

FALL 2022
Leading **PRINT**

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

HOW PARKLAND DIRECT
IMPACTS BRANDS

*Selling the value of print in a digital world • The challenge of capital investment
Graphic designers need print • Keys to developing the next generation of print workforce*

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

DREAM ENABLING

At APTEch, we believe that people always come first. Our entire platform is built on building trusting relationships, serving others, and finding a better version of ourselves together. To serve someone else means that you are putting another person's needs first. It is an action that defers your wants and desires and prioritizes the care of others. There is simply no more noble or honorable endeavor.

Service demands accountability because it is a significant responsibility. That is why we have built our entire strategy around the purpose of servitude.

Thayer Long
President, Association for
PRINT Technologies

We are grateful for the opportunity to serve this wonderful industry, and with the addition of whattheythink.com, we feel equipped to help support your ambitions better than ever.

Our team, known throughout the industry for their knowledge and business expertise, is dedicated to your success. Our growth-focused service offerings, events and content are designed to help you address today's most important management issues and inspire creativity with your print business.

"It reminds us that true enrichment comes from looking out for others."

Service requires adaptability and innovation as the landscape changes. We are so proud of the platform we have built because we have seen how it works for you. Events like EDgag Live and Amplify offer the chance to see possibilities and engage with others. And our commitment content provides knowledge and motivation to help you serve your clients better than ever.

As you endeavor to achieve the business of your dreams, I can't help but think that part of the recipe of your success will be the joy that comes from the marketing service that you provide. And while we have been immersed in a hyper-individualistic world, true connection is what is missing. So, when you can forego self in the servitude of others, you are truly living the dream.

I am bullish on the future, and it gives me great pleasure to watch our team serve you. It reminds us that true enrichment comes from looking out for others. We are continuing to keep our ears open to better understand and craft the kind of tools that will aid you in the future. Please feel free to share your thoughts with the team. In the meantime, enjoy another fantastic issue of Leading Print. In an effort to serve the progressive printer, our cover story, "First Impressions," reveals how Parkland Direct is serving brands in the most impactful way. In another feature, "Sizzle," we discuss how to sell the value of print. With other content dedicated to capital investment and design agency feedback, this issue is chock full of content that will help enable your dreams. Enjoy.

All the best,



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Adam Goldman

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FALL 2022

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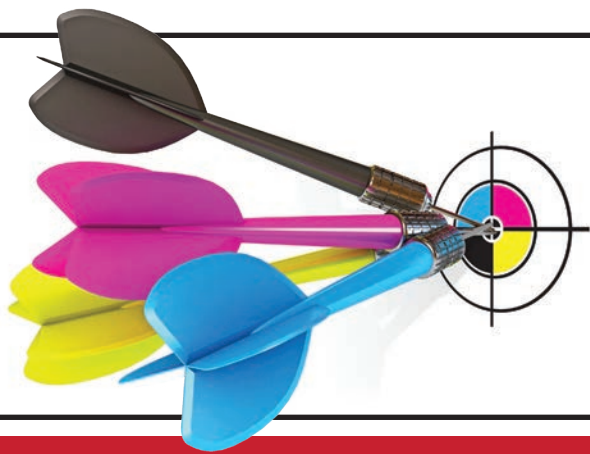
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REGISTRATION MARKS

BUMPY RIDE

Gartner survey of 405 CMO's warns marketers to get prepared

- ▶ Marketing budgets climbed to 9.5 percent of total company revenue this year, up from 6.4 percent in 2021.
- ▶ 70 percent of respondents reported their budgets had increased this year.
- ▶ 87 percent reported that they'd met or exceeded their 2021 goals.
- ▶ However, by mid-June, the majority (75 percent) believed that inflation will have a negative impact on their strategy.

Customer Journey Taking Multiple Paths

Study Shows "offline" marketing channels in the mix

In 2020 and 2021, CMOs moved their budgets to online channels in response to COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. As Western Europe and North America relaxed pandemic protocols, customer journeys recalibrated, funds flowed back to offline channels, and CMOs made the shift from digital-first to hybrid multichannel strategies.

When CMOs were asked to report the proportion of their 2022 budget allocated to online and offline channels, online channels took the largest share (56 percent). However, offline channels account for almost half of the total available budget—a more equitable split than in recent years.



