

SPRING 2021

Leading **PRINT**

CORNERSTONES

HOW WORTH HIGGINS
& ASSOCIATES BUILDS
CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

*Strength in Numbers • Letting Go • Q&A with Jennifer Fondrevay, Founder of Day1 Ready™
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Thayer Long
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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

DREAMS STILL COME TRUE

I would venture to guess that much of your success over time was due to a level of stick-to-it-ness. In other words, I bet your greatest moments came about because you didn't quit. You probably showed dogged determination and persistence in the face of obstacles and opposition.

So, why should this period of time be any different? The answer is that it shouldn't. It is our opinion that some organizations are going to emerge from this confusing and ambiguous time

better than ever. They will have adapted, worked passionately and engaged their clients with great enthusiasm. The bottom line is that there will be winners and there is no reason that you should not be among them.

Now, we can spend our time wishing upon a star or hoping against all hope that things work out for us. But, in the real world, if you want to make your dreams come true, you need to have stick-to-it-ivness. That is how the seemingly ordinary accomplish the extraordinary.

This can be our time. I won't bore you with the ongoing theme that print matters (but it really does). This is a time, however, for remarkable stubbornness. Your success will require a stubborn pursuit of your goals and the tenacity that you exhibited during those fruitful times in the past.

My suggestion for the progressive printer is that you listen well, read often, and think clearly. Search for new ideas and stay with them. Dog it, and work until it's done, and done right. Our dreams can still come true. We just need the guts to pursue them.

Worth Higgins & Associates has the guts to give. In our cover article, "Cornerstones," you will read about an organization committed to a philosophy of giving and how it helps them forward. In our second feature,

"Letting Go," we talk about letting go of tradition and redefining your value. This is not an easy thing, especially in these times, but the most successful people let go of what was and embrace change going forward.

I hope you enjoy another issue of our award-winning magazine. It continues to be the product of hard work and a stubborn commitment to a community of progressive printers that are still making their dreams come true.

Warmest wishes,

Your success will require a stubborn pursuit of your goals and the tenacity that you exhibited during those fruitful times in the past.

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THE STRENGTH OF PRINT

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SPRING 2021

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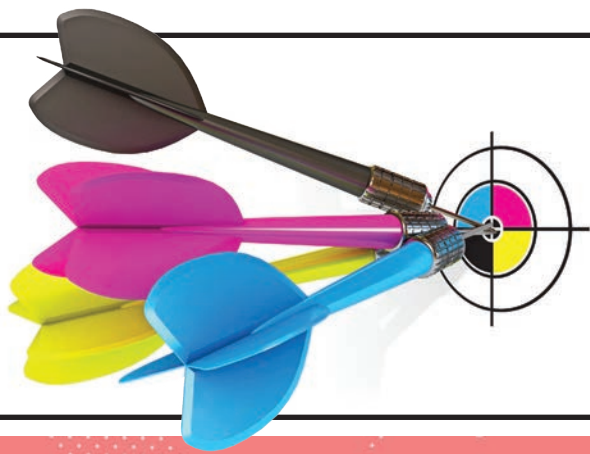
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REGISTRATION MARKS

"PEOPLE ARE PAYING MORE ATTENTION TO WHAT'S IN THEIR MAILBOXES AGAIN, SO IT'S TIME TO SHOWCASE YOUR PRODUCTS, REGARDLESS OF INDUSTRY, IN A SPACE WHERE YOU CAN LITERALLY GET INTO THE HANDS OF YOUR PROSPECTS. KEEPING A CLEAR EMPHASIS ON YOUR MESSAGE AND ADDING SOMETHING VISUALLY INTERRUPTIVE CAN MAKE A HUGE IMPACT ON BRAND AWARENESS AS WELL AS RESPONSE."

— Tari Johnson, Creative Director at SeQuel, on direct mail's role in 2021

YEAR IN REVIEW

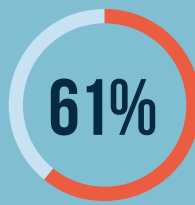


2020 sure had its downs, but print book sales in the United States had their best year since 2010. Growth occurred across every major supercategory, including adult non-fiction, adult fiction, juvenile and teen categories. Unit-sales volume in 2020 rose 8.2%, year over year, to reach 751 million units, according to The NPD Group (www.npd.com).

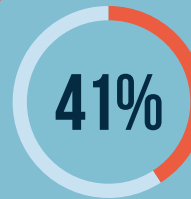
RAMP IT UP

Empowering remote workforce is top priority for CEOs

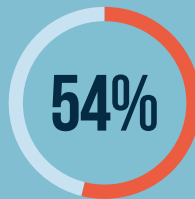
Enhancing your organization's strategy is no easy feat when your workforce is scattered across myriad locations. CEOs recognize that empowering their remote teams is the first step to creating the ripple effect of innovation, flexibility and engagement. The following are what CEOs cite as their top concerns since the beginning of 2020, according to the 2021 CEO Study "Find your essential: How to thrive in a post-pandemic reality." The IBM Institute for Business Value (IBV), in cooperation with Oxford Economics, interviewed 3,000 CEOs from nearly 50 countries and 26 industries to put together the report.



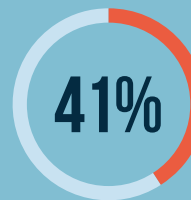
EMPOWERING REMOTE WORKFORCE



ENGAGING CUSTOMERS VIRTUALLY



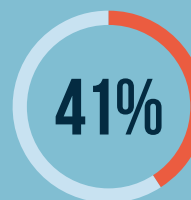
ACCELERATING AGILITY



ENHANCING SUPPLY CHAIN CONTINUITY



REDUCING OPERATING COSTS



BALANCING BUSINESS PORTFOLIO



By Benny Bowman & Scott Hudson

CORNERSTONES

HOW WORTH HIGGINS & ASSOCIATES
BUILDS CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

INTEGRITY. RELIABILITY. INNOVATION.
RELENTLESSNESS. CONSISTENCY.



When we think of the cornerstones that lay the foundation for a company and its cultural significance, those are the ones we cite most often. Significant companies are the ones that have the right people, the right strategy and the right purpose.

And while that is easy to say, you must put the work into the process every day. In an industry where change is constant and each project brings new and exciting challenges to tackle, the promise

you make to your people, the attention to detail you put into your strategy, and the commitment you make to maintaining your purpose matters.

It matters to your employees, your customers, and most of all, to yourself.

