

SPRING 2022

Leading **PRINT**

The many sides
of Think Patented

MULTI- FACETED

*The power of strategic influence • Benefits of direct mail
Selling print • The PSP vs. MSP debate*

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

THE ZONE

Have you ever become so consumed with a task that time flew by and you had a sense of satisfaction that couldn't be put into words? The idea that we could be so interested in an endeavor that we get lost in it is something that we all crave in our business and personal lives. In other words, most of us truly want to do what we do for the intrinsic satisfaction it brings.

As progressive print leaders, we need to cultivate a culture where we stop any compulsion to impress people. We cannot give them that power, but at the

same time, we cannot construe this as a license for self-indulgence or narcissism—there is enough of that to go around. A soulless quest for material rewards alone will not work. At this time, our industry demands the type of people who sincerely and authentically serve others.

The print community has been built upon the backs of people who work hard and believe that the consequences and the benefits of their actions are true. They never pretend to know more than they do and they have made lifelong learning part of their being. And while the world seems to have lost some of the essence of service, our community clings to it.

There's much to be done in this new climate, for sure. We must, however, follow our curiosities and remember that what we love defines us. This is a remarkable time to reconnect with what we have always loved and lose ourselves in the service of others. The irony is that when we let go of the rewards and focus on the zone of elite work, the results will astonish.

As our friends at Think Patented demonstrate, the world requires people who can come alive for their clients right now. And once they become the center of your existence, your offering can be as diverse as it needs to be. Check out the cover story to understand how one of your peers is becoming an integral part of their customers' business.

While you focus on getting in the zone, I want to encourage you to visit us at Amplify, an exhibition and educational program spotlighting the entire print finishing value chain. Join us on June 14-16, 2022 for this immersive three-day event at the Minneapolis Convention Center where you will take in a wonderful trade expo, technology demonstrations, and straight-talk seminars. Amplify will be a wonderful chance to learn how to enhance your offering and get in the zone.

Warmest wishes,

"This is a remarkable time to reconnect with what we have always loved and lose ourselves in the service of others."

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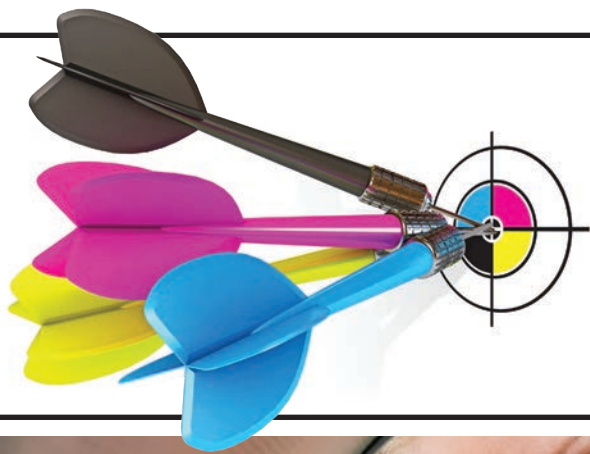
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REGISTRATION MARKS



73%

of American consumers say they prefer being contacted by brands via direct mail because they can read it whenever they want

Source: Epsilon

2022 IS SET TO BE A BIG YEAR OF CHANGE IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABILITY, AND NOWHERE WILL THIS BE MORE APPARENT THAN IN PACKAGING. WE ARE EXPECTING DATA-DRIVEN DECISIONS TO TAKE CENTER STAGE, WHICH IS A MUST, GIVEN THE HUGE VOLUMES OF PACKAGING IN TODAY'S HIGH-SPEED MARKETPLACES."

— Simon Buswell, sales & marketing director at Eco Flexibles, on sustainability packaging trends in 2022

RAVE REVIEWS

The impact of online consumer assessments

The customer is always right, right? Whether or not that's true, there's no denying the impact that customer reviews can have on a business. Positive online reviews essentially function as a digital word-of-mouth marketing method. Consumers use online reviews to choose, trust and understand businesses offering services.

Here's what they are saying:

88%

of consumers say they would be 'likely' or 'highly likely' to leave a review if the business went above and beyond to ensure they had an exceptional experience.

80%

of consumers say they would be 'likely' or 'highly likely' to leave a review if they initially had a negative experience that was turned into a very positive experience.

73%

of consumers say they would be 'likely' or 'highly likely' to leave a review if the business had a low average star rating and they didn't think it was deserved.

77%

of consumers say they would be 'likely' or 'highly likely' to leave a review if they knew that the business was fairly new.





MULTI-FACETED

The many sides of Think Patented



By David McNerney

I T IS A MINDSET WE DISCUSS OFTEN AT THINK PATENTED. IF YOU CAN OPEN UP YOUR MIND TO THE PROSPECT THAT EVERY OPPORTUNITY OFFERS, YOU CAN OPEN YOURSELF UP TO AN ENDLESS ARRAY OF POSSIBILITIES.

Think Patented is a forward thinking, “try to say yes,” high quality marketing execution company. Over the past 43-plus years, our ability to see all the opportunities around us continues to take us down a road of infinite possibilities.

While printing is—and always has been—at our core, we are not just about selling print.

Working closely and seamlessly with our clients, Think Patented is about accomplishing goals—making dreams a reality. Those efforts come in a variety of offerings and services, including offset, digital and wide format printing, mailing, fulfillment solutions, kit-packing, design services, promotional products and digital engagement solutions.

