

SUMMER 2022

Leading **PRINT**

# BOUNCING BACK

THE REINVENTION OF CR&A CUSTOM INC.



*Selling in the current landscape • Pricing best practices  
Creative perspectives • Supply chain insights*

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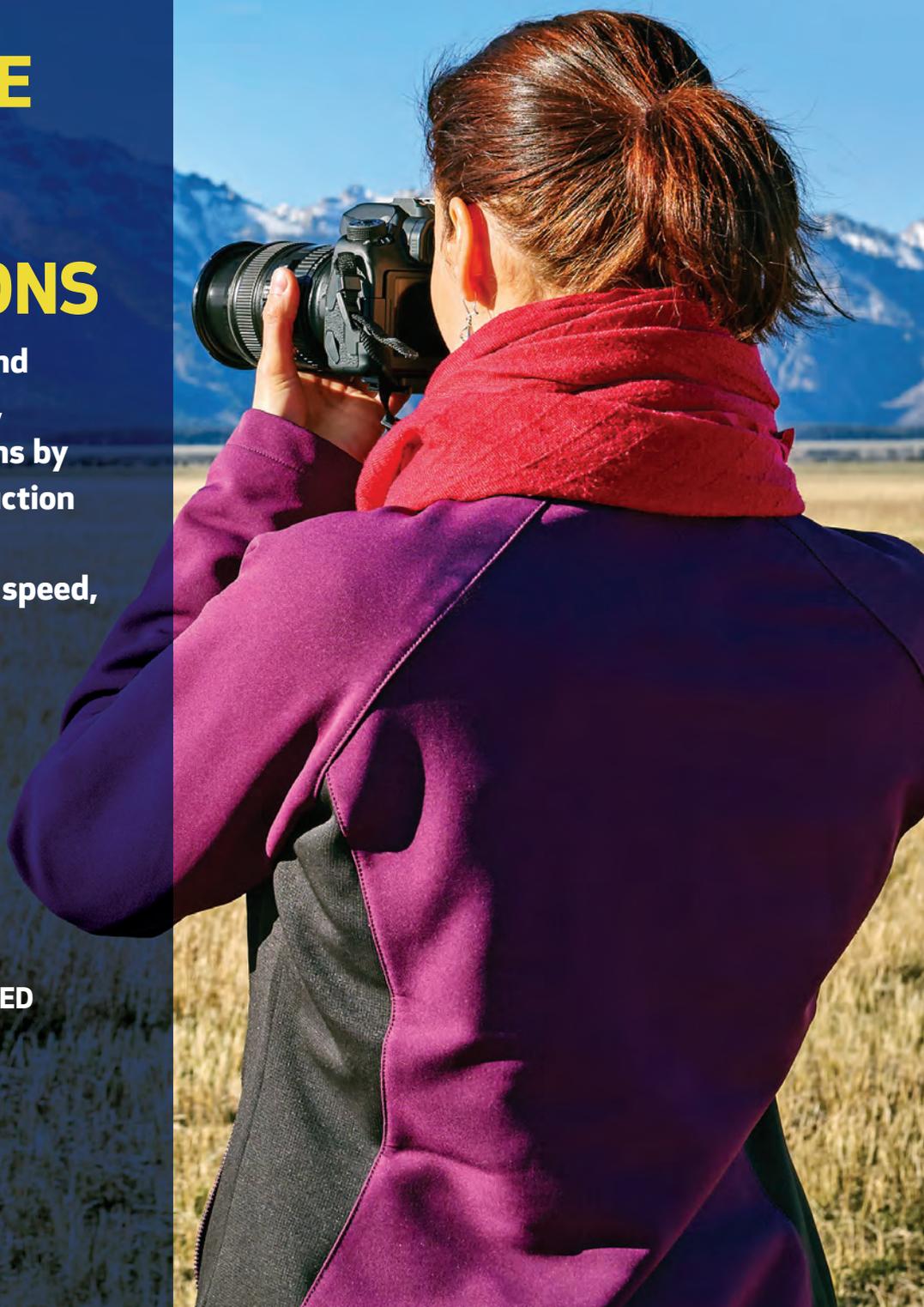
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# CAN





**Thayer Long**  
President, Association for  
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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

### THE PATIENCE OF CHANGE

Making change within your business can be difficult because you do not know what your newly imagined world will feel like or whether you will enjoy it. That's because there is no finality to one phase that jumps right into the next phase. It is virtually impossible to morph from your traditional self into a new version within a day.