The mission statement at Worth Higgins & Associates is that we are a premier provider of print and visual communication solutions for customers who value quality and service. We pledge, above all else,

that our company empowers our employees, and attracts customers through sustainable opportunities and profitable growth.

We are printers. We made that edict in 1972 when Mr. Worth Higgins first opened his doors to the public. Still today, almost 50 years later, harnessing some of the industry's most cutting-edge digital, wide-format and finishing technologies, the craft of printing is at the core of everything we do—and what we do well.



But the true measure of our success—the standard that guides our significance—lies in what we offer beyond putting ink on paper. Significant companies empower the people who work for them to treat those who entrust us with their business with respect, fairness, honesty and gratitude. These are the values we weave into every fabric of our culture. More than anything else, culture is the guiding force in the search for significance. Building,

maintaining and perfecting that culture is what every company should try to achieve.

In our case, culture is centered on customer service. This requires a relentless pursuit of excellence with integrity, innovation and reliability being front and center. These core values steer our business and give us the credibility we need to remain viable in a market that is shrinking. It also gives us the foresight to expand and diversify

into new markets that serve our customers' needs.

Mr. Higgins' vision for the future of his company was always focused on the highest level of craftsmanship and customer service by the employees. That is why he entrusted his people with the reins in 1999, when he sold the company to his associates rather than opting for one of the industry's largest consolidators at the time. Over the past 20-plus years, this

employee-ownership has guided our commitment to furthering his vision.

AGAINST ALL ODDS

Last year, in the throes of a pandemic that continues to change the fabric of everything we do, the employees of our company were awarded with one of the highest honors the commercial print industry bestows on within its community—Printing Industries of the America’s “Best Workplace in America.” The recognition, more than anything else, continues to honor Mr. Higgins’ belief that a positive culture breeds a sense of safety and comfort.

In the eye of the storm that still rages, our ability to remain consistent helps strengthen

the foundation of sustainability Worth Higgins has created. Today, every senior management meeting not only focuses on the health of our company but, more importantly, the health of our employee-owners. Our team is behind every decision we make. The payoff comes when you get culture right. It comes when you know the hard decisions you have to make will get the buy-in by everyone who is entrusted to carrying them out.

So, what is being significant? What are the factors that drive everyone moving forward to achieving that goal?

We believe it starts with knowing that our team is capable of achieving anything we put our hearts into doing. Nobody here—not our management team or any of

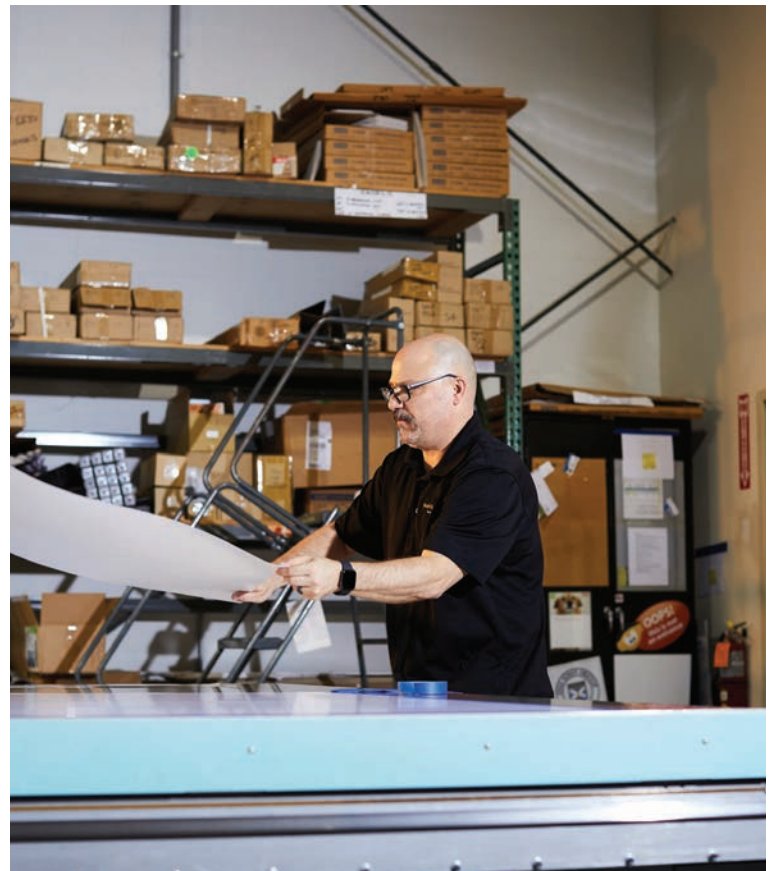
our associates—willingly signed up for what the world has faced over the last year. The additional responsibilities that every one of our employees have faced only add to the sometimes overwhelming stress our fast-paced industry squares up against every day.

During the past year, virtually every employee volunteered to perform an alternative role sometimes on a daily basis, as each moment seemingly delivered a different set of new and challenging obstacles.

The accounting department became handwork assemblers.

The pressmen became bindery operators.

The bindery operators became delivery drivers.





With a reduced workforce, what was needed on a daily basis changed on a dime. And with each change, every employee stepped up in a moment's notice without ever questioning the task in front of them.

While it was impressive for sure, it was also humbling to witness the true character of our team.

As we look out over the rubble of what the last year has put each of us through, we have been blessed by our team's ability to cling to our cornerstones. We are humbled by their sincere effort to make both their peers and our customers smile. For Worth Higgs & Associates, the journey we have been on has not only been one of expanding profit, but of emotional strength.

And as we head into even more uncharted waters, we have developed this strength to refocus on our company's financial profit and long-term viability.

Moving forward, we will continue to diligently assess everything we do and make the necessary changes as these challenging times drag on. And while there will continue to be hard decisions to make, we will make them as a team. Everything that has happened to this point has strengthened our resolve as a company—as a culture—and has brought us together in ways that will embolden our significance and stature in the industry.

Benny Bowman, President and COO, and Scott Hudson, Director of Communications, are part of the executive team for Worth Higgs & Associates (www.worthhiggs.com). Along with offset, digital, wide-format and promotional product printing, the Richmond, Virginia-based printer offers myriad services, including mailing, warehousing and fulfillment, automated print management systems, variable data printing, digital publishing and multi-channel solutions.

Letting go

Why it's time to abandon tradition and redefine your value

In the first week of March 2020, O'Neil Printing was coming off an exceptionally strong January and February. For the 100-plus year old company, it was business as usual.