"OUR LEADERSHIP MINDSET SITS AT THE CRUX OF EVERYTHING WE DO. ALONG WITH BEING ABLE TO OFFER THE LATEST INNOVATIONS AND THINKING ABOUT WHAT OUR CUSTOMERS NEED, WE BECOME AN EXTENSION OF OUR CLIENTS' TEAMS."



All of this flies under the Think Patented banner—one workflow, one roof.

You do not have to look far to see just how much the power of innovation has changed our industry—the world in general. Innovation's transformative powers are evident in everything—and just about anything—we do today. It is in how we think, act and engage with our customers.

Being able to house this type of innovative thinking—that open-mindedness—helps us take the limits of human imagination to new and exciting levels. Working with Think Patented means you are working with a team that is open to different ideas, cultures, points of view, modes of expression and styles, and, most importantly, doing what is right.

Trust and integrity are the words that best sum up who and what we strive to be. We want our clients, our vendors, our employees and the community we serve to have complete trust

in what we say, what we do, how we do it and what we produce. Internally, we talk about trying to find the best and most efficient ways to say yes. That doesn't mean we say yes all the time. We understand that our customers have choices. But what it means is that we work hard not to give them a reason to go anywhere else.

Steve Jobs referred to the process as connecting the dots. "You can't connect the dots looking forward," he said, "you can only connect them looking backward. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future."

For us, it all goes back to that "one workflow, one roof" mentality. The concept is a combination of being forward thinking, as well as having a value proposition of really being a partner and trusted resource with everything that we offer. Everyone is resource strapped these days, so being able to get more done in less time has been a huge benefit to our clients.

"THINK PATENTED CONTINUES TO BE ON THE FOREFRONT OF WHERE THE INDUSTRY IS GOING. STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE IS WHERE OUR CUSTOMERS WANT US TO BE—AND HOW THEY WANT TO BE REACHED."

The Think Patented team is committed to being everything our clients need us to be—and more. If all we did was print, our clients might view us as a commodity, which leads to an endless dance of getting quotes from every printer you can find and find who can do it for less.

We are more than that. We provide solutions, such as custom marketing portals that integrate with their internal systems, sample programs with a drip campaign tied to it or automated/ personalized enrollment programs. These bring value to the companies and organizations we serve, thus becoming a partner—not a commodity.

The combination of all of our services, under one roof, is the key, including offerings like technology services, and our fulfillment and kit-packing capabilities—each of which continue to drive our success and growth. Being a marketing partner means you are more than just price.

KNOW WHO YOU ARE...

The way Think Patented evolved into this mindset started in 2006, when our managing partners, industry leaders Niels Winther and Ken McNerney, bought the company. Ahead of the curve of the changes that would come, Neils and Ken saw an industry ripe for transformation.

Their belief back then—like it remains today—was that print is not dead, nor dying. The secret to success is understanding how to mix it with the digital and social channels that continue to drive the way each of us engage. It continues to be the key to our growth and success.

And even more than that, Think Patented continues to be on the forefront of where the industry is going. Staying ahead of the curve is where our customers want us to be—and how they want to be reached.

Our leadership mindset sits at the crux of everything we do. Along with being able to offer the latest innovations and thinking about what our customers need, we become an extension of our clients' teams. Again, not just a printer, but a partner who is willing to listen, strategize, collaborate and perform.

So, when you think Think Patented, you think about a brand with the right content, messaging and education needed to be a trusted thought leader in an ever-changing landscape that needs leaders.

This is not a one-off mindset, but a daily endeavor.

When I think of the Think Patented way, I am reminded of the story about one of our clients that was struggling to hire people. We uncovered their dilemma during a meeting where we asked about their pain points. Located in a somewhat rural area, they needed, in essence, to fill 100 or so positions. Our team suggested they do a multitouch campaign to certain demographics—a demo of people within a 30-minute drive of their facility.

The campaign consisted of two direct mailings and our Mail360 solutions, which combines direct mail with email, social media and digital marketing. While they were resistant at first—as all their hiring has been via online channels only in recent years—they decided to give it a shot.