BY THE NUMBERS

Print shipments and morale up

JUNE 2022 SHIPMENTS

\$6.98

BILLION

Best June since 2019

MAY 2022 SHIPMENTS

\$6.96

BILLION

JANUARY TO JUNE
SHIPMENTS FOR 2022

\$40.73

BILLION

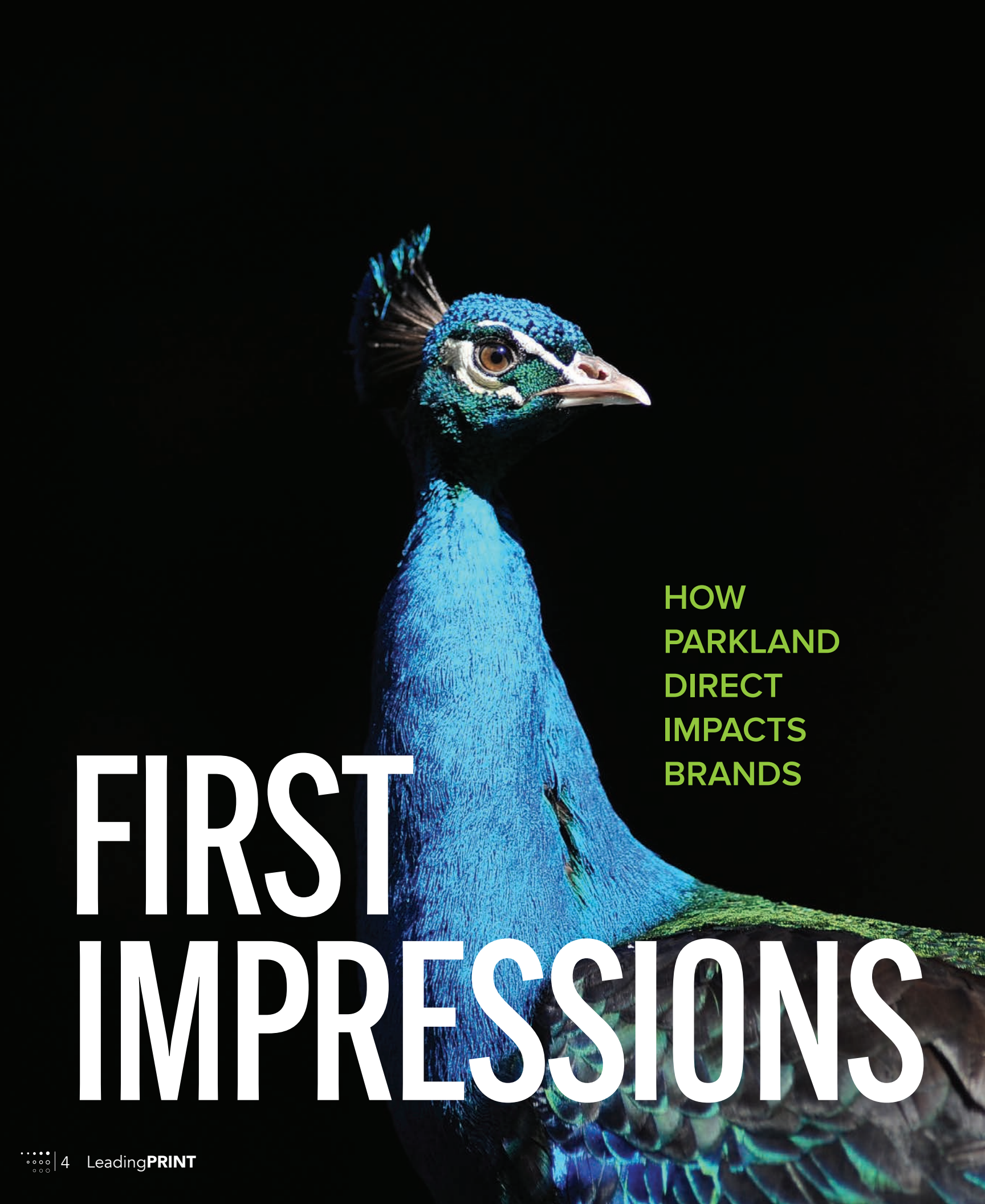
JANUARY TO JUNE
SHIPMENTS FOR 2021

\$40.55

BILLION



Source: WhatTheyThink



HOW
PARKLAND
DIRECT
IMPACTS
BRANDS

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

For our clients, the envelope expresses who and what they are as a brand. It is the initial opportunity to capture a consumer's imagination, making it vital that the envelope represents their brand well. If designed and executed correctly, an envelope demands attention, gives messaging that stands out from the crowd, and creates a lasting impression with anyone who touches it.

Creating a physical touch point establishes a sense of ownership with people. And when crafted in the right way, the envelope will grab attention and start to build trust—thereby increasing the value of your brand. Unlike many other marketing channels, direct mail has the unique ability to tell consumers they are a priority.

Building a positive brand image takes time, thoughtfulness and effort. And it's hard. In today's world, it is so easy for consumers to get distracted by the non-stop influx of emails, videos and social media. Did you know that according to a study by the eyecare company Wantlens, 93.5% of adults spend more than two hours a day using a digital device on average, with 70.1% using them for more than five hours a day?

With statistics like these, it is no wonder that it's difficult to get your brand into the mix.

Using an envelope with a creative approach and personal touch allows brands to stand above all the other noise. An eye-catching direct mail package with a unique presentation lets consumers know that they are more than just an alert on a device by giving them something that must be touched and physically opened, which is a marketing experience like no other.

According to an Epsilon/SmallBizGenius study, 59% of consumers say they enjoy getting mail from brands about new products, and 42.2% of people who receive direct mail read the messaging. Even in today's fast-paced, never-ending thrust of technology, direct mail has risen to become a top-tier marketing channel.



By Clint Seckman

"Making envelopes that get opened is what we do. If your organization's response rate is not what it should be, allow us to use our creative, exclusive envelopes to help you successfully reach your direct mail goals."

At Parkland Direct, we are passionate about our craft—always looking ahead to find innovative ways for our clients to get the most out of their direct mail campaigns through dynamic, interactive envelopes. Founded in 1978 as a high-quality litho print and envelope manufacturer, we offer extensive experience in foiling, embossing and specialty coatings. We are now vertically integrated with the latest UV-litho printing technology, embellishments, and high-speed envelope converting equipment available.

With all production aspects under one roof, we can manufacture litho-envelopes on a large scale with a quick time-to-market. In today's continually evolving landscape, having this one-of-a-kind manufacturing platform provides optimal workflow. And we do not outsource any production, which helps us improve delivery times and control quality.

We are tenacious about continually refining and improving our processes. This mindset has enabled us to implement embellishments to direct mail much more efficiently than ever before. Value-adding embellishments (e.g., foiling, embossing, specialty coatings, scent, fluorescent inks, etc.), which already are proven to work exceptionally well in packaging and labels, can now be adopted for envelopes in large-volume direct mail.

Consumers fixate on branded print with embellishments, such as foil, for 50% longer than print without embellishments, according to "The Impact of