A printer dedicated to innovation and passionately engaging with its customers, the O'Neil team looked forward to embracing the slate of projects it had on the horizon.



And then it hit. Seemingly without warning, the world changed. Knocked off course by a pandemic that would stop everyone and everything in its path, O'Neil Printing, like every company across the globe, had to make sense of a landscape that came with no blueprint to follow.

Examining the carnage, Simon Beltran, a thought leader with more than 12 years of executive level leadership under his belt, not only admitted that the scene in front of him was unlike anything he had ever experienced, but that the road ahead seemed daunting. As O'Neil's President and Chief Revenue Officer, it is his responsibility to oversee everything related to the technology and revenue generating machine, including sales, marketing, product, technology solutions and client experience. But even the veteran's stops at 4over and Shutterfly Business Solutions couldn't prepare him for this.

His teams are charged with the core goal of delivering exceptional value and an amazing user experience for clients across a full spectrum of technology driven solutions, excellence in print and fulfillment services, and marketing supply chain expertise. The change afoot demanded a new way of doing business—a new mindset that every single employee would have to buy into. “I will always be grateful for the leadership our teams exhibited in the face of great challenge and uncertainty,” Beltran recalls.

“Most companies that have disrupted industries have challenged some underlying assumption about that industry that most insiders would have never thought to question.

**— Susan Robertson, Instructor,
Harvard Extension School of
Professional Development**

Acting soundly and efficiently, O'Neil started by putting the health and safety of its teams and clients first, above revenues and profits. Navigating the unprecedented months ahead, everyone communicated and made the necessary adjustments, sometimes on a daily basis. “Our commitment to each other and to the people we served allowed us to emerge at the end of the year focused, more efficient and poised for a successful 2021,” Beltran says.

The continuing lessons of the pandemic serve as a daily reminder that the world around us is ever-changing. And while it may be a cliché, companies—no matter what industry they play in—must adapt or die. The reminders of those that did not figure out the Business 101 lesson are enshrined in history for all to see: the Kodaks, Nokias, Blackberrys and AOLs, etc.

How important is it to let go of—at least reexamine—the processes and protocols that your company follows? According to Forbes, only 52 of the companies from its Fortune 500 list in 1955 remain on the list today. That's 10%. That means 90% of those companies are either out of business or have fallen off the list of the most prosperous enterprises.

Renowned innovation strategist Susan Robertson says business owners all understand that they cannot control every factor impacting their businesses. Being nimble in the face of change is—and always has been—a critical business survival skill. So, where does the disconnect happen?

Robertson, a creative thinking expert with 20-plus years experience coaching Fortune 500 companies, cites two reasons that play with our entrepreneurial psyche: Negativity Bias and the Curse of Knowledge.

"Negativity Bias is one of these cognitive biases that gets in the way of new thinking," says Robertson, who also is an instructor on applied creativity at Harvard Extension School of Professional Development. "It's the phenomenon that negative experiences have a greater impact on our thoughts, feelings and behaviors than positive experiences. So, we are much more highly motivated to avoid negative than we are to seek out positive. The way this manifests in everyday life is the phrase, 'Yes, but...,' in response to new ideas."

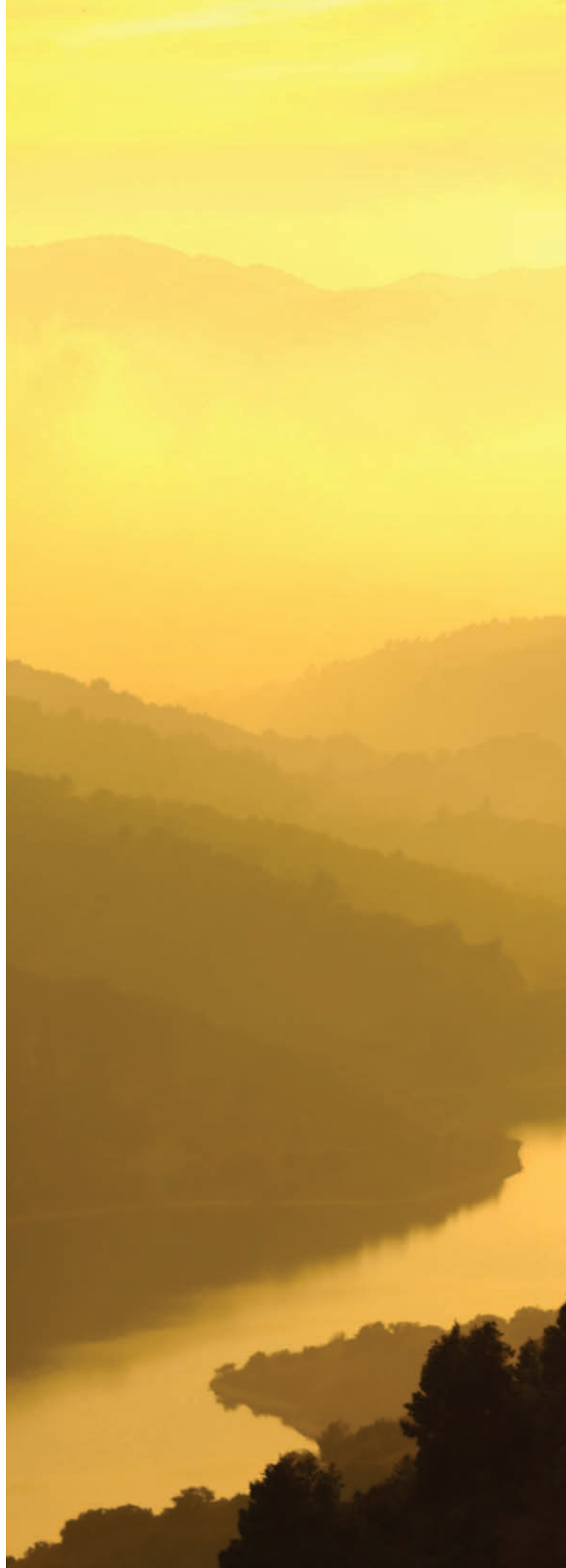
To negate this negativity bias, Robertson says you must respond to the "Yes but..." with "What if...?" This requires a dedicated and conscious mental effort by everyone on your team to monitor their own and the team's response to new ideas. "Every time 'Yes, but...' is uttered, the response needs to be, 'What if we could solve that?' This reframing of the problem into a question will trigger our brains to look for solutions, instead of instantly rejecting the idea."

