** New business development requires a new style/breed of salesperson than I think most veteran salespeople in our industry are. It requires new skills, and relies less on being a Technical Expert or Good Relationship builder. It requires a higher degree of presentation and communication skills with social media, email, phone and so on. The new salesperson in the Biz Dev role needs to rely less on "how" it is printed and more on the "what it will accomplish" idea. This insight provides the value proposition for the reason to buy. They need to be comfortable on a Zoom call and not just going to an office or lunch.



Maintenance should be handled by an inside team, either a dedicated team or the CSR team, and not your commissioned workforce. You need your best sellers selling, not writing up work, doing billing and following a job through the shop. Your inside team will be able to communicate more effectively with the client and keep the work moving while the sales team is prospecting new business and uncovering new opportunities.

**Gillespie:** In small accounts this is easy. Reps can and generally do manage sales and service of existing business while seeking new opportunities. It has been my experience that problems can arise when enterprise accounts are involved. This is a sales leadership issue. Typically, companies allow one rep to hold an account because they enjoy success in one department. If the motivation is missing, development of other departments or sectors might get ignored. Sales leadership has to insist on account profiling. An evolving picture of the account with all known pockets of business has to emerge. A strategy for each area has to be presented. If the rep can't do it or won't, the company deserves to include other reps in the account development. Printers tend to think of accounts as sales rep owned rather than company owned. This is a mistake and is unfair to every employee that depends on successful selling. It's rare that one rep can service or even find all pockets of business that exist.

"You need to be able to create and measure your metrics for each layer of the plan, and be able to create compensation that drives the behavior you want from your team."

— TOM MOE, PRESIDENT & CEO,  
DAILY PRINTING

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**SCAN TO LEARN MORE**



# THREE'S A CHARM

How the family way is the right way for Thompson Print & Mailing Solutions

David Thompson, Trevor Thompson, Sterling Thompson, Preston Thompson, Thompson Print & Mailing Solutions

Jim Thompson started Thompson Business Forms when his son, David, was four-years-old. It was 1964, back when Jim was selling Pegboard Systems (One Write Accounting Systems) to apartments, medical offices, contractors, hospitals, all types of industries, as well as business forms, stock tab, etc., throughout the San Antonio area. At the time, Thompson Business Forms was the largest pegboard distributor in South Texas.

Enlisted to help out early in the family business, David could remember helping his father put together boxes of ledger trays and metal tables so that they could be delivered the next day. Fast-forward to 1977, and the boy who would help dad out in the evenings ended up taking over the family business, which eventually became Thompson Print & Mailing Solutions.

When David took over as president, the company was at \$1.8 million in sales. Pushing the family's business forward with a bent toward providing a complete package of commercial printing, he ended up racking up \$10 million in sales, growing from an initial 12-person team to more than 60. Along the way, he also acquired 25 other companies.

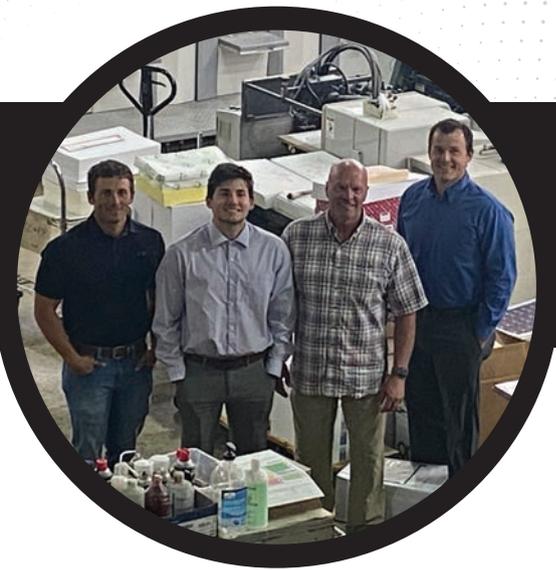
Just like his father before him, David laid out a path for his sons to be a part of the Thompson legacy. Today, Sterling, Preston

and Trevor are learning the ins and outs of an industry that has been more than good to the Thompson name. "Being a part of the business is something that I always wanted to do," David says. "For the past 24 years of owning and growing and running, I have done well."