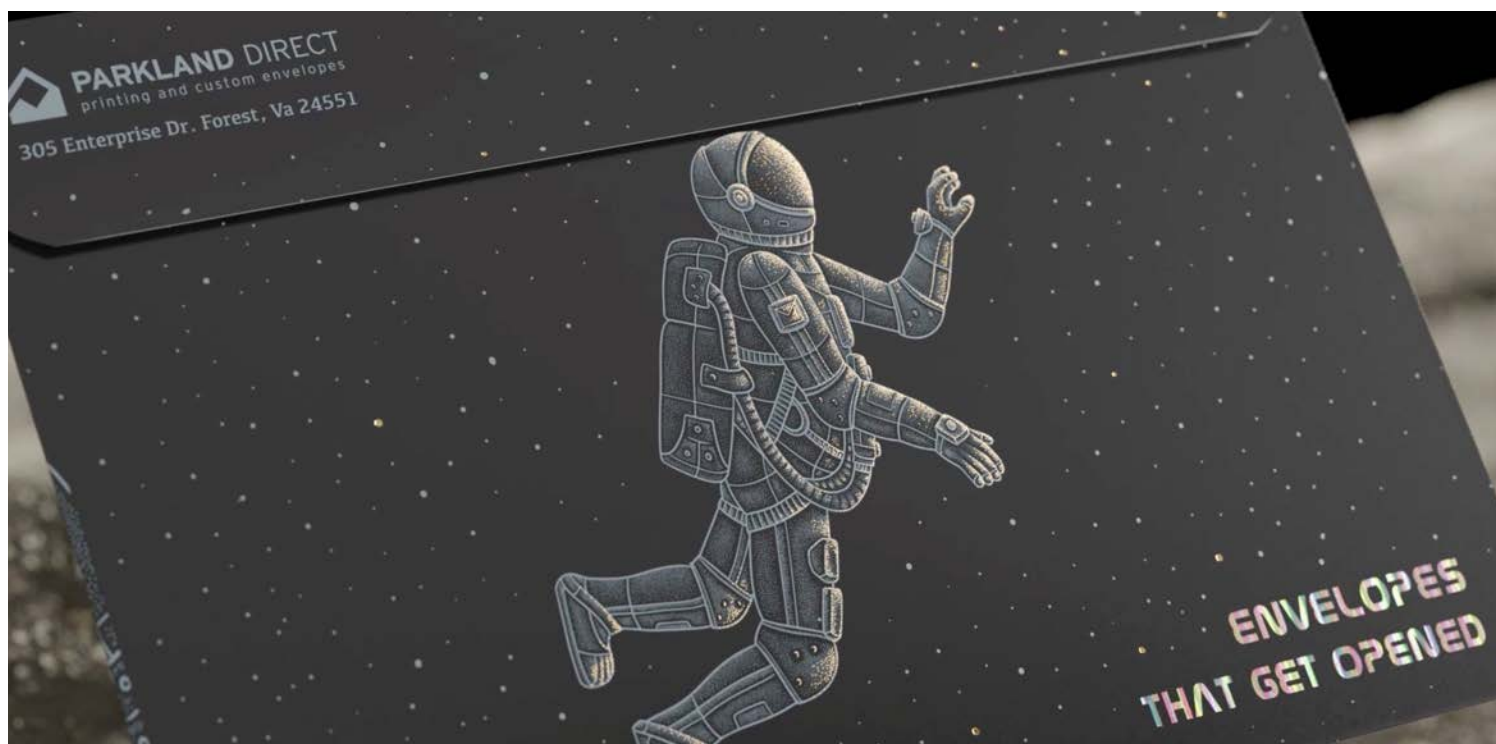
High-Visibility Enhancements on Shelf Presence: A Second Study," conducted by the Sonoco Institute of Packaging Design and Graphics at Clemson University, in partnership with R. Andrew Hurley's research program. This creates that vital "tipping point" to have a consumer open the envelope or not. And with no limits on embellishments to represent your brand, ours is a process unlike any other.

"Building a positive brand image takes time, thoughtfulness and effort. And it's hard."

To build on this passion and show other creative minds what is possible with print and direct mail, we started a free monthly mailing campaign in the first quarter of 2020 to showcase a variety of the trendiest direct mail pieces.

Each month, our customers get a firsthand look at the latest and greatest envelope ideas, complete with attention-grabbing embellishments (embossing, foiling, specialty coatings, augmented reality and more)—all of which can be produced in large volume.

The campaign initially started as a counter to the restrictions of the pandemic, which limited our travel and in-house visits. It gave us a way to engage with our existing clients and present to prospective ones by connecting in a non-obtrusive way through direct





mail. This campaign also enables us to educate and inspire potential customers on the capability of direct mail envelopes.

Also, by designing and producing the envelopes for this campaign ourselves, we continually build on our knowledge, which allows us to share expert advice and guidance with our clients on the latest print and embellishments that best represent and highlight their brands.

Even as we continue to carve our path in the direct mail world, we remain respectful of the power of what digital marketing represents. Our approach moving forward continues to marry the two mediums—a boundless partnership in the world of brand representation.

Direct mail and digital marketing complement each other perfectly, with direct mail being a fantastic driver toward digital. In a recent Sappi study, "The Science of Touch," 87% of people were influenced to make an online purchase as a direct result of receiving mail. These are reasons why we combine both channels in our monthly mailing campaigns and encourage our clients to do the same.

While production capabilities are important, ultimately, it is the end product that matters. The envelope is how our clients' brands are represented, which is why we make such a firm commitment to research, testing and the development of new technologies. Knowing what will work for large-volume direct mail while being both cost-effective and timely is critical.

Research enables our production team to push for higher outputs with fewer resources. Testing gives us the knowledge to share that information with our clients as to what works and what doesn't in a large-scale production environment. And adopting new technologies allows us to offer a wider variety of creative features.

Making envelopes that get opened is what we do. If your organization's response rate is not what it should be, allow us to use our creative, exclusive envelopes to help you successfully reach your direct mail goals. Parkland's process is unlike any other, with no limits on embellishments to represent your brand. Dynamic and engaging envelopes are excellent for enhancing any brand's marketing strategy and generating new business opportunities.

In a world of first impressions, we strive to make the most impactful envelopes to represent our clients' brands. Our goal has always been to push the boundaries of what can be achieved with direct mail envelopes while still being fully producible in large volumes. 🌵

Clint Seckman is co-owner and President of Parkland Direct. A G7 Master Printer that specializes in large volume production of high quality, litho-printed envelopes. By eliminating much of the inefficiencies associated within the industry, Parkland Direct has developed the fastest and most efficient manufacturing process for envelopes. As a result, they offer quick turns for direct mail envelopes including: enhancements such as foiling, embossing, and specialty coatings.



THE BUCK STOPS HERE

THE CHALLENGE OF CAPITAL INVESTMENT

**Efficiency. Capability.
Features and add-ons.** When it comes to the variables that help commercial printers set their capital investment expenditures, those are some of the ones that Oregon Printing Communications focuses on.