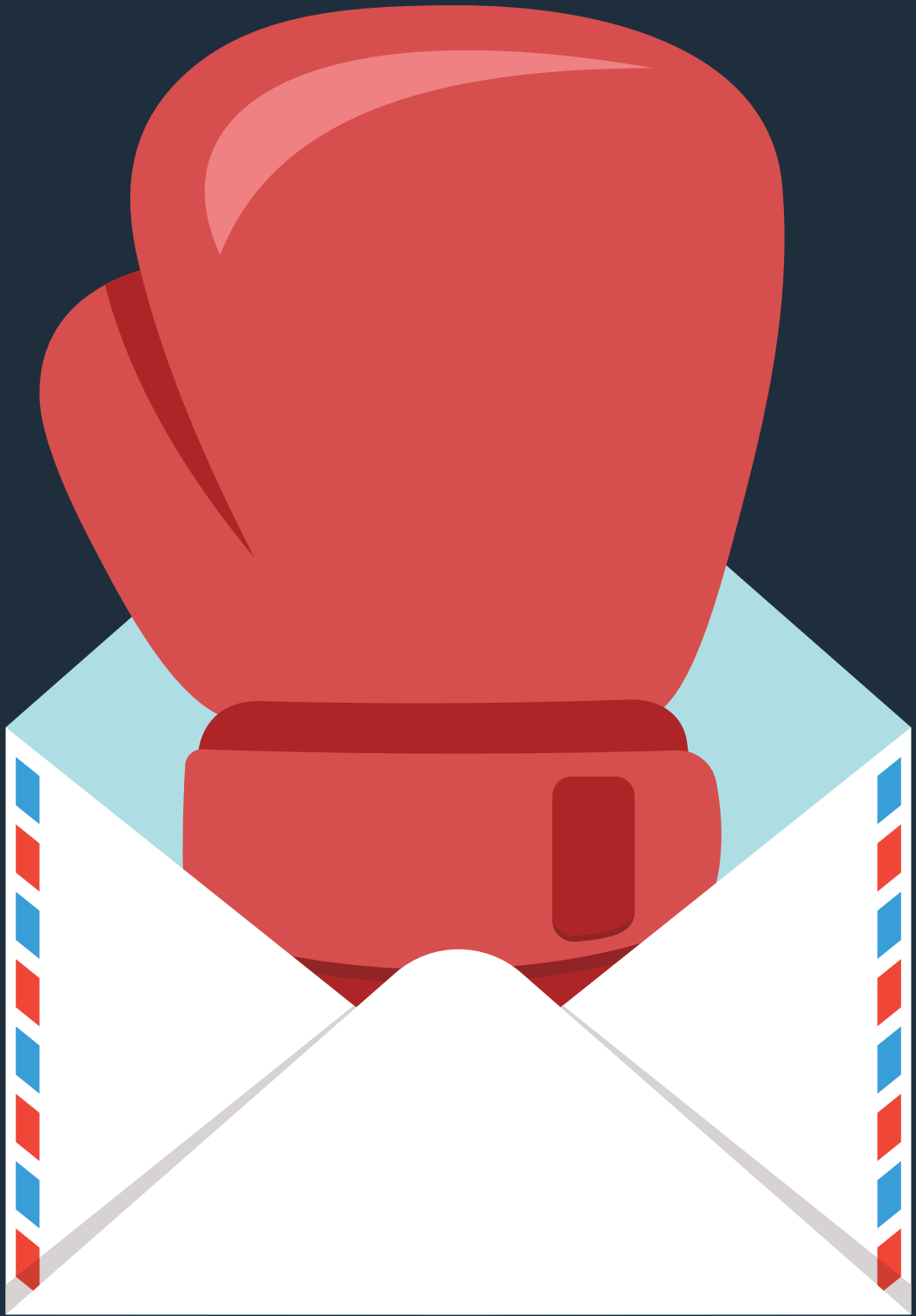
Within 30 days of the campaign ending, they had 148 applications and hired 22 people. They were elated. Because we were able to open up their minds to the possibilities, they trusted our judgment.

I don't know about you, but these are the kind of stories that get us excited about being in this industry. It all comes back to those key words: trust and integrity. A trusted partner, vendor, customer and employer are a pretty hard partnership to beat.

Open your mind up to the possibilities.

As Vice President of Sales & Marketing at Think Patented, David McNerney is responsible for the strategic direction, and daily management for sales and marketing. During his 13 years with Think Patented, he has helped the organization grow from \$13 million to \$22 million, helping lead the expansion into wide format printing, promotional products, design services and digital marketing solutions. Prior to joining Think Patented, McNerney held sales leadership positions in the technology sector. Additionally, he sits on the Board of Trustees, Executive and MarCom committees for the Dayton Chamber of Commerce, as well as a Board member for Dscope Americas.





DON'T CALL IT A COMEBACK

Why the benefits of direct mail are greater today than ever before

Just recently, Joe Holleman's 19-year-old daughter was complaining about going to the mailbox. The musings were something that Holleman, the Director of Marketing for Quantum Group, found more than a little interesting.

All I get is bills," his daughter said. "I miss the days when I would get an American Girl Doll or Lego magazine each month. That was the mail I wanted to get."

Holleman had to laugh. Whether his daughter realized it or not, she was introduced to direct mail years ago in the most memorable of ways—receiving things she liked with subtle incentives to dig deeper into relationship-building with a brand.

What a long, strange trip it has been for direct mail, which over the past two-plus years has returned with a flurry at our fingertips. Whether you call it timing (a pandemic that has driven many to digital fatigue) or a return to simpler days (seeing something that makes you feel a little more at home), direct mail is close to making, what Holleman calls, a rebirth. "Ten years ago, my daughter was introduced to direct mail with those magazines. It provided a memorable experience for her. That is the power of direct mail."

Holleman believes that direct mail is being viewed as a “sexy channel” again. With so much data to manipulate, marketers are seeing an endless array of opportunities for personalization. “Consumers expect personalized messaging. Printing technologies have evolved to the point where just about any type of variability is possible and most programs can be automated. It’s a good time to be in direct mail. I’m excited for the near future.”

Right now, the near future features a series of ups and downs. Jeff Tarran, COO of Gunderson Direct Inc., says the industry is facing a double-edged sword. On one hand, there are some significant disruptions due to supply chain issues, including paper, labor and other materials. On the other, companies are being very aggressive in the mail, with many eyeing making the most of coming out of the pandemic.

“The reaction by many marketers during the pandemic was to double down on digital channels,” Tarran says. “More than ever, marketers found themselves lost in the digital noise. Direct mail became a channel they had to try to get noticed. We’ve had a number of digital-first marketers look to bolster response with the addition of direct mail.”

The growing digital/direct mail approach is something industry companies remain optimistic about. With direct mail being the only physical and personalizable channel, the combination can be very powerful in generating a higher level of involvement with a marketing message, whether as a stand-alone piece or as part of an integrated campaign.