**"I THINK IN ANY INDUSTRY, IT'S IMPORTANT FOR NEW GENERATIONS TO CONTINUE LEGACIES AND MOVE BUSINESSES FORWARD. WITHOUT THAT, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE LONG-STANDING SMALL BUSINESSES—AND SMALL BUSINESSES ARE WHAT KEEP AMERICA RUNNING."**

—STERLING THOMPSON

And now, as David continues to push the business toward newer and higher heights, he has his three sons to help pull the reins. "I came into this industry straight out of college with zero knowledge or experience in the printing industry," says Trevor, who, while working on the sales and customer service side, also has his eyes on marketing and advertising. "I came into the industry with the will to learn, and



The Thompsons include (from left to right) Preston, Trevor, David and Sterling.

to grow with the family business. I truly didn't know if I wanted to be a part of the business or branch off and work at another company or try and start my own business."

As for Sterling, after graduating college with a degree in exercise science/nutrition and a minor in business management, he had hopes of getting into the fitness industry. After always telling himself he would do something different, following a few post-graduate interviews, he decided to enter the family business. "I started in the shipping and receiving department and worked my way up. Now I help run all of the day-to-day operations."

## STAYING ON TOP OF THE GAME

With a front row seat to the twists and turns the ever-changing print industry continues to make, especially in the midst of an unprecedented pandemic, the Thompsons are loving the new and exciting challenges each day brings. That it is an industry the Thompson family as a whole are fully committed to is even better. "I think in any

industry, it's important for new generations to continue legacies and move businesses forward," Sterling says. "Without that, you wouldn't have long-standing small businesses—and small businesses are what keep America running."

In a time of great technological change, the Thompsons know that staying on the cutting edge of the industry's ever-evolving cycles will be an important part of keeping the business ahead of the competition. "It is extremely important for the next generation like us to stay on top of things," Trevor says. "The only way to keep pushing the industry forward and staying relevant is through digital marketing. Our world is more digital than ever and it's only going to continue to grow, and we need to continue to grow our digital presence to reach new markets and industries and grow the company."

Are there similar parallels from when another Thompson stepped into more of a front line role 40-plus years ago? David tends to see similarities, especially in an industry ripe with change. "The industry is constantly changing and we need to be on the forefront of it. That means marketing to our current and new customers with new ways to contact and connect with them. Constantly working on efficient manufacturing methods and keeping up with the technology."

Back in his sales days, David was big on marketing via direct mail and



cold calls. Today, print professionals are working to find even more ways to reach current and new customers, especially since the old ways do not always work so well. And as his sons continue to assemble the skills it takes to one day take over, David is happy to help provide the knowledge needed every step of the way.

"I find this younger generation, across all industries, need to find gray heads like me to confide with," David says. "So I encourage them to join groups and put themselves in uncomfortable situations so they can grow and learn."

Are dad's lessons ringing true? Trevor tends to think so. And with each day that passes, the Thompsons find tenets like professionalism and communication to be critical components to success, particularly for younger industry professionals.

"Becoming a young professional in the industry, you need to have good verbal and written communication, along with being professional," Trevor says. "The printing industry is all

about customization and what the customer wants. Being able to successfully communicate with them and being able to be professional with the customer throughout the entire process are unique challenges for young professionals. I want to become the best version of myself. I want to have the knowledge, confidence and expertise to better myself and the business."

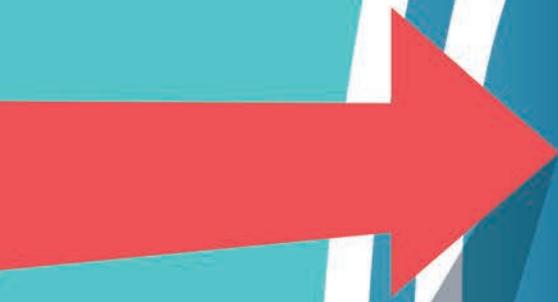
As Sterling approaches the road ahead, he is embracing many of the same beliefs. "Be humble, be a sponge and learn from your elders, and use these as the foundation for your future. There are so many new printing techniques, machines, software, etc., out there. The only thing that will hold a company back is not implementing (and learning) new and improved methods."

From the looks of the Thompson stock, it appears that the next generation knows what to expect.

# THE BACKBONE



## WHY MARKETING IS CRITICAL TO YOUR FUTURE SUCCESS



**A** few years back, Daniel Dejan came face to face with a study that changed the way he viewed everything related to how consumers interact with the onslaught of marketing-related engagements they receive on any given day. At the time, Dejan was the Print & Creative Manager at Sappi North America, where his impassioned work helped solidify the importance of quality design, the integral role of paper, and their direct correlation to printing.

It was a chaotic time for the print industry, mostly due to the widely circulated and incredibly misguided notion being pushed that print was dead. As the debate raged on, branding agency Millward Brown released a groundbreaking study that showed how our brains process paper-based and digital marketing in different ways, and in particular, that paper ads caused more emotional processing.