When you get right down to it, Mike Green, Manager of the Dayton, Ohio, printer says the decisions surrounding investments center on how you can help your customers impact their message.

"If I consistently do this right, then the competitive edge will occur as a result of the research, and thus worth the investment."

**— Chris Wallace, Owner/CEO,
Performance Print Services**

For efficiency, how will a piece of equipment or software help you do something more efficiently? Will it decrease the number of touches or the amount of time we need to work on something? Does it add automation to a manual process? How will it help our customer? Does this allow us to have more flexibility in production for cross-training and multiple operators?

For capability, is this a capability we don't currently have? Will it add value to what our customers are trying to accomplish (allow them to better get their message/story out, attract new business, create interest or excitement about whatever they are trying to communicate, etc.)? Does this new investment allow us to offer a more useful solution to our customer? Does it move us into a marketplace that our customers are interested in? Will it allow us to offer a service we don't currently offer?

"Making a capital investment can be daunting," Green admits. "For us, we go through several steps before making any investments. The discovery process is extremely important."

One of the first things the Oregon Printing Communications team does is have conversations with its customers. These conversations start to sort out if there is something its customers are looking for (a service or capability) it doesn't currently offer. In the end, the Oregon Printing team is trying to make things easier for everyone involved.

"It's really about doing the research," Green says. "Going to shows, digging around on the internet, checking with peer groups, sitting in webinars. All of these are steps in the process when we look at a new capital investment. There's examining hard data—all of the nuts and bolts that determine whether or not a capital investment makes sense."

And in between the ROI, equipment and service options, budgets, etc., comes the fact that your decision must not only be warranted, but correct. "The biggest risk of a capital investment is that it doesn't add value to the customer or increase efficiency," Green says. "If it doesn't do either one, or both of those things, then you have probably wasted the dollars that could have gone to

something that adds one or both of those things."

As a print shop that recently moved out of offset printing and has gone totally digital, Oregon Printing Communications has seen the shift from more paper, longer runs and less efficiency to shorter, personalized, more targeted marketing that reaches a customer's target in new and more personal ways. As an extension of its customer's team, it is more a partner and less a supplier.

For example, by moving more toward the front end of projects and partnering with clients (instead of just asking for the printing), the Oregon Printing Communications team finds the need for new software and digital solutions to help get their clients' message out across multiple channels and media.

THE DECISION IS THE DECISION

If you ask Chris Wallace why his company makes the capital investments it makes, the answer is the customer every time. The owner and CEO of Performance Print Services says every capital investment his Durham, North Carolina, company has made has been predicated on the premise that the customers needed it to make this investment.

"If the answer is yes, then I consider cost, potential additional labor and ROI," Wallace says.

The easier equation is that any investment—and the decision to approach it—has to make sense. For example, Performance Print outsourced its wide-format work for five years, each year watching as the volume of work increased. "It made sense to begin the research to bring a wide-format in house,"



Wallace recalls. "Then, it was simply a matter of compiling financial data that would support whether or not this was a sound decision."

Not unlike any decision on any front, the obvious risk is the financial burden capital investments can have on a company. That's why Wallace spends a significant amount of time crunching numbers to make sure the justification is there. "If I consistently do this right, then the competitive edge will occur as a result of the research, and thus worth the investment."

"Going to shows, digging around on the internet, checking with peer groups, sitting in webinars. All of these are steps in the process when we look at a new capital investment."

— Mike Green, Manager,
Oregon Printing Communications



The advice is as simple as it is straightforward: Analyze the work you are doing to make sure it is efficient from a production and cost standpoint. If you are able to gain efficiency that will increase productivity, you can proceed with a further cost analysis. "My earliest example of this was adding a creaser during our first year in business so that my business partner didn't have to hand-crease brochures," Wallace says. "That investment has paid major dividends."

Furthermore, Wallace recommends taking a closer look at what you are outsourcing. Are you doing so much of that work that it might make sense to bring it in house? It is important to take the time to investigate the pros and cons and the cost analysis to help answer that question.

As the industry steamrolls ahead, continually adding innovative technological opportunities to increase the areas of efficiency and capability, today's printers have other areas to watch, particularly staffing. For example, while Performance Print has a strong production team, Wallace sees a gap in production talent in the industry.

"I think we need to devote more resources to recruiting the next generation of production operators," he says. "Forging relationships with technical colleges and vocational schools to help educate instructors and students is vitally important for our industry's future."

A blip in the next generation entering the industry as others age out means the need to accurately build your equipment portfolio is critical. "Technology is changing so quickly that as a company, if you fall behind, it's hard to catch up," Green says. "You have to find ways to automate as much as possible and to increase efficiency. With workforce demands, shortages in paper/supplies and inflation, it's imperative that your business be as efficient and automated as possible."

And, as printers head into the next frontier of print production and economics, the need to invest will always be the next decision on deck. ❦



EVANGELIZING PRINT

Creatives weigh in on why print uplifts

There has always been a great love of print design among creatives. Over time, however, there are less people designing for print, which has led to a shortage of people who can do it well. We sat down with Bart Caylor, President at Caylor Solutions in Indianapolis, Terri Price-Deep, Business Development Leader at Millcraft in Columbus, Ohio, and Monica Grier, Creative Director at The Quantum Group in Chicago to discuss the merits of print and why it matters in the current design landscape.

What are the biggest differences in designing for print and designing for web?

Caylor: With a background as a print designer myself, I made a switch to web very early in my career (first website in 1994). The challenge is understanding the dynamics of the medium: the strengths and challenges of each. Similar to print, there are both limitations and opportunities with interactive web design. Understanding what you can do is critical; just like understanding what the interaction between paper, inks, varnishes and other techniques is so vital to a print project. Design, whether it's print or web, is understanding the boundaries and pushing the edges.

Price-Deep: The biggest thing to consider when designing for print or web is how the audience will interact with your design. Keep in mind that printed material offers a more tactile and sensory experience, while digital is more about navigation and user experience.

"Design, whether it's print or web, is understanding the boundaries and pushing the edges."