For marketers eyeing the addition of direct mail into their arsenals, Tarran offers the following points of interest:

- » Direct mail data sets are unique from digital. Direct mail data has its own set selects and, of course, each record needs to include, or link back to, a physical address.
- » Direct mail is physical. This requires a whole different mindset to develop effective communications.
- » Direct mail timeframes include a manufacturing process and physical delivery to a household. Gunderson measures campaigns over a period of weeks, not days.

“In terms of using direct mail and digital together, there are a few things marketers should consider,” Tarran says. “While mail data requires a physical



address, we have resources that can append email and IP information to files; and likewise, reverse append physical addresses to IPs or emails. That opens the door to running targeted email and/or online campaigns tied to mailings. Triggered mailings also are growing in use. Website visitors can be targeted with personalized mailings based on their site behavior.”

“Scrolling through email and social media posts can become mindless. But picking up or collecting mail is a physical interruption in the thought process.”

— Anne Fouss, Director of Marketing/Business Development, Kenwel Printers

The Gunderson Direct team often debates the value of multiple touches in a direct mail campaign. They have seen it work exceptionally well in B2B situations when certain criteria are present—notably when they know they have a valuable target, but they don’t know when they will actually need their solution. In those instances, emails build the brand into a top-of-mind solution for when the prospect is ready to buy.

One of Gunderson’s clients has built itself into a category leadership position doing just that—by establishing broad awareness and a strong brand through ongoing, monthly mailings. “Response

stays strong because when our client's solution is required, there is likely an updated offer already in the prospect's hands," Tarran says.

GETTING PERSONAL MATTERS

Anne Fouss recalls a recent conversation with an association research company client who said the groups he worked with were having a hard time getting responses from their members. The issues were traced back to the throes of the pandemic, when electronic forms of communication were used to reach people physically isolated in their homes.

But as Fouss—Director of Marketing and Business Development at Kenwel Printers Inc.—and others soon discovered, the digital approach was leading to overload and burnout.

"Printing technologies have evolved to the point where just about any type of variability is possible and most programs can be automated. It's a good time to be in direct mail."

— Joe Holleman, Director of Marketing, Quantum Group

While the associations had made the transition from doing mail-in surveys to digital during the pandemic, after they started adding a regular mail component, the responses started to tick back up. "The number of business and consumer emails sent and received per day continues to grow," Fouss says. "Scrolling through

email and social media posts can become mindless. But picking up or collecting mail is a physical interruption in the thought process. The brain is likely more open to receiving the message. It is something tangible—a connection that can be held onto."

The benefits of direct mail are equal parts viable and straightforward. In short, it is more stimulating (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste); it is not impeded by spam filters; and it is something that can easily be passed around.

Take this example by Kenwel Printers' client Ohio Wesleyan. Lindsay Mauter, the university's Director of Admission Communications, says the statistics her team examines for different generations tell a great deal about how prospective students interact with print and digital media. While practices differ between groups, it is clear that all age groups still interact with direct mail and that it is still an effective branding tool.

"If we stopped direct mail to 16 to 18 year-olds telling ourselves they're only living in a digital space, we neglect the important influencers in their household that do interact with direct mail," Mauter says. "If we want to build an effective campaign, we take a multimedia approach."

Fouss recalls another example of a direct mail campaign that hit the mark in the higher education space, where variable data was used to customize alumni fundraising letters by graduation year. Each recipient received a personalized and relatable story relevant to their year in college. Having the ability to change the data on each letter in one run, the printing was done more efficiently and the higher quantity of pieces batched together creates savings.

"The personalized story by graduation year created more of a connection with the donor," Fouss says. "We have a customer who told us that the pandemic shifted them to online events and gatherings for a period of time. Still, direct mail remained a helpful outreach to draw recipients into those digital spaces."

Regardless of your approach, having the perfect blend of direct and digital is a strategy worth employing. While digital can reach anyone, anywhere, direct mail provides the audience with a physical reminder of the brand with a tactile experience, helping build the kind of trust you want for customer engagement.



SELLING STUFF

How printers
become more
than printers



Standing out in a the digital world is difficult enough these days. Printers have the additional task to provide even more for their clients. Selling everything from design to ad specialty to marketing automation is part of the modern-day print establishment. A mindset change has taken place within the print industry, but getting the customer to see us differently is critically important. We talked to three industry thought leaders about how to stand out and how to sell print and other stuff. Our panel consists of: Lisa Arsenault, vice president of Lake County Press; Linda Bishop, president of Thought Transformation; and Simon Beltran, president and chief revenue officer of O'Neil Printing.

How do you get clients to view you as more than just a printer?

Linda Bishop: Come up with a clear value proposition that explains what you do. Be sure it is linked to what the client wants to accomplish. For example, if you have a platform of services, be sure you link the “output” to what your clients want to accomplish (fewer partners for less friction in the marketing supply chain).

Simon Beltran: It must start with the early discussions with a new client. We lead with tech-leaning solutions that enable them to manage their print supply chain and spend very little time discussing equipment and print capabilities. We try to ask smart questions and listen, spend our early discovery time learning more about their broad marketing strategy and then develop product and service solutions with them. For ongoing, loyal client relationships, we force ourselves to reimagine their go-to market strategies and strive to help them stay ahead of the marketing learning curves—how we can help them understand current trends in marketing and apply smart and creative print campaigns to drive growth, conversion, or loyalty for their brands.

Lisa Arsenault: You need to approach them with creative ideas and demonstrate how they can monetize their existing assets through utilizing your technologies and other resources.