The other cognitive bias, the Curse of Knowledge, gets in the way of letting go because of our subconscious assumption is that we have some sort of expertise on every subject. These assumptions limit thinking and suppress the ability to come up with new ideas. "Most companies that have disrupted industries have challenged some underlying assumption about that industry that most insiders would have never thought to question," Robertson says. "To help curtail your own Curse of Knowledge, seek advisors who don't have the same Curse of Knowledge you have. In other words, rely on advice from people outside of your industry."

Question the questions

Heading into this year, companies like O'Neil Printing are not operating under the "a rising tide lifts all boats" playbook. Beltran says that while the tide may lift most, the economic challenges the industry faced will thin out the competition.

"A healthy balance sheet, a sound strategy and the personnel to execute will most certainly separate the boats," he says.





"All of us need to have the managerial courage to inspire our best people and remove the ones that have stayed but 'quit on us.'"

— Simon Beltran, President & Chief Revenue Officer, O'Neil Printing

That last part—people—is critical to a company's ability to push past the ties that bind them. Beltran says that operating with wrong or disengaged employees can keep a company from growing and achieving its goals. "All of us need to have the managerial courage to inspire our best people and remove the ones that have stayed but 'quit on us.' It's important to recognize that everyone knows who is holding the company back, as leaders we need to remove these human obstacles."

Finding the strength and willpower to let go of the old ways of thinking is not only cathartic, but a highlighted bullet point on your to-do list. Companies that get too comfortable, and either don't want to change or are afraid to, leave themselves in a precarious situation. If the past year has shown us anything, the "if-it-ain't-broke-don't-fix-it" mindset doesn't leave much room for success.

"If we don't emerge from the recent health and economic crisis as better leaders, spouses, parents, sons and daughters than before March 2020, than we truly have missed an inflection point in our lives," Beltran says. "This has been an incredible reset for our communities, our country and our world at large. This change event should leave us grateful and self-aware of how quickly things can change and how little control we truly have."

In a time of forced change, listen to the advice of that ancient Chinese Proverb: "A wise man adapts himself to circumstances, as water shapes itself to the vessel that contains it."

Sometimes letting go is the best way to move forward.

TRUE IMPACT

LEADERS DISCUSS CHANGE AND MOVING FORWARD

The new year is in full swing, yet the aftershocks of 2020 are still being felt. LeadingPRINT sat down with three impact marketing personalities to get their take on the current environment and what lies ahead. Andrea Coville is the CEO of Brodeur Partners, a multidisciplinary communications agency and author of “Relevance: The Power to Change Minds and Behavior and Stay Ahead of the Competition.” Chris Hyde is president of Cipher Creative Group, a design firm that specializes in creating personalized experiences across print and digital platforms. And Preston Herrin is a strategy, growth, and performance consultant and founder of Herrin Consulting Group, Inc.™, a management consulting firm. He has served in c-level and senior leadership roles at fast-growth companies like 4over LLC, Café Press and Drummond.

WHAT IS YOUR TAKE ON THE UNCERTAINTY THESE DAYS AND ITS IMPACT ON BUSINESS IN GENERAL?

Coville: With spring's arrival, optimism is in the air: Millions are getting vaccinated, COVID-19 case rates have fallen, and business is recovering. Nonetheless, our recent social tensions have intensified humans' natural yearning to connect with ideas, experiences, and institutions that are relevant. Consumers want the brands they do business with to serve as a meaningful point of connection and lead with their actions. Our research also shows that Americans want more kindness, honesty and optimism in their lives, values that businesses can demonstrate in creative ways.

Hyde: It's funny—if you asked me that question each month over the last year, I would have answered it differently every time. As an individual there seemed to be a different reason to feel uneasy about the present and future at every turn of 2020. The pandemic, the George Floyd killing and subsequent demonstrations, the election, the capitol riots, the political polarization of everything, climate change related weather anomalies, Reddit-inspired attacks on the hedge fund industry....it all seems bonkers.



"CONSUMERS WANT THE BRANDS THEY DO BUSINESS WITH TO SERVE AS A MEANINGFUL POINT OF CONNECTION AND LEAD WITH THEIR ACTIONS."

— CHRIS HYDE, PRESIDENT OF CIPHER CREATIVE GROUP

I am certain of one thing—that the motivators that drive human behavior will remain: fear, exclusivity, esteem, self-actualization, guilt, greed and social belonging. Over the last year I think the obvious drivers have been fear, social belonging and self-actualization.

Perhaps it's naive optimism, but I'd rather turn the uncertainty on its head and look for the opportunities being created by the massive changes created over the last year.

Herrin: While times are more trying than ever thanks to the slowly relenting pandemic, uncertainty in business has been with us for decades in the form of constant change. In fact, I was so aggravated by the continual use of “new normal” in a business context that I sat down and wrote an article “Crisis Demands New Agility, Not a New Normal” (<https://www.herrinconsulting.com/preston-herrin-articles>). In the article I describe five steps to infusing purposeful agility into organizations in this age of hyper-change. The point is that uncertainty has been with us, especially in the print industry, since the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution which is rooted in digital transformation.



An additional thought on uncertainty is that it can be managed, even embraced, within our businesses. Uncertainty can paralyze organizations, their leadership teams and their workforce. I argue in my article “Wield the Data Sword” that you can slay uncertainty with a practical application of business metrics and analytics. Creating a data-driven organization will dispel uncertainty relative to past, current and future performance when implemented correctly. Control everything that you can in the current state by developing new agility in business efficiency and effectiveness. Then, develop predictive analytics and modeling to contemplate future outcomes. Hyper-change is here to stay. Organizations who develop new agility will win the future.

WHAT STEPS DO YOU THINK BRAND OWNERS WILL NEED TO TAKE TO GET BACK TO ACHIEVING SIGNIFICANCE?

Coville: First, I'd advise brand owners to tailor experiences to a wide variety of post-pandemic attitudes. Different people will have different feelings about emerging from the pandemic. Some will seek out huge public gatherings—beaches, stadiums, concerts, malls and marches—but not everyone. Others will feel tentative about stepping out the door.

Secondly, I'd urge brands to be consistent with the persona they manifested through the pandemic and racial justice protests. Although the world will be different when the pandemic ends, your brand should display stability, especially with respect to important values.