— Bart Caylor, President, Caylor Solutions

Images are another key factor to consider as the resolution for web is lower (i.e. 72 pixels per inch). In print design, to achieve a sharp image 300 pixels per inch is normally required. A big factor in print design is the equipment that will be used to produce it. Marketers must be aware of the variety of presses and how that impacts the campaign.

Grier: Tangibility makes an impact. I love the touch and texture of a printed book, package, mailer. Research shows that we retain more information when we use more senses vs. visual only. By touching a piece, we are literally and mentally connecting with it, and we remember it.

What does it mean that the vehicle (paper) becomes part of the message?

Caylor: We are limited in the vehicle in any design project. Whether print (paper), screen (web/video), or experience, we are limited by the boundaries that the vehicle and medium provide. We have to push to the edge. The greatest designs have always been done within limitations.

Price-Deep: This is one of my favorite topics. My philosophy is that choosing the right paper is part of the design process. As an example: If you are selling chrome furniture or guitars, you might want to use a coated paper to have the chrome pop more on the sheet and emulate the look of the actual product. Jewelry is another example which is typically printed on coated sheets to capture the shine of the gems or metals.

But if you are printing a sustainability report, you might choose softer photography and go with a more natural uncoated sheet, or even a slightly textured or recycled fiber paper to evoke the feel of the earth. Using textures to match the imagery is a smart way to help convey your message or create a mood. You can create texture by choosing a textured paper stock or using specialty print techniques. Many times a piece of mail that's touch is so unique is opened it first or saved it a bit longer.

Caylor: I think a well-planned printed piece enables us to retain the information. I've saved beautiful pieces over the years, just because I love the substrate they are printed on. Seeing my work on a mailer, truck, billboard, an ad, is very gratifying.

How has the relationship between graphic artists and print changed over the past few years?

Caylor: When print was the primary way of communicating marketing messages, designers and graphic artists were more familiar and intimate in understanding all the aspects of what could be possible. With the introduction of so many other forms of communication (web, social media, animation, interactive, video, etc.) designers have had to become more diverse, which often makes one a "Jack of all trades" rather than a master of one. We are all becoming more art directors than true designers and graphic artists.

Price-Deep: Prior to Covid-19, we started to see

renewed interest in printed materials as the younger generations found it more authentic than the digital medias which they have been bombarded with all their lives. In the last year with supply chain challenges, print has seen a decline due to necessity. People tend to trust print. How many times have you heard we need to get that in writing? That's not typically an electronic transaction.

"People tend to trust the printed word versus an email messaging. People react differently with print."

— Terri Price-Deep, Business Development Leader, Millcraft

Grier: Unfortunately, Covid has forced more digital design, and less print, due to paper shortages, budgets, staff, art departments reduced or furloughed. As printers, we're "holding the hands" or mentoring those people remaining, as they may not be trained in what is required for a successful print project. The all-time favorite printers' mantra: Print is not dead.

What are some symptoms that come from "digital fatigue?"

Caylor: Going to the same wells for inspiration. Limiting our experimental nature. Staying in the safe areas. Designers need to understand how to better jump between the mediums and understand more tools like QR codes, NFTs, and other technology that can span between print and digital.

Price-Deep: Our brains tend to work harder in virtual interactions. We become hyper-focused and overstimulated. It's harder to find a central focus and we are often distracted by faulty audio and video. Since early last year, studies show that people are logging off more, leaving social media in some cases, and returning to print books for a relief from the constant screen time.

Maybe I'm biased being in the paper industry, but I often sigh when restaurants have a QR code menu. I long to put my phone away at

mealtime and enjoy my friends and family. Visual noise, as well as long exposure to screen time, can contribute to lower back pain, eye strain and fatigue.

Grier: We are inundated and it's exhausting! Fast and convenient isn't always better. It has compressed our attention spans, compromised our imagination, and decimated our thought processing. I am an avid reader, and enjoy an intriguing mystery or historical fiction, and who doesn't love a dishy beach read? Our imagination and inspiration kicks into gear when we read the words (on paper!) or see a masterpiece at an art gallery (in person!). Our brains need to solve problems, get fully immersed in the message, to fully appreciate the writer's/artist's craft.

Why are print campaigns so effective?

Caylor: They have what I like to call the "kitchen counter" effect. Digital, by nature, lives in the ether. Print is a physical object that takes up space in the world. If a print piece is designed with value and quality, there is a natural inclination to hold on to it, give it more room to explore, discover, and return to. That is the power of print.

Price-Deep: Number one, print lasts longer. People tend to trust the printed word vs. email messaging. People react differently with print. It's more tangible and is less likely to be skimmed like digital messaging. Studies show that children learn better from books, and information retention is stronger. Direct mail, for example, has a higher open rate than email or other online interaction. People appreciate direct mail from brands they buy. The more it's personalized, the higher the response rate.

Grier: It takes 6-11 touches to get a response. Repetition is effective, but a good design, printed on paper—especially if it's personalized—will prompt the recipient to take pause, consider the offer/message, do their research, and ultimately take action.

Finally, there seems to be a gap with educating designers on print. What advice do you have to close that gap?

Caylor: Back to training designers more on the technology and what is available. In my training, I was encouraged to start with sketches and

pencil drawings before starting on digital designs using the computer. I still think those basics are important, but we also need to understand the technology and how it can apply to the physical world elements. This will continue to be critical as tools like the metaverse gain more attention, and design has the risk of being commoditized with the tools like Adobe Express and Cava. Designers have to understand more than just how to create compelling design. They have to hone their craft to create emotion and tell stories through content. Design is a language for that.

"By touching a piece, we are literally and mentally connecting with it, and we remember it."

— Monica Grier, Creative Director,
The Quantum Group

Price-Deep: I think the challenge is that print technology evolves so rapidly. It's one thing to teach designers to design for traditional print, but to design for all the various types of printing processes can be overwhelming. For example, layouts for a sheet-fed printing project are very different from designing for packaging or wide-format printing. There's a lot to know. Designers should get the basics in school but be willing to spend time with printers and learn the nuances of the various print techniques available to them. I have often thought printers should hold workshops to help customers navigate how to build the best files for their equipment platforms. Doing this would also generate some interest in techniques that a designer may not have realized are available to them.