“We try to ask smart questions and listen, spend our early discovery time learning more about their broad marketing strategy and then develop product and service solutions with them.”

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

What other types of services or needs do customers require these days?

Bishop: Some want a quasi-advertising agency. Others want someone who can warehouse. Or handle display graphics. Or tell them how to make direct mail more efficient, or get better results. Still a wide variety of needs. Problem is that there is little cohesion in client needs nowadays. So you need to decide who you serve, and have a strategy to find and reach them.

Beltran: Truly, our clients need all marketing and agency services at some point in their marketing life cycle. From startups to mature brands, at some point they will require brand strategy and website support, digital and social support, data and analytics support and some level of print, mail, kitting and fulfillment. And if you have to say no to any of these services, it will allow and invite another partner/competitor into their ecosystem.

Arsenault: Clients are now required to do more with less on their side. In turn, we spend a lot of time performing audits of the customer's processes and showing them how they can do more by engaging with our existing technology.

How are customers using print in the modern day?

Bishop: For direct mail, marketing literature, environmental graphics, POS— depends on the industry.

Beltran: Print is still a relevant and important communication medium. Today, more than ever, personalized and variable communications are the growing trend—mostly due to higher conversion rates and more relevant content for the intended target. Large and wide format communications are super important to retail and high traffic areas. Direct mail, especially in an election year, remains a high demand product for our clients.

Arsenault: They're using well-designed, personalized direct mail in order to focus on micro-segments. This allows them to grow their business in a very deliberate manner.

What kind of adjustments has your organization made to the engagement process?

Bishop: My clients have improved their marketing and increased their marketing. If you are talking about printers in general, I'm not sure that there has been that much change made in the engagement recipe over the years. It is a great time to invest in marketing.

Beltran: Post-pandemic, meeting face to face has become the exception, not the rule, in the engagement process. We need to expect that our

prospects and clients will prefer phone, email or virtual meetings, especially in the early stages of an engagement process. Once trust and genuine interest are developed, meeting in person and client tours are opportunities to build the relationship. We have enjoyed a return to written notes and sending branded gifts to build relationships as well. Human connection is so important, today more than ever, and thankfully we have many new ways to connect!

Arsenault: We've been reaching out to both prospects and customers in the same way. We relentlessly share ideas that can help them grow their business in a very precise manner.

What do you think should be the most important action items for sellers going forward?

Bishop: If you are talking about sellers of print, I think we need to toss out the old sales-driven model and replace it with a marketing-driven model to generate top-of-the-funnel demand.

Beltran: The overused but important word: transparency. With talent and supply chain issues all around us, we need to communicate early and often with our clients regarding pricing, timing for completion and any surprises as they arise. I often share with our team members, and my kids, bad news does not age well—let's attack the issue and give ourselves a fighting chance to solve or provide alternatives for the client.

Arsenault: Start asking questions of your clients' desires while simultaneously compiling your ideas that could truly generate some enthusiasm. If ideas are fun for you and focused on improving the clients' progress, the enthusiasm will be infectious.



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IDENTITY



CRISIS

The PSP vs. MSP
debate continues

Eric Stern loves the concept of the elevator pitch. Always has. He loves it so much that he tasked his Almaden sales team to get the company's pitch down to 30 seconds. Sure, Almaden has pitches for a minute and a minute and a half, but Stern loves to watch his team—painfully at times, he muses—work through the process of practicing to explain to a customer who and what the company is.

While being President and CEO has its perks, that is not why Stern loves to watch his team work through the exercise. It is about perfecting the process of succinctly illustrating just what the Santa Clara, California, marketing supply chain service provider is capable of doing in a highly competitive and continually evolving landscape. And you'll notice, while print is not in the snapshot description of Almaden, the company offers UV web and sheetfed offset, and digital print capabilities.

Stern discovered a long time ago that limiting yourself to just printing—in both name and offerings—was not the surest path to longtime sustainability. Interestingly, in an industry that has changed as much as commercial printing has over the past 10-plus years, the debate of whether you should label yourself a Print Service Provider (PSP) or Marketing Service Provider (MSP) rages on.

"Well, we're a marketing supply chain service provider, so you can see where that label stands," Stern says, noting that Almaden expanded the breadth of its offerings 10-plus years ago. "While we stayed out of the whole campaign creation side of the business, we provide a range of services that make what we do different than our competitors."

Working with some of the best-known brands in California and around the world, Almaden's

capabilities include marketing collateral; promotional products; large format printing and wall graphics; direct marketing analytics and mailing services; and technology-enabled distribution, kitting and fulfillment. It also runs web-based ordering portals, company stores and gifting platforms that feature real-time reporting and tracking. Working from two California production facilities, it also operates a state-of-the-art distribution center.

"Your real value is working as a partner on projects, providing input to make each project as successful as it can be, and acting as an integral part of each project."

— Linda Whitehead, President,
Zuz Marketing

"The elevator pitch," Stern says. "Being able to tell our customers that we offer more than one thing is important. Trying to figure out how to grow your business as you go along doesn't work. Too many printers have gone sideways doing that. The ones who were able to focus on product niches like labels and packaging have been able to perform. The companies that offer marketing-related services, however, have done well too."

Debates aside, Stern believes your company's direction is what you say it is and that in the end, your customers will let you know what works. "The No. 1 thing I always tell our people is to listen to our customers. They will tell us what they want and what they need."

YOU ARE WHAT YOU SAY YOU ARE...