Hyde: This is a tough question—if a brand has lost its significance, then it is in trouble. But I think that the

question is more nuanced than that. I think the last year has provided the opportunity for brands to refocus and experiment with new ways to deliver value for clients and customers. “Adapt” and “pivot” have been the popular, if not overused, buzzwords. But businesses large and small that have viewed the situation from a customer needs perspective have found opportunities.

Herrin: The first step is to make your customer the central heroic character in your story. Tightly aligning with the customer needs and expectations is essential. Empirically measuring customer experience and retooling your strategic initiatives based on the steady influx of new insight will cast products and solutions in a relevant and significant light.

THE WAY WE CONNECT HAS CHANGED, BUT WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS GOING FORWARD?

Coville: Online and off—in the news media, on the internet and in our neighborhoods—we all need to take small steps every day to put America back on track. We need to take time for one another, engage in hard conversations, and entertain compromise in the best sense of the word. We need to do that as brands and as people.

In business, look for new hybrid models—for example, more workplace/home office flexibility. In communications, look for long-form journalism delivered through print, audio, video, and graphics in digestible chunks.

Hyde: Remote work is here to stay, impacting how teams are built and a reduction in office sizes. I think business travel will not return to pre-pandemic levels and in-person meetings will now be scrutinized and made more interactive and effective. In addition, online meeting tools will continue to add features that make them more dimensional and interactive. Clearly, the sales process, B2B and B2C will be impacted by video with online equipment demos becoming more choreographed and cinematic.

Herrin: The future will be a hybrid of online connection and in-person connection. I've read numerous reports in the past few months that have measured the work from home (WFH) phenomenon. While some are more productive at home, others are not. As a business community I think we are just beginning to understand the impact of extended work from home rules on mental health. As humans we crave interaction. The sense of “belonging” to an organization and the engagement level of the workforce are largely driven by interaction with coworkers.

Thus, a hybrid model where a mix of days are spent in the office and WFH will create a much better work-life balance than what we had pre-pandemic. The burn-out pace and culture was forced to slow a bit in 2020 and I believe that will have a positive long-term outcome.

"PRINT IS REAL. IT FEELS TRUSTWORTHY."

— ANDREA COVILLE, CEO OF BRODEUR PARTNERS

CAN YOU SPEAK TO THE MERITS OF PRINT AMIDST THIS AMBIGUOUS WORLD?

Coville: The world has gone digital, but who doesn't love to hold information in their hands as a tangible artifact the way it has been conveyed for millennia? Print is real. It feels trustworthy. And it's an example of what I call sensory relevance. Especially for people who grew up with newspapers and books that go on shelves, print is timeless. Hollywood, you'll notice, still conducts major print campaigns in the run-up to the Oscars.

Hyde: The merits of print have been disputed since before the pandemic, so not sure what's really changed. Packaging has certainly enjoyed the benefits that came from more online ordering of food and products. Direct mail is being revisited because people are working from home and the competition in the physical mailbox is lighter.

I've seen print as more "special" for a while now. I like how Rory Sutherland from Ogilvy talks about how print means you are serious. He jokingly asks his audiences if they'd go to a wedding if they were invited by email versus a nicely printed invitation package. Print is becoming more unique as people spend more and more time on digital platforms—but it has to be done well. Unfortunately expertise in print design, writing and testing is wane.

Herrin: I believe print will play a key role in the revival of small business and shops during the re-opening. Signage, promotions, direct mail and EDDM, promotional products all have the ability to drive traffic back into stores. What is yet to be fully quantified is the number of small businesses that will never reopen and the net-effect that will have on the gross print volume and revenue.

One added layer of complexity is the reality that our industry will continue to disaggregate in certain spaces and reaggregate in others. For example, will menus ever

fully return? The brilliant use of the QR code to drive menu content to the mobile device will not abate anytime soon. Thus, as a product, menus are disaggregating. Where is the reaggregation? The general populace now knows that mobile device camera systems have built in QR readers and they know how to use them. This means that integrating QR codes and PURL's into direct mail, for example, where recipients have a personalized brand message awaiting their scan can drive a new level of engagement and lead-generation activity.

There is always opportunity. Often it simply depends on the lens through which you are looking as to whether or not you see it.

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE IN FINDING A BETTER VERSION OF OURSELVES AND OUR BRANDS?

Coville: Believe in the possibility of positive change for yourself. And believe that your brand can be a change agent for others. My mantra: Find something flawed in the world and make it better. Express something in a way it's never been expressed before. And stay true to your values.

Hyde: Hopefully brands and those who manage them have used the last year to take stock of what matters most in their lives and their customers' lives. Brands had already been getting more involved with supporting social and environmental issues, a trend I hope will only continue. I don't think I have any great advice for how to become better, other than it has to start from the inside and that it can't be shallow. If it is whitewashing, employees won't live it and certainly customers will see right through it.

Herrin: If the pandemic has not challenged you as a human being to be more empathetic then there are few catalysts that ever will. We need to continue to be empathetic as leaders. It's perfectly fine to be enormously demanding in business as long as that is countered by being enormously caring. It is this balanced leadership style that will attract and retain top talent.

In addition to exercising empathy, practice the expression of love. I have worked for companies, leaders, and managed teams that I loved! Many of my long-term relationships were borne from business interactions (associates and customers). These are people I love and I let them know it. We don't express love in word or deed enough and I believe it carries with it a deep, profound sense of belonging.



Print is not one size fits all. Neither are you!

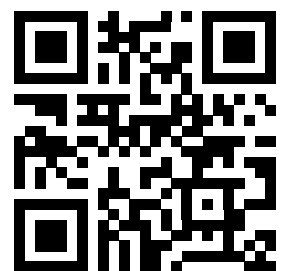
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Printing Company

How the Advertisers Printing Company became the career Alex Fechner couldn't refuse



Alex Fechner hadn't thought much about joining the family business while growing up. Sure, it surrounded him. For four generations, his family ran a St. Louis-based printing company started by his great, great grandfather, Claude Fechner in 1923. The C.F. Fechner Printing Company focused on letterpress printing, eventually evolving to include everything from offset printing, to mailing and direct mail components, and digital presses, among other services. Today, the certified printer, which operates under the name, The Advertisers Printing Company, is dedicated to helping its clients get their messages heard across myriad mediums.

That's where Alex comes in. It's just that the road that led him there took a few turns. Doing small jobs along with his brother, Rob, growing up, Alex set out for college to make his mark. It wasn't until his dad visited him in school and asked if he had considered joining the ranks that he put any real thought into it. "Printing is in my blood. I'm the fourth generation Fechner to come into the company, but I didn't know this was going to be my career. When I thought about how the company had been in my family for 80-plus years, I was excited to give it a shot."