Grier: I believe every designer should be educated in prepress. (Latest software, font management, color separations, trapping, proofing, CMYK, vector art creation, etc.) as part of their design degree, internship, career. I spent several years at a prepress house. What a plethora of information! By understanding the mechanics of the printing process, I successfully create clean and properly assembled files for the production end. 🍷

Out of the Shadows

THE KEYS TO DEVELOPING
THE NEXT GENERATION
PRINT WORKFORCE

Many print and graphic communications companies are seeing significant improvement in customer demand for printed products. While this could be a sign of clear sailing ahead, the reality looks far more choppy. Historic labor challenges are depressing business growth and optimism, leading to reduced operational efficiency and margins.



Our industry's labor shortages stretch well beyond the print industry, touching all levels of manufacturing. But, adding to the burden for print service providers, our industry is underestimated, misunderstood, and even unknown to many career seekers. Print careers are not generally considered like other comparable industries or trades. Even those currently serving within the print production workforce often lack a clear path to advancing their career.

Print is flying under the radar of young people today, driven by a narrative that is weighted in the wrong facts. While a struggling postal system, a sea change in news consumption, and the growth of digital advertising are well-documented facts, they are nowhere representative of the enormous impact print manufacturing has on the global economy, on our local workforces, and on our everyday lives.

The pandemic brought out of the shadows the significant role print has in our daily life. The printing of logistics, packaging, labeling, health instructions, safety-related signage and much more literally kept us safe and our economies moving. The importance of print in an integrated marketing and visual communications campaign was heightened in a world where "touching" customers became increasingly difficult. While digital channels are critical to every marketer's communication plan, not factoring in print is proving too often to be a deal-breaker.

To meet customer demand for printed products, we must first solve our industry's workforce development crisis. The average age for press operators is closing in on 60. Record numbers of employees are leaving the workforce. The decline of print and graphic communications' school programs continues, unabated. These sobering facts make the recruitment, retention, and training of our future workforce the most critical set of long-term issues facing our industry.

We must widen our search to attract a more diverse audience of career seekers. This will only be accomplished by creating foundational changes in the recruiting, hiring, and training practices of our businesses. Business leaders that empower their human and financial resource executives to create and implement a strategy of retention, culture, and innovation will be the most effective in employing the required workforces of tomorrow.

To inspire parents, students, teachers, and all career advocates to the opportunities of print, we must find ways to share how print is more than they know. Print and graphic communications jobs are high-tech, highly-skilled, creative, and innovative. As an industry, we need to better support all print stakeholders in sharing the real-world opportunities of print careers. Changing the public perception gap of print is critical to meeting our industry's future hiring needs.

Retaining current workers in today's environment is a critical part of any workforce development strategy. While companies scramble to get work out the door, employers can lose sight of the need to ensure their production employees have a clear path to advancing their career and pay through improved skills-training. Whether an entry-level employee or a long-time professional, effective training requires more than gaining access to self-paced videos. A key to transforming the notion of training to one of learning is addressing the realities that we all learn differently. While some can learn at their own pace, others need more oversight and support. Our industry must support education that is competency-based, task-driven, and experiential in ways that actually cements the instruction.

To meet our industry's workforce challenges, we must empower all stakeholders to share the understanding and awareness of the print industry, awaken potential career seekers to exciting and rewarding careers in print, and establish respected industry accreditations in our most needed disciplines using effective methodologies that will actually result in inspiring the next generation of print professionals. ❖❖❖

About the Author

Steve Bonoff is a co-founder of Print Industries, a national thought leadership and workforce development organization serving the advanced manufacturing sectors of print and graphic communications, offering industry advocacy, career guidance, and experiential learning to inspire, recruit, and train our next generation workforce. More at www.printindustries.org or Steve can be reached at sbonoff@pilearning.org.



Selling the
value of print
in a digital world

SIZ ZLE



For everyone still making their mark in the print game, Leon Dombrowsky has a word of advice. To make his point, the President of AccuCraft Imaging summons his inner James Bond. Having passion for what you do—in this case, delivering the passion and promise of printed goods to people who depend on them to tell their stories—means you have to have swagger. You have to express a refined aura of self-confidence in your identity and the place you hold in the marketing world.

As a printer in today's ever-involving, always creative print landscape, you have all those Bond-like gadgets and technology needed to make what you do sizzle. You possess the seasoned wisdom of a company that has been through the ups and downs, and ins and outs of what it takes to survive in today's digitally focused landscape.

And like James Bond, you have to know the villain, i.e., the opponent you face. In this case, today's consumers are being bombarded with a strong dose of digital. For example, according to a study commissioned by Vision Direct, the average American is expected to spend 44 years of his life staring at a screen. On any given day, people spend an average of five hours staring at a laptop, four and a half hours watching TV, four and a half hours glued to their smartphone and more than three hours gaming.

What's a printer to do? Dombrowsky recommends going with what you know—and why it works. A successful marketing campaign should consist of a strategic allocation of digital and print. Neglecting to include print as an integral part of any marketing plan will significantly increase the risk of a campaign missing its mark. "Whether that's in your above-the-line or below-the-line strategy, it's an added touchpoint that is tangible. Digital and print tactics can be thought of two-fold. We capture consumers both visually and viscerally. Print enhances your digital tactics by adding a tier of something thoughtful."

More than anything else—and the point all printers must dwell on—is that perhaps the No. 1 advantage print has over other media is that it truly is so visceral. One of the many things we have come to better understand and appreciate over the past few challenging years is that people desire and need personal connections and interactions. Print, unlike digital, provides a greater sense of one-on-one connection.

"If your target is someone who doesn't value print, my experience is that showing them something from someone else in their space who is using print successfully makes a difference."

— Bill Gillespie, VP of Sales, Bennett Graphics

"Print can immortalize moments in time, from memorable events to art that makes you feel something," Dombrowsky says. "There are multiple studies out there demonstrating how the synapses in the brain fire off and process things differently in digital vs. print. It shouldn't be ignored that print has, and always will, make you feel something."