According to the study, "Using Neuroscience to Understand the Role of Direct Mail," physical-based media left a "deeper footprint" in the brain. Data suggested tangible materials involved more emotional processing in the subjects—an important factor from a branding and ad recall standpoint.

"We were looking for ways to dispel this notion that print was dead and the study hit the mark," says Dejan, who today is Principal/Creative Director at Dejan Associates. "In the New Now, the study's results still prove how people process information and how brands set out to market to them."

**"Marketing extends a sales organization, leveraging breadth at a much lower cost, supporting sales who bring depth at a higher cost."**

— John Sisson, President, HBT Marketing

Dejan says that because we still are in the midst of a once in a lifetime pandemic, how brands get their messaging in front of today's consumers is paramount. Strategizing your marketing strategy around a "content is just content" approach does not translate into a blueprint for success. "Marketing means you have to create a desire for what your audience wants. Your message must be relevant and timely, and it must be something your customers believe they need. Here's the thing: If your product and/or service is viewed as a major asset, your marketing campaign will work. If it doesn't, you're just going to be another vendor selling on price."

The bottom line is that your job as a marketer is to draw attention to whatever it is you are marketing—a strategy Dejan says involves being able to effectively use what he calls the 4 E's: Engage, Educate, Entertain and Entice. "Research shows that you have between six and eight seconds to capture people's attention. That's the length of the average attention span. If you don't hit on it in that time frame, you may have lost your opportunity."

## Marketing + Good Marketing = Success

Take a close look at any good marketing campaign and you will see that strategy is core to success. The power of marketing is getting your audience to know you exist, engage them, and eventually get them to buy your product or service. Good marketing is recognizing the uniqueness of your audience and presenting your product or service in a way that lets that audience know what's in it for them.

If you ask John Sisson, President of HBT Marketing, the secret to hitting this objective on all cycles, he'll tell you that education is key—for you, your clients and the industry as a whole. "Being a student of what's new and what's possible, and helping clients achieve their objectives with marketing is what drives action on the part of your audience. Our clients like success. And because we have a unique value proposition that's focused on getting our clients' audience to act, our clients keep coming back."

Paramount to this success is knowing how to balance the unique, and sometimes complicated, relationship with sales. Sisson says that HBT deals with, in many cases, a self-directed audience that at times is resistant to sales. That means this audience must find what they are after—and marketing is the only way they will.



"Marketing extends a sales organization, leveraging breadth at a much lower cost, supporting sales who bring depth at a higher cost," Sisson says. "But the audience exists for your product or service and with all the channels available to them, without marketing, yours won't be the product or service they buy. Everything we do is measurable. We're generally not in a position where we have a challenge in providing marketing's success. Not all campaigns are successful to be sure, but they are generally all measurable. Measuring and testing proves marketing's success."

Sisson recalls a client that came to HBT because it wanted to improve its reach with a tough-to-persuade audience. The challenge was to overcome the audience's status quo bias. HBT had to leverage a combination of direct response best practices and behavioral science to get the client's audience to act. Using a multichannel approach, HBT helped the client double its response rate overall, improving its print profitability by 186%.

"The marketing campaign convinced them to continue with this channel, which they considered dropping, and ended up driving significant investment dollar increases," Sisson says. "The client grew their business. That is the ultimate goal of any marketing campaign."

The story is one that T.J. Tedesco, co-founder and VP of Customer Success of VIVIO Health, can relate to. The longtime



**"Marketing means you have to create a desire for what your audience wants. Your message must be relevant and timely, and it must be something your customers believe they need."**

— Daniel Dejan, Principal/Creative Director, Dejan Associates

marketing professional says that while strategy is core to success and sustainability for any marketing initiative, knowing and living it are two different things. "The sooner you realize your business is their business, the better you and your organization will perform. If you don't understand your customers' wants and desires, you may earn a little money here and there, but you won't make a long-lasting difference. You'll be just selling stuff and not building relationships."

As the print industry—and economic landscape overall—continues to juggle the ever-changing, always complicated whims of today's consumers, marketing's role will be even larger than it was moving forward. "As we continue to move purchases and interactions with brands to be online and become even more isolated from one another, we become dependent on marketing to guide us to the right solution or product," Sisson says. "Without marketing, companies will struggle to reach their audience even more than they may have in years past."

In the end, attribution will reign supreme. The best way to show marketing's worth and ROI is through testing, preferably testing with a hold out. By testing against those who do not receive your message, you can see lift that is directly attributable to your marketing efforts.