Giving it a go meant working side by side with his father, Bill, and uncle, Bob, every day. And

"I'M HIGHLY OPTIMISTIC ABOUT OUR FUTURE. WE HAVE REALLY BUCKLED DOWN ON PROCESS, ACCOUNTABILITY, CULTURE AND OUR FUTURE STRATEGY."

while filling those "gigantic shoes" seemed daunting, he was up for the task. Today, as Director of Business Development, Alex manages the sales force, monitoring, managing and helping improve its CRM and lead pipeline. He also is active in conceptualizing and building the company's marketing outreach campaigns.

But perhaps the area that hits closest to home is the work he puts into furthering Advertising Printing's growth opportunities. "We have a one-, three-, five- and 10-year plan set, and every decision is based around that plan," he says.

For a company that fully embraces the mantra, "We're all in this together," Alex has learned to identify where he fits in. Admittedly, that part of the growing process has come along with the help of outside consultants like Mike Philie of the Philie Group



(L-R) Bill Fechner (third generation), holding picture of Claude Fechner (first generation); Alex Fechner (fourth generation); and Bob Fechner (third generation), holding picture of Robert Fechner (second generation).



First generation founder Claude Fechner (far right) in the office with his team

and other mentors. "I'd say one of my strengths is delegating work to individuals more capable and smarter than myself," Alex says. "I've come to recognize where I muddy the water. Now, most of my time is focused on the business, and not in it, so I don't muddy things as often. Everyone is much happier that way."

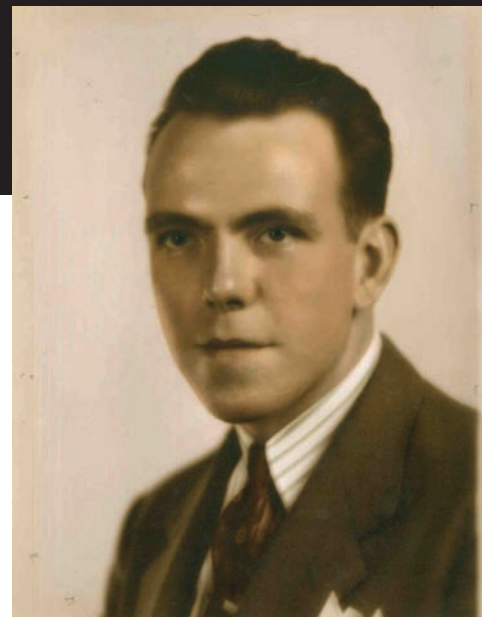
A TEST OF TRUE MATTERS

Part of the vision and planning the Fechner family has always prided itself on is being able to pivot. That means being able to change on a dime. Perhaps no time challenged anyone more than the recent pandemic. "When COVID struck, we knew we had to make some tough decisions," Alex recalls. "We did not panic. We reviewed and followed our plan. We didn't waste time. We worked hard—still do and always will—internally to come out of this stronger than before."

Because Advertisers Printing "over-communicated" during the pandemic, Alex says it has made

everyone better. For example, today, he's fine-tuning a new workflow automation strategy that will help better serve its clients and team. The company also rolled out a management structure to the rest of the organization. "We never stopped investing in our company despite COVID. For example, as crazy as it might sound, we purchased and installed a 10-color UV/LED offset press about 2 months into the pandemic. I'm extremely proud of our team and how we stayed positive during this tough time. We're ready and well-armed for when we're past this."

Just where the world will be in the aftermath of COVID is anybody's guess. But if there is a way to find opportunities and get to the next level, Alex is ready for the challenge. "The world has become so digital dependent; there's a belief that direct mail isn't an effective marketing channel and that digital marketing is the only way to market. That same digital thinking is making it hard to



Alex's grandfather, Robert "Bob" Claude Fechner, 2nd generation

attract and keep younger workers. Technology is also moving at a pace that is very hard to keep up with, and anyone in this industry knows if you are not keeping up with technology, you are on a fast track to becoming obsolete."

So, what's the plan? Alex says it rests in three key areas: finding and training good operators, replacing long-term, multi-talented employees, and keeping pace with technology. "I'm highly optimistic about our future. We have really buckled down on process, accountability, culture and our future strategy. Our team has never been stronger and we're getting stronger every day."

Future forward with an eye on its history.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Why your partners matter
more than ever

At the height of the pandemic, when the demand for print materials slowed down, many of the peer groups that worked with The Standard Group discussed the idea of producing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)—face shields, shield barriers, etc. Their prospects were driven by the stories of printers that were already having success in the area.

Thanh Nguyen says the temptation was there. The Standard Group could have shifted its sales and manufacturing to chase the PPE market. But after further discussions within its peer group, the printer decided that it was more prudent for other manufacturers that were better equipped to produce the volume needed to get the job done.

"Instead of entering the PPE market, many of us chose to focus on our core competency and optimize our business," says Nguyen, CMO for The Standard Group, a premier print management and marketing logistics company located in Reading and Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

The Standard Group's core competency lies in its ability to partner with its customers to streamline and automate processes, facilitate ordering, improve quality, manage inventory and reduce obsolescence. Its efforts have resulted in an award-winning company specializing in digital and print communications for everything from small, non-profit organizations to Fortune 500 companies.

Like companies everywhere, COVID-19 continues to be new and uncharted waters, something that Nguyen says offers its share of lessons. "There isn't an instruction guide on what we should and should not do. We strive to make the best decision

based on the most reliable information available to us in business, but we are sometimes second-guessing our decision. Having a peer group of printers around the continental United States to talk to about everything from COVID-19 best practices, PPP loans and personal protection equipment was tremendously helpful."

At the height of the pandemic, The Standard Group took part in weekly conference calls with printer colleagues designed to help each other survive and make sense of the craziness. One member even created a series of COVID-19 educational posters to give to customers and shared them with the peer group.

"In business, we are typically good at some things and bad at others," Nguyen says. "We have lots of experience in some aspects of our offering and novice in others. Why make the same mistakes when we can learn from our peers who have gone before us. Also, as executives, some things are often challenging to discuss, even with your employees. To be able to get advice on critical decisions from another executive in a similar industry is invaluable. Our peer group allows us to get outside of our four walls and hear what is going on—not just locally, but on a national level and what initiatives are being used to better our businesses."