The message is gaining traction. During the first half of 2022, the United States Postal Service (USPS) launched the Tactile, Sensory & Interactive (TSI) Promotion, a discount promotional program for direct mailings offering a tactile, sensory or interactive component. Examples included adding texture with embossing or crinkly paper, visual effects with holographic paper or paper infused with scents. Another promotion offered direct mail discounts for businesses that incorporate advanced technology in their mailings, such as video in print.

According to Globe Newswire's "Direct Mail Advertising Global Market Opportunities and Strategies to 2031" report, the global direct mail advertising market is projected to grow from \$42,799.0 million in 2021 to \$46,330.1 million in 2026 at a rate of 1.6%. The market is then expected to grow at a CAGR of 0.7% from 2026 and reach \$47,938.3 million in 2031.

"In our data-driven world, print necessitates having measurability," Dombrowsky says. "Luckily, digital peeps are well-aware of the significance print has as a complementary tactic, and have delivered ways for the print industry to adapt. With the refreshed use of QR codes throughout the pandemic, we've been able to quantify our efforts. In addition, landing page visits, UTM and coupon codes, call tracking, and personalized direct mail campaigns with clean lists are all easy solutions to tracking ROI."

Taking direct aim

After 44-plus years in the printing business, Bill Gillespie has tons of stories about how print helped connect the message a brand wanted to tell with the community it serves. Many of these stories came under his watchful eye as VP of Sales for Bennett Graphics.





There was a brand selling vodka. The target was restaurants and bars that were not carrying the brand, so the printer built a kit in a FedEx box that delivered a sample bottle and a clever story. Or the salt substitute brand that wanted to target food processors around the world. The printer delivered a bag of crackers and a bag of chips along with the value argument to decision-makers in 19 countries. Or you could take the example of the hotel that was looking for unique ways to train its employees. Bennett built a board game that required employees to play. The game put them into situations that would randomly occur during the day when they were interacting with guests. The employees were able to learn to navigate the desired responses.

"Only print could do any of this," Gillespie says. "I think the industry should be evangelizing print by sharing these kinds of successful stories and case studies with prospects. Leaders and reps should be showing examples of how print solved a problem that no other media could. The examples would be different depending on the company's space (packaging, direct mail, catalogs, dimensional graphics, etc.), but the process or goal would be the same. Package and show how print solved a problem and helped the buyer's business accomplish goals."

In what has been Gillespie's longtime message, he says the tools for this are easy. It involves direct mail, hosted events, social media blogging, face-to-face calls with samples and/or virtual "lunch and learn" style sharing sessions. "If your target is someone who doesn't value print, my experience is that showing them something from someone else in their space who is using print successfully makes a difference. Stakeholders see problems they face being solved by a competitor and they instantly relate. It doesn't make an instant sale, but it moves you along the journey. People simply learn better when you're talking about their world and not yours."

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Today, print has become the perfect complement in a digital world—conversations that can become cool object lessons. Think of it like a golfer with a bag full of clubs for each situation. Print is one of those clubs. It works alongside social media. It works with PURLs. It can send you to a website or follow up on an inquiry alongside an email.

"For me, as a sales rep, my confidence in print was evident in every call or email," Gillespie says. "My prospects knew I thought print was the best club in the bag. They also knew I knew it wasn't the only club in the bag. To be hired, I had to be flexible and be part of something bigger than just my own deliverable."

Show them the sizzle and the value follows. ☑☑☑

Q&A

ERIC VESSELS, PRESIDENT & CHIEF REVENUE OFFICER, WHATTHEYTHINK.COM

STEWARDSHIP: INDUSTRY LEADER IS HERE TO HELP

Eric Vessels is the President of WhatTheyThink and a serial online entrepreneur with a focus on building online engagement in niche content-driven communities. Since 2002, he has played a key role in the development and growth of member-driven news and analysis site WhatTheyThink.com, focused on the printing, packaging, publishing, display graphics and textiles industries.

With the recent announcement that AP Tech acquired WhatTheyThink, there is a new level of energy for the top-of-mind source for industry information. We sat down with Eric to get his perspective on our industry and what he sees as its biggest issues and opportunities.

Can you share a bit of your core philosophy and what guides your work?

My core philosophy can probably be summed up in something people have probably heard me say many times over the years: "Work hard, play hard." Like most things, this has evolved over the years. For many of my early working years that was it, but I would probably now qualify that by adding "be helpful." By asking how I can be helpful, both internally and externally, success follows. It's no longer as much about me as it is about my team and the larger community that we serve.

What is your mission at WhatTheyThink and how has it developed over time?

Our mission is to be the widely recognized leader in delivering industry content that informs, educates, and inspires the global printing community. I don't know that this has changed much over the years, but it has come into a much greater focus for us. I want us to be top of mind when the topic of industry learning comes up. I also want those who are familiar with us to

evangelize WhatTheyThink to others based upon our value and not hype. We've seen this over the years and it's my favorite thing. I'll never get tired of hearing "I love what you guys do."

What impresses you the most about the people of this industry?

They are resilient and, for the most part, are willing to help one another. The printing industry has been consolidating for some time now and there has been a tremendous amount of shake-up over the years. I'm impressed with the ability of the print community to adapt, improvise, and overcome the many challenges that have presented themselves. This happens most readily by cooperating and seeing the larger picture of the industry instead of a constant focus on one's own business or personal self-interests. This goes back to that core philosophy of "how can I help?"

What are you hearing are the top business challenges for printers?

In the short term, it is supply chain disruption and staffing issues. Those two are talked about the most right now. While the supply chain issues may indeed settle down some—and I'm hearing they are—this issue of how to get good people to do the work you need done will probably persist. It will take some creativity to overcome this issue. Again, adapt to overcome.

What do you think printers should be capitalizing on?

Their strengths. What do you do well? (Do you even know?) Do more of that. What do you suck at or is either hard or unprofitable? Stop doing that shit! Most importantly, you must capitalize on relationships and be more cooperative to gain new business. Ask what opportunities exist to work with other printing companies, consultants, or marketers.

Why are you bullish on our future?

If you read the 2022 version of our annual Printing Outlook report, you'll know that print

shipments haven't been all that bad with all things considered. The good news is that both survey respondent data and government data point to increased profitability overall. The printers who have survived found a way to insert higher margin offerings into the mix. We're seeing this in the digital embellishment space as new technology allows printers to add higher value offerings to their customers.