# Q&A

## MIKE DE LA CRUZ, SVP, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & DIVERSITY

### COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE: BUSINESS LEADER DRIVES INNOVATION AND GROWTH WITH DIVERSITY EFFORTS

With 30+ years of sales experience in the agriculture, industrial, telecommunications, transportation and software industries, Mike de la Cruz has a passion for building relationships and trust with clients. It is with this passion that he has led the business development and diversity efforts for Group O, Inc. for more than 20 years. We wanted to get his take on the current climate and, specifically, his view on inclusivity.

#### Tell me about your company and its mission in this day and age.

Founded by Bob Ontiveros in 1974, Group O is a regional packaging materials supplier that has grown into one of the largest 100% Hispanic-owned businesses in the country. Bob's son, Gregg, now oversees a multifaceted business process outsourcing firm, headquartered in Milan, Illinois, with more than 1500 employees, 43% of whom are people of color.

In addition to its Packaging Solutions business, Group O has three service divisions: Incentive Marketing Solutions, Supply Chain Solutions and Retail Fulfillment Logistics. Core services include supply chain, 3PL, warehousing, redistribution, marketing promotions fulfillment, print management/rebates/prepaid cards, customer care centers, packaging materials/service/equipment and mobile device lifecycle management.

We are super proud of the diversity in our ownership and workforce and our overall core capabilities.

#### You have a real commitment to diversity and inclusion. How does that weave into your strategy?

In both our hiring practices and our vendor selection, we pay special attention to ensure improved access for applicants from underserved populations. We also work closely with our suppliers and mentees to emphasize diversity in hiring. Once aboard, we offer all employees opportunities for upward mobility and career advancement. Group O leaders recognize that working with suppliers that reflect the customer base and the communities they serve is not only socially responsible, it also helps drive innovation and growth.

#### Why is diversity and inclusion important today?

Beyond the social responsibility and economic impact metrics, research shows that diversity and inclusion present a competitive advantage. Many progressive organizations have already implemented an effective supplier diversity strategy. Supplier diversity programs increase vendor competition, quality of goods and services, and potentially cut operational costs. Some of the diverse classifications include Minority-Owned, Women-Owned, Veteran-Owned and Small Business.

Diversity also drives collaboration, creativity/innovation and quality. Minority-owned businesses create jobs and generate tax revenue, particularly in areas which need them the most. In addition, minority entrepreneurs bring innovative goods and services to the marketplace. Ideally, supplier diversity combines the best of our desires for a better, more equitable world and the drive to be a competitive leader in the marketplace.



### **How do you develop a culture of diversity and inclusion in this new climate?**

We recognize that while often used together, “diversity” and “inclusion” are not the same thing. Diversity refers to ensuring your workforce, leadership and suppliers include members from different groups. Inclusion is the physical act it takes to make that diversity work throughout the organization. Our commitment to both begins with taking an honest inventory of where we are and consciously choosing to allocate resources to diversity and inclusion. We strive to build trust by being transparent in our policies, beliefs and goals and are committed to the ongoing evolution of diversity, equity and inclusion in the workspace.

### **What advice do you have for businesses?**

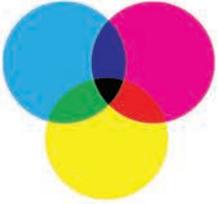
Be authentic. Mean what you say and model best practices around diversity and inclusion. The effort needs to be a core part of your mission, values, policies and practices—everything that you do. Transparency matters—identify and explain why this matters. Take an organizational-wide approach among both internal and external stakeholders. Begin data collection and analysis for change. Design your DEI Strategy to match your business objectives. Implement your initiatives, and continuously evaluate and audit your plan.



**"BEYOND THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ECONOMIC IMPACT METRICS, RESEARCH SHOWS THAT DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PRESENT A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE."**

# THE STRENGTH OF PRINT

CMYK



## REPORT SHOWS THE IMPACT OF DIRECT MAIL

Are you using all of your marketing muscles? Direct mail is a tried and true way to reach your audience and beef up your campaign. According to PFL's "The State of Multichannel Marketing" 2020 report, a quarter of marketers planned to increase their budget for direct mail during the pandemic, and they are seeing results. Those who are investing more in direct mail are more likely to report the following:

Direct mail pieces are personalized a lot or completely

Direct mail complements the other channels used by improving overall multichannel campaign performance

Direct mail is significantly more effective when it comes to reaching all target audiences

Their average multichannel campaign is producing a "good" or "very good" ROI

Direct mail efforts are integrated with marketing technology used for multichannel campaigns

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