Whichever side of the debate you stand on, your biggest asset is being able to solve your customer's problems. So, how do you define yourself? "By the clients we serve and what they say about us," says Dean Petrulakis, SVP, Sales for Lake County Press Inc. (LCP). "I try not to focus on what we do, but rather on the problems we solve. Your brand is what your customers say about you when you are not around. It starts and ends with your customer experience—period. I want my clients to always compare the other vendors they use against me. I want to be the measuring stick."

In the snapshot that defines LCP, the Waukegan, Illinois, company—whose offerings include digital print-on-demand, web-to-print programs and in-house custom development for web/cloud based messaging—the focus is on the delivery of the marketing message. Petrulakis says the integration of Lake County's highly skilled crafts people, backed by some of the industry's leading technology, positions it to consistently meet and exceed the strict standards of quality and service its customers demand.

And in the end, that's what ultimately matters to all parties involved. "First and foremost, I think printers are better off to stop thinking like a printer," Petrulakis says. "Stop trying to sell ink on paper. I'm not saying run away from all print. There's plenty of print business to be won and earned these days. But that cannot be your primary focus when approaching a new client or trying to add value to a current one. Your focus should be on how you can make their life easier, and how you can help them win more business or be more efficient."

The key rests in seeing the bigger picture—in taking ownership of your company's vision and working from that mission statement. Instead of being a company customers come to for a bid, be the source that helps them figure out what they need before they do.

"Think and act like a marketer," Petrulakis says. "A printer puts ink on paper, while an MSP solves marketing logistics challenges and provides solutions for today's busy marketer. Today's client isn't just buying print from us; they spend their days dealing

"Being able to tell our customers that we offer more than one thing is important. Trying to figure out how to grow your business as you go along doesn't work."

— Eric Stern,
President & CEO, Almaden





in multiple media, so the more we can help manage their brand in those various touch points, the better partner we are.”

WAY BEYOND PRINT...

Located just north of Toronto in Vaughan, Willow Printing Group sits near Canada's Wonderland amusement park. Since 1953, the printer has been helping its customers find creative and powerful ways to engage with their target audiences. The messaging Willow uses is straightforward: How we help you go way "beyond print."

Today, along with printing, the company offers a broad expanse of services, including database management, direct mail, brochures and collateral, banners and signage, kitting and fulfillment, and postage audit. "We strive to help clients get better results with our consultative approach," says Jeff Ekstein, who along with being President of Willow Printing is a third-generation owner of the company. "When the client wins, so do we. We will look at the message/objective of the project and make suggestions for improvements, i.e., it might be an integrated solution with the addition of technology to enhance the printed piece."

Ekstein says Willow's goal is to be a valuable part of its client's team. In many cases, that means it is the glue that keeps everything together. "Our objective is to meet as soon as possible in the process to add value and help shape the project for success."

Linda Whitehead, President of Zuz Marketing and a consultant to Willow Printing, says that too often when you describe yourself as a "printer," the customer automatically views you as a commodity, an order-taker. You become a company that takes quotes, gets files and produces whatever you receive.

"Your real value is working as a partner on projects, providing input to make each project as successful as it can be, and acting as an integral part of each project," she says. "I think you have to realize that print is a marketing service, and if that is the primary service you want to offer, make sure you do it in a valuable way, so your customers can't live without you."

In the end, the PSP vs. MSP will continue, especially in an industry that wants to be too busy to pick a side. The consensus, if one exists, is that whichever label you put on your business card, make sure to determine what the real opportunities are and partner with your customers who need you to solve their problems.

Q&A

GARY C. LANEY, CEO, SUCCESS MASTERS LLC. AUTHOR OF "THE POWER OF STRATEGIC INFLUENCE"

POSITIVE IMPACT: THE POWER OF STRATEGIC INFLUENCE

Gary is the best-selling author of "The Power of Strategic Influence" and CEO at Success Masters LLC, a holding company that has invested in business networking, online media, e-commerce, and intellectual property. A 35-year veteran of sales, marketing and professional service, Laney's background covers domain expertise in Business Networking, e-commerce, Sales Process, CRM, Business Process Management, Content/ Document Management, and Search. His insights and commitment to making a positive impact is a fantastic message for any business.

What motivated you to write this book?

I wrote my book because I'm passionate about positive forms of influence that stem from meaningful relationships, built upon trust. I've known for 15 years that I needed to write a book and share what I know to be true about great business principles I've learned and taught about over the years. The hardest part is getting started, and producing something that others may consider to be worthwhile. I knew my ideas had merit since I taught them in business over and over for many years.

Why do you think there is such a gap in leadership these days?

If by gap, you mean, why is there so much variance in terms of leadership effectiveness today, I would say it boils down to three components I teach about in my book, "The Power of Strategic Influence." They are 1. Personal Value, 2. Driving Forces, and 3. Leadership Competencies.

First, becoming a leader requires anyone to develop a certain level of Personal Value (your knowledge, expertise, and experience). This means that to be considered and recognized as a leader,

others must weigh the value you bring to the table. Ask yourself, "What value can I offer to others?"

Next a leader must assess and identify what I call Personal Driving Forces (PDF's), or the compelling reasons why you do what you do. PDF's represent the purpose and passions that drive you to achieve higher levels. Without personal driving forces, your plan will end up being short-term, short-lived, and unsustainable. Leading others requires a person to be intentional about why they are leading, and having a feeling or sense that gives the leader confidence that they can make a difference. Saying that money is your purpose is not a valid reason to be doing something because when things become difficult, when challenges arise, it will be the authentic you (purpose behind the effort) that will motivate you to carry on. In my book, I share my own driving forces as an example, but each person, each leader must take time to evaluate and identify their own personal driving forces by looking in the mirror on a regular basis and taking stock of what really motivates you.