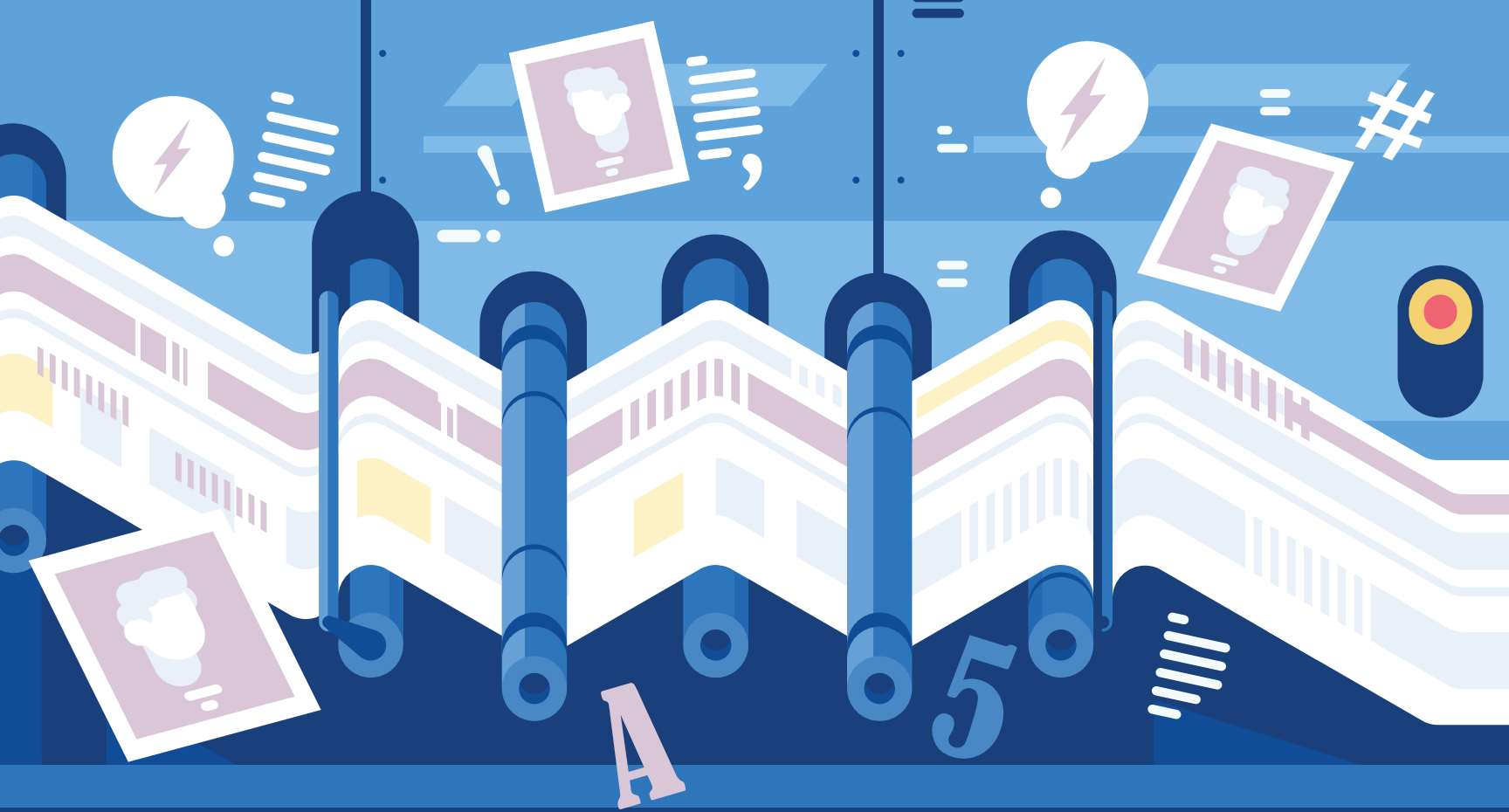
How should the industry be promoting the merits of print?

The industry should work closely together to promote the merits of print. Asked and answered. WhatTheyThink has always been willing to work with anyone whose mission it is to promote the merits of print in today's ever-changing digital communications landscape. Whatever works, we should all support that and get behind what is working and work together more instead of everyone trying to re-invent things—or worse, duplicating efforts. Call me. Let's find a way.

Your current favorite bourbon?

I like an Old Fashioned with rye because the spicier notes of a rye balance out the sweetness better than a bourbon, which tends to be on the sweeter side. My current favorite is Peerless. Pricey, but worth it. 🍷

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STATE OF PRINT

It's easy to assume that print marketing has lost its relevance in the digital era. As more and more consumers are trading traditional print materials for smartphones, tablets, and laptops, businesses are also moving their advertisements online. However, here are a few statistics that might convince you that print ads are still important.

70% of households with an income above \$100,000 are newspaper readers (Mansi Media, n.d.).

By combining print and digital ads, it will make online campaigns **400%** more effective (Top Media Advertising, n.d.).

95% of people under 25 years old read magazines (Top Media Advertising, n.d.).

Print readers usually spend **20** minutes or more with their publication in hand, while a typical visitor to a digital news site sticks around for less than five minutes (Heitman, n.d.).

Print ads require **21%** less cognitive effort to process (R.C. Brayshaw, 2020).

82% of consumers trust print ads the most when making a purchase decision (Burstein, 2017).

B2B SALES FUNNEL

UNAWARE

AWARE

INTEREST

DESIRE

ADOPTION



Customer's due diligence begins

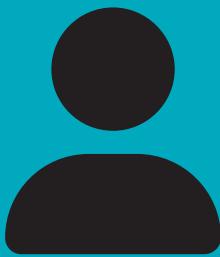
Customer's first contact with supplier

Customer purchase decision

TWO-THIRDS COMPLETE

when first human interaction takes place

WHY CONTENT WORKS



CUSTOMER
RETENTION



GENERATES
LEADS



COST
EFFECTIVE



BUILDS
TRUST

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CHANNELING CONTENT AND CONNECTIONS



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