"In business, we are typically good at some things and bad at others. Why make the same mistakes when we can learn from our peers who have gone before us?"

— Thanh Nguyen, CMO, The Standard Group

Steven Pearlman believes that in today's fast-paced, networked-oriented world, building close, working relationships with peers from within your industry can offer different, yet valuable perspectives. If done correctly, you build strong relationships with forward-thinking organizations that can offer the resources you need, but lack the time to develop yourself.

"Building peer alliances can serve deeper purposes when organizations become attuned to the needs of each other," says Pearlman, co-founder of The Critical Thinking Initiative. "Rather than cookie-cutter connections, deeper partner alliances attend to a company's needs and long-term strategic plans. When partnerships emerge in concert with strategic planning rather than in service to existing plans, it enables you to create an infrastructure for success."

The Standard Group's peer group members help accelerate and guide many of its projects, providing the printer with buying power potential, and intel on best practices and equipment decisions. For example, when Standard started on its Continuous Improvement (Lean Manufacturing) journey, it was able to talk to employees of its peer group who were already certified. The discussions enabled Standard the ability to offer solid advice and visit their facilities to see the program in action.

"Business can be a lonely and stressful place," Nguyen says. "The world is big enough for all of us to win and share in the piece of the pie. It's crucial to find a print peer group of like-minded individuals who share your morals and have a similar business attitude. It also helps if your peer group is from another geographic location so that there is less chance of running into the same customers."

JUST DO IT...

After more than 32 years in the business, Rick Baker knows his way around the process. Along every step of the way, he has seen the benefits of building and sustaining long-lasting relationships. And in a time when regardless of experience, everyone has been in

the same boat, having partners that you can turn to has been critical.

"You get to see other's point of view—a way of thinking of something different than you think," says Baker, President of the Pittsburgh-based Print Tech. "We have all had moments of, 'Why didn't I think of that?' Why not look to others who have had similar issues or challenges and may be able to give you the answer you are looking for?"

As a member of a peer group consisting of some 20 printers from across the country, Baker has benefited immensely from the yearly meetings and email connections. Along with suppliers that give personalized product demonstrations, Print Tech has been privy to its share of sales techniques, production tricks, and insights on new and emerging technologies it doesn't currently use.

Baker recalls the time he was invited to visit a vendor facility to check out a die cutter the Steel City printer was interested in acquiring. While he was there, Baker found a folder that he did not know existed on the simplicity of operation. He ended up buying the folder instead of the die cutter, of which he admitted Print Tech eventually purchased.

When it comes to building and fostering relationships, Baker says the decision is a no brainer. "Just do it. Take the time to work on the business, rather than work in the business. The rewards will be well worth it."

The takeaway, which is plain to see, is that without question, the best avenue for success is to open dialogue with peer organizations early and maintain them often. Too often, while partnerships are seen as ways to meet predetermined goals, these goals sometimes could have been better informed by perspectives brought by peer organizations in terms of where trends are headed, what is needed, and, most of all, what is possible.

"In my experience, many business initiatives for critical thinking stall, or never even launch, because leaders cannot conceptualize how to define critical thinking, much less teach it or assess it," Pearlman says. "But companies open to early discussions on those issues might find that existing breakthroughs can empower the very initiatives with which they might otherwise struggle."

Stronger together is always more practical than standing alone.

Q&A

JENNIFER FONDREVAY, KEYNOTE SPEAKER/BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

THE HUMAN TOUCH: HOW MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS AFFECT WORKPLACE CULTURE

Jennifer Fondrevay is an author, professional speaker and business consultant who has the pleasure of assisting organizations, workforces, and individuals going through major transitions. In her new book, "Now What? A Survivor's Guide for Thriving Through Mergers & Acquisitions," she shows how organizations can flourish in the post-deal integration by creating a more agile business that is better able to see the opportunities. As the Chief Humanity Officer, and Founder of Day1 Ready™ M&A Consultancy, she has dedicated her life to helping companies going through a transition cultivate the human side of their businesses. We sat down with her to get her ideas on managing culture after a merger.

The pandemic may seem like a great time for mergers and acquisitions. What are some of the things that companies should consider?

In all of the conversations I am having, there appear to be two schools of thought. One school of thought sees enormous opportunity to acquire companies or merge companies together right now. Companies in every industry had their business models impacted. Some models were flipped upside down and some, such as a move to ecommerce, were accelerated. These struggles have created opportunities.

The other school of thought is that now is NOT a good time to get too aggressive in deal planning as business models are still being tested. The forecasting for how a company might do in the future was obviously challenging in 2020. While

the picture is getting clearer, the "wait and see" school of thought feels greater visibility is needed on how companies and their workforce will adapt. Will we continue to see huge percentages of the workforce working from home? Will more employees return to work because of pent-up desire to be with coworkers? Will we see widespread adaptation of a hybrid approach? The general thought is we will need full rollout of the vaccine and then months after to evaluate. Decision-making now all comes down to your tolerance for risk.

The Know-It-All, one of ten "Cast of Change" characters from "Now What? A Survivor's Guide for Thriving Through Mergers & Acquisitions"



*Jennifer Fondrevay, receiving
the 2019 North Shore Women in
Business Entrepreneur Award*

**IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO COMMUNICATE
A CLEAR VISION FOR WHERE THE
COMPANY IS GOING SO THAT THE
WORKFORCE CAN UNDERSTAND THE
NEW DIRECTION AND EMBRACE IT,
YOU CAN SPEND MONTHS OF
LOST PRODUCTIVITY.**

The core of your work is with the impact of merger and acquisitions on people. Can you share how people don't take into account the impact M&A deals have on people?

It's not that the impact of M&A deals isn't taken into account; it's that too frequently it isn't taken into account soon enough in the deal-planning process. The focus in the beginning is to "get the deal done." The people piece tends to be something to "deal with later"—unless it's an acquisition driven by getting certain talent.

Where this has the greatest impact is in the first 90 to 100 days of announcing the deal. If you have not thought of the people piece: everything from organizational structure and job titles down to bonus/incentive plan and vacation days, people will fixate on the unknown—the unanswered questions. Beyond that, and most importantly, if you are unable to communicate a clear vision for where the company is going so that the workforce can understand the new direction and embrace it, you can spend months of lost productivity. People spend precious energy and time trying to figure out the new direction and their role in it. Those deals which are successful take the time to have answers to those people-questions and have a clearly articulated vision of where the company is going.