Once you have identified what motivates you, then evaluating what makes you competitive is critically important. This is the next level in my teachings about how to acquire strategic influence. To move to the next performance level of influence and success, you need to possess a credible and a robust set of competitive competencies. This is the third element of influence growth representing your leadership capability and potential, made possible through competitive assets you have developed. When combined with personal value and motivational driving forces, this element affords you the ability to differentiate your value, accentuate your motivation, and stand out from the crowd. This is possible because when you master and then possess certain expert competencies, they in turn can act as your superpowers, giving you an edge to compete and lead at the highest

levels. Once you get to a certain level, your value, competencies, and personal driving forces become fused together into one powerful and efficient package that can make up what others would consider to be a powerful leader.

You talk a lot about positive impact. Can you share how critical it is for that mindset in the current landscape of small business?

The slogan for my LinkedIn newsletter called Influential Leadership is, "The true measure of leadership is positive influence," so you will see positivity is a constant theme in my life. I have been fortunate to have been raised by parents who had a positive outlook in life. My parents were entrepreneurs. I never knew either of them to work for someone else. They believed that if they were creative, hardworking and honest, that good would always come of it. That helped me have a healthy perspective about life and that happiness, fulfillment, and success were there for the taking. I mention in my book that positivity attracts other people. Besides the great parents and other inspiring people I associated with in school, sports, and work, I read many books that help mold me into a positive advocate for life.

In terms of your ability to build and use positivity and influence in your life, the answer is something that Martin Luther might agree with: It doesn't matter, as long as you believe it. Think about it this way. If you believe that failure and rejection are fate, you'll be looking for them



and anticipating them. And since the human mind doesn't want to be wrong, when you see the opportunity for failure and rejection, you'll gravitate toward them. In contrast, if you believe you are entitled to success and acceptance, you'll look for opportunities to make your belief come true. When you see such opportunities, you'll seize them. You will take responsibility for your future and welcome the chance to better yourself.

One of the unique aspects of my book is that I interviewed 12 CEO's to exemplify the principles I teach in each of the 12 chapters. Having a positive outlook and mindset came up several times in those interviews.

Cristal Bemont, CEO of Talend said, "I've learned that people who are successful want to bring you with them. They want to be surrounded by people they enjoy, but also who contribute in a positive way. They need to know they can have confidence in you, that you're trustworthy, and that they can put things in your hands and everything's going to be okay. I think it's about observing and seeing what I would be attracted to, especially things that are on the positive side."

"THE KEY TO BUILDING YOUR PERSONAL INFLUENCE IN BUSINESS AND MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THE WORLD IS TO FOCUS ON WHAT YOU GIVE AND NOT ON WHAT YOU GET."

"YOUR SUCCESS AND LONG-TERM FULFILLMENT ARE ALL ABOUT THE QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIPS YOU HAVE IN YOUR LIFE."

Kimberly Carney, CEO of Fashwire told me, "A positive mindset is the very first thing. I'm relentless about surrounding myself with reading and listen to books almost daily. I protect my morning time to listen to people who inspire a mindset. For me, everything is about your mind and what you tell yourself you can do. I have a passion for the study of psychology and our mindset. I like to be in constant communication with people. Tell me what's happening, what you're seeing, and what you're hearing. How do you feel? The positive mindset and constant communication have been important to create habits around, because I think they're easy to deviate from, especially with COVID-19 this last year."

Clearly, effective leaders focus on doing things that benefit others.

Can you speak to the general idea of how leaders should refocus on their sphere of influence?

In the foreword of the book, Kevin Harrington, one of the original Sharks from Shark Tank, said, "Your sphere of influence is the essential ingredient in your recipe for success, respect, and a lasting legacy."

I like that you asked how leaders should "refocus" their sphere of influence. That to me means that influence has a history of creating and utilizing influence in a socially responsible way. Your question is, how do we get back to responsible usage of influence? To me, we begin with the

understanding that hard-earned influence can and should have a positive element to it, inferring that the impact of responsible influence can and will have a positive impact. That is important since some leaders in the world feel their "influence" or "authority" allows them to use their position and influence to make self-serving decisions. That is the complete opposite of what I believe the word influence was intended for, but as anything in life, your emphasis to give or get will cause a very different result.

The key to building your personal influence in business and making a positive impact on the world is to focus on what you give and not on what you get. My 10 Success Factors of Highly Influential Leaders instructs you how to access, utilize, develop, expand, and ultimately constructively use your influence to help make the world a better place.

Are there some success factors that are more important than others or is it more of a process?

All 10 success factors are interdependent, so yes, it is a process, but perhaps better said, it is progressive development cycle requiring all steps to be completed. That means a person starts from no influence and learns in a systematic way how to access influence, then to utilize influence, then to acquire influence, then to expand influence, and finally how to share influence to benefit others.

The book lays out how to begin with a mental picture, perspective or vision, and then build influence from scratch in an organic yet constructive manner to allow a leader to maximize his or her potential influence.

Consider Success Factor 1, which is about Accepting Personal Responsibility. Perhaps the most daunting and brave act a modern-day business person or leader can muster today is the willingness to accept responsibility for any

and all circumstances that occur in one's daily life, both personally and professionally. Accepting personal responsibility means that you approach challenges and opportunities with a solution-oriented approach. You are adaptable, and you recognize what you can and cannot control.

Success Factor 4, Forming Trusted Partnerships, is another example of what is necessary to become an effective leader. I consider relationship building to be a skillset that can be learned. For some it comes fairly naturally, but for others it is an advanced and complex concept since it requires trusting others to do the right things. The Six Building Blocks of a Trusted Partnership, highlighted in the book, offer a foundation to cultivate relationships with influential business people from your industry. If two people have common goals, strategies, and a determination of honesty, then trust can be built.

One principle I weave in throughout the book is the significance of Giving First Before You Get (Success Factor 10). As a developing leader with influence, others will look to you for inspiration, guidance and leadership. As you perform and advance as a leader, your successes, industry authority, and connections will give you powerful influence and the opportunity to positively impact people, businesses, and communities. Regardless of the level of success you achieve, everyone has the ability to give back, whether it be time, money, resources, or even a smile to someone who desperately needs a lift.

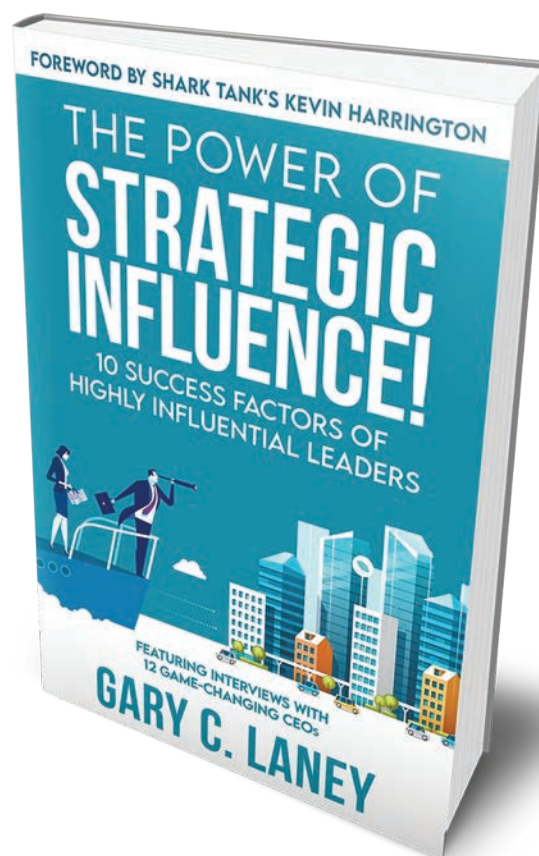
Finally, what advice do you have for small business leaders in general?

In a nutshell, your success and long-term fulfillment are all about the quality of relationships you have in your life. Self Reliance (Success Factor 2) means you learn how to develop trustworthy relationships so that you can access resources and assistance to accomplish your goals. The person who tries to do it all by him or herself will quickly learn their limitations and fall short of

their potential. Self-reliance is about learning how to access and utilize resources that are available to you through relationships of trust you have developed. This is one of the reasons why the majority of startups fail. Small business leaders typically try to do everything themselves and forget the critical element of involving others who specialize in areas where they lack expertise.

If you want to have impactful influence in your business, in your community, and in your life, focus on developing meaningful, deep-rooted relationships. Influence is rooted in your relationships with other people.

For more information, you can find Laney on LinkedIn or visit his website, GaryCLaney.com. To learn more about his book, visit ThePowerofStrategicInfluence.com.





RULE29 STANDS WITH UKRAINE

Creative agency and certified B Corp Rule29 is committed to their GIVE initiative, which mandates that the company give 20% of its time and resources to causes, ideas, and initiatives that help create a healthier, more equitable, more sustainable, and more welcoming world. Their latest project, ukraine.mattersto.us, seeks to make a difference in the lives of those that need it most right now. The site features a limited-edition poster (designed by Rule29 and printed by O'Neil Printing) of which 100% of proceeds go to UNICEF, World Central Kitchen, and International Rescue Committee. In addition, the site features additional resources such as digital downloads and links to purchase digital art from Ukrainian artists who cannot safely create.

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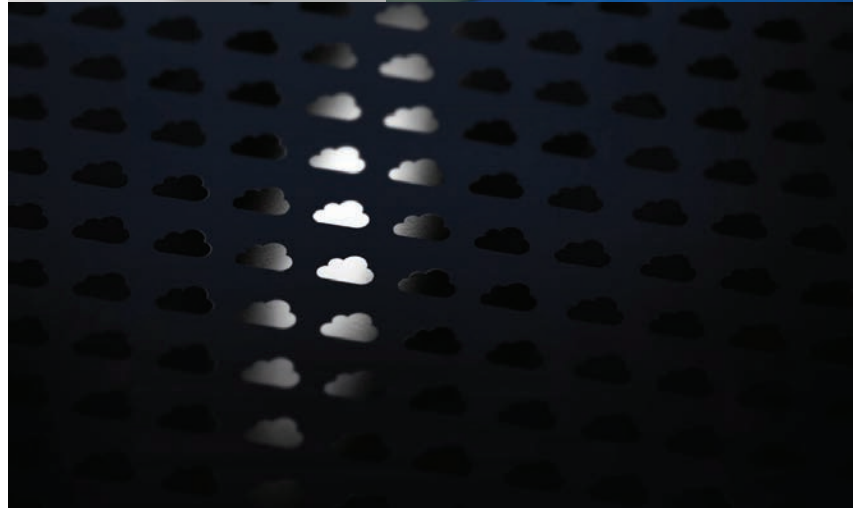
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