Can you talk about why you have to identify a cast of change characters and how that influences engaging people?

M&A situations tend to create a "survival of the fittest" mentality. It's the nature of the situation. People can naturally become fearful for their job. When people are afraid and overwhelmed, you tend to see a different side of them—not always the best version. I experienced three separate multibillion dollar M&A deals and each time, I saw a different side of people.

I wanted to highlight this by creating what I called the "Cast of Change" characters. I had an illustrator, Jeff York, who brought those 10 characters to life through caricatures. As I interviewed executives and PE leaders for my book, the illustrations helped enormously. Everyone could identify one of the characters, if not more. Most importantly, the illustrations helped bring certain personality types to life in a humorous way. I've been able to engage people through the illustrations as it opens them up to listen and share, which is critical.

While M&A results in stages of grief, you have talked about how we have all lost this past year. What processes of grief management are important for us all?

Yes, I am glad you asked this. I talk about the stages of grief people experience in mergers and acquisitions to help them understand their emotions. I felt that other descriptions around change management—like the S curve or

The Former Rockstar, one of ten "Cast of Change" characters from "Now What? A Survivor's Guide for Thriving Through Mergers & Acquisitions"



change curve—while relevant, felt too academic. As if an entire organization goes through change at the same pace in the same way. That wasn't my experience and was supported by my research. People genuinely grieve—and it is not a linear path.

I was speaking to a grief counselor about the emotions you feel after an M&A deal, and she told me it had all the hallmarks of "secondary or ambiguous loss." This is the act of mourning the future that won't be. I felt that really nailed what I experienced and it was confirmed in the interviews I had with M&A survivors and practitioners. Both sides can grieve.

This mourning period is what we have all experienced with the pandemic. Each of us is mourning the future that won't be. NO ONE has been immune to the dramatic change and an altered future. Recognizing that there are stages to grief—Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance—helps you understand that each emotion is a stage. The key is to get from denial to acceptance.

As time has passed and healing occurs, what advice do you have for small- to medium-sized businesses to push forward?

I actually talked about this in a Fast Company article I shared at the beginning of the pandemic: "How to lead when people are afraid." While we are past the initial shock of the pandemic, people are still dealing with uncertainty. And, they are burned out. We've not been able to put a deadline on "return to normal"—whatever that may be. The same leadership traits I saw as important at the beginning of the pandemic remain important moving forward.

When people are feeling afraid and uncertain, they follow leaders who exhibit three key traits:

- Communicate openly, plainly and continuously
- Model the behavior they wish to see
- Engage with empathy and humility

Q&A

The COVID crisis has presented a masterclass in how uncertainty affects people as well as insights into what leadership traits are required when people are afraid, overwhelmed and not sure how to proceed.

To find out more about Jennifer Fondrevay and her work, visit jenniferfondrevay.com. Her new book, "Now What? A Survivor's Guide for Thriving Through Mergers & Acquisitions," is available on both Amazon and Audible. Take the "Cast of Change" Characters quiz on her website (<https://jenniferfondrevay.com/which-birds-and-beasts-are-you-battling-in-the-ma-jungle-quiz/>), and check her out on Spotify via her playlist "From Denial to Acceptance."

The Ostrich, one of ten "Cast of Change" characters from "Now What? A Survivor's Guide for Thriving Through Mergers & Acquisitions"



"WHILE WE ARE PAST THE INITIAL SHOCK OF THE PANDEMIC, PEOPLE ARE STILL DEALING WITH UNCERTAINTY."

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 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 complements the other channels used by improving overall multichannel campaign performance

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

How to Become a Next Generation Print Provider



by Nicholas Pearson, Domtar Marketing Specialist

Our industry is evolving but adaptability is the mark of a great printer. Clearly defining your value, building your brand and communicating with potential customers are all ways that printers can continue to evolve, but where should you truly focus your efforts? Below are three steps that you can take to attract the next generation.

Be a Resource

The easiest way to build a rapport with your customers is to be a resource. Cold calls and emails where you list your capabilities and ask customers to quote their next job aren't going to get it done. Virtual meetings are a great way to get facetime and share engaging and educational information. If you take things further by hosting a virtual event and inviting more than one customer, they can also be great ways to build a sense of community. Keep in mind, your customer is being bombarded with meeting requests these days, so make sure the topic and meeting is useful, inspiring and fun. A few ideas might include hosting a virtual happy hour and walking them through the latest paper mill promotion or sending Door Dash for lunch and breaking down InDesign time-saving tips.

Stay Connected

Consistency is also an important part of communication. This is the time to update your forms of digital communication and make sure that your website and social media is fresh and up to date—if you do not have a social media presence then that needs to change as soon as possible. Short videos and creative photographs with quick tips about the printing process are both great starting points. The task of creating a social media strategy can be daunting, so a good place to start is to figure out what platforms your target audience is most active on and focus your efforts there. To really stand out, combine your digital marketing efforts with an eye-catching direct mail piece that shows off your capabilities. This could be a great opportunity to demonstrate the positive impact print can have in an omni-channel campaign.

Build Your Brand

The best way to win business is to stay top of mind and build the right brand—if your brand is based on “we’re a printer who prints things,” then you’re missing your mark. Rethink how you’re promoting yourself and look at your business objectively—are you marketing yourself in a way that appeals to the next generation of print buyers? There are a few signs that indicate that it’s time to update your business narrative, including a promotional strategy that focuses on your capabilities instead of your story, a lack of differentiation and an absence of repeat customers.

In order to build a new brand narrative for your business, follow these simple steps: Research—ask customers why they work with you and how you compare to competitors. They may perceive you differently than you see yourself or have a different list of direct competitors. Analysis—take the research you did and find areas of strength and weakness. This is a good time to bring in someone who isn't as close to the issue, maybe from outside of the marketing team or someone you trust outside of your business. Choose your audience; Identify who you are talking to in your marketing. This isn't choosing who you're going to do business with rather it's who you are going to understand and communicate with on a promotional level. Oftentimes you'll see a ripple effect as you appeal to your intended audience and their circle, as others recognize the concerns and goals.

Historically, customers have looked for businesses that supplied what they wanted and made their lives easier. Now, simply offering the right service isn't enough—you have to meet the customer where they are. Interested in more tips and trends on the power of paper and print? Subscribe to the PrintWorks Newsletter, our exclusive newsletter created for printers at info.domtar.com/printworks2.

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