The transition is a long and gradual process, enlightening us with glimpses of our future along the way. Governed by a sense of purpose, any change we aspire to will need to be a process rather than flick of a switch.

When we choose to commit to a process of change rather than the urgency of change, we give ownership to our value and the skills required for success. The patience needed for change allows us to avoid a sense of pressure that does not allow us to grow.

All too often, we look at our business and proclaim a need for change. But making changes for the sake of change is not the right idea. The decision to alter your course should be embraced as a path to learning, curiosity and excitement. Changing out of fear and desperation will only lead to regret and remorse.

*"The decision to alter your course should be embraced as a path to learning, curiosity and excitement. Changing out of fear and desperation will only lead to regret and remorse."*

The last couple of years have put a great deal of pressure on each of us to make some alterations to our business. We simply cannot avoid some of the variables that have affected us. Please note, I am not discounting the impetus of some changes we have "had" to make. What I am suggesting is that we embrace the process of change with enthusiasm and a growth mindset. My guess is that it will lead to enrichment on multiple levels.

Speaking of embracing change, I hope you will take some time to read our cover story, "Bouncing Back," which details Carmen Rad, President of CR&A Custom Inc., and her story on how she built a new business during the pandemic when her event signage business dried up overnight.

Our second feature, "Saving Face to Face," reminds us how the sales process has changed and offers insight on how to stand out and how to build trust in a digital world. With additional content on pricing controls, supply chain ideas and staffing tips, this issue of LeadingPRINT aims to be one of our best yet.

Enjoy the issue and embrace the change.

All the best,



Scan to contact  
Adam Goldman

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### SUMMER 2022

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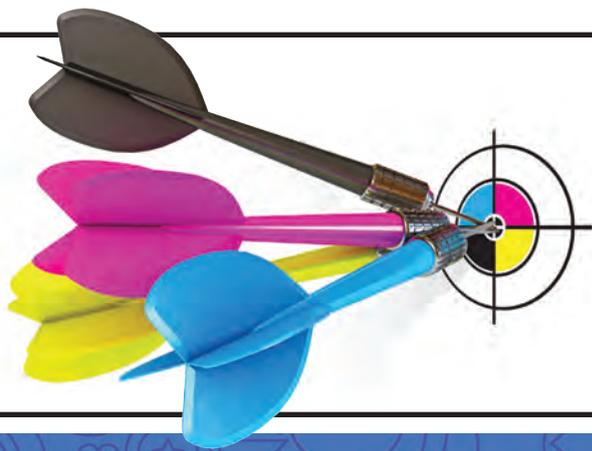
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# REGISTRATION MARKS

**W** ENGAGEMENT TRENDS SHOW TODAY'S CONSUMERS ARE LOOKING FOR BREVITY IN MARKETING INTERACTIONS. WITH OUR OWN CLIENTS, WE'VE FOUND THAT DIRECT MAIL PACKAGES WITH SHORTER, MORE CONCISE MESSAGING ARE NOW BEATING OUT PREVIOUS, COPY-HEAVY LONG-STANDING CONTROLS."

— Tari Johnson, Creative Director, SeQuel Response

## No pay, no gain

### Workers' dissatisfaction in the workplace

The Great Resignation is here and workers are leaving companies in droves. Understanding why can help you keep them happy and reduce the cost of turnover. The "People at Work 2022: A Global Workforce View" report explores the current work world and what employees expect from the workplace of the future. ADP Research Institute® surveyed 32,924 workers in 17 countries around the world to see why employees are not satisfied:

**49%**

Increased responsibility with no extra pay

**46%**

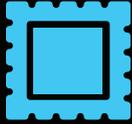
Lack of progression

**41%**

Receiving fewer benefits than expected

# ON THE RADAR

8 direct mail trends to keep an eye on



## POSTAGE INCREASE

With prices on the rise, it is imperative to use data and analytics to optimize your mailing campaign.



## PERSONALIZATION

To make better connections with prospects and customers, focus on their wants and needs as an individual.



## INFORMED DELIVERY

Introduced in 2017, Informed Delivery is a postal service program that gives consumers a free daily digital preview of their mail before it arrives in their mailboxes.



## INTERACTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

Mail that prompts people to respond through digital channels such as QR codes or social media are gaining popularity.



## CONCISE COPY

Decreasing attention spans and increasing paper costs require focusing on essential copy.



## SUSTAINABILITY

Environmentally-focused products and messaging will continue to be a growing trend.



## TACTILE & INTERACTIVE MAIL

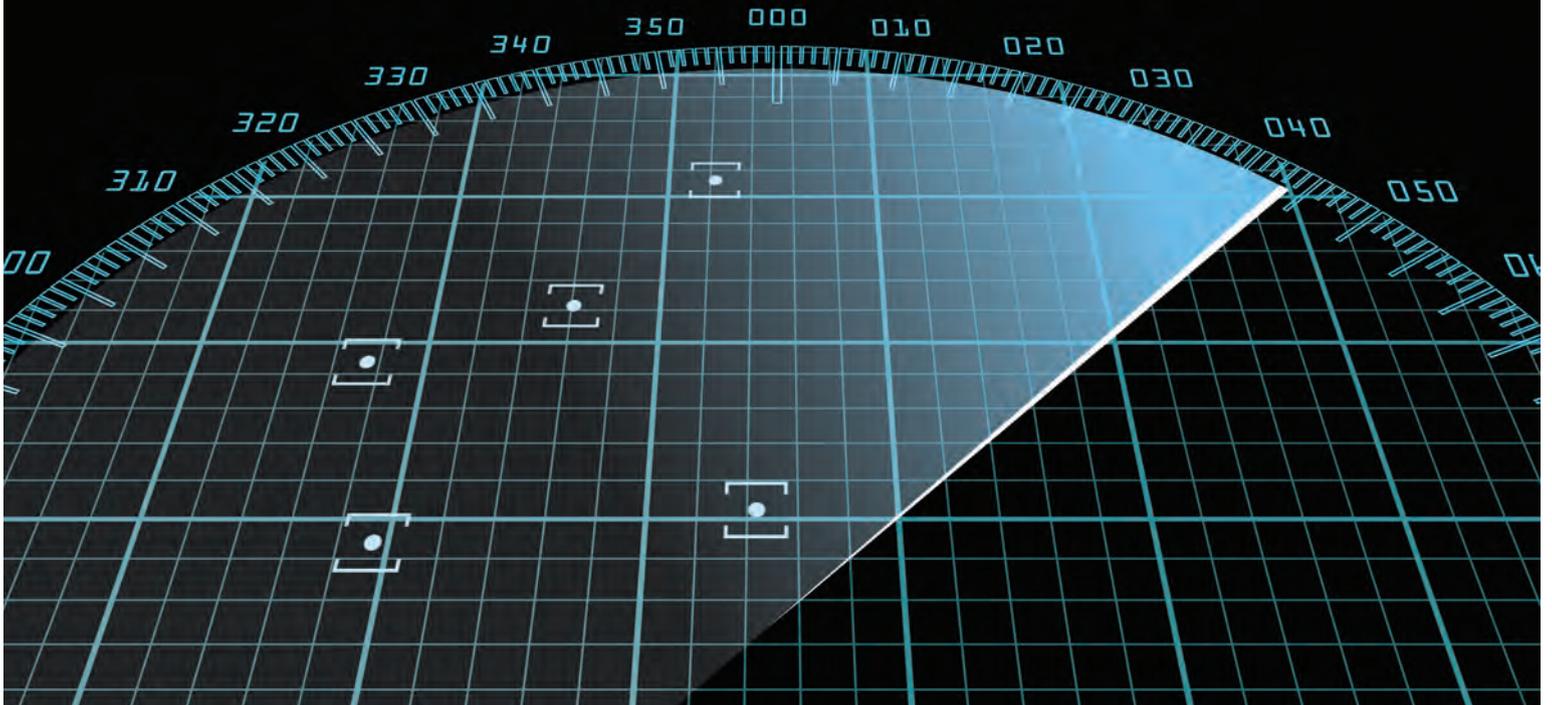
Embellishments and interactive direct mail engages customers and gets them to act.



## LARGE POSTCARDS

A cost-effective way to grab readers' attention.

Source: Who's Mailing What!



# BOUNCING BACK

THE REINVENTION OF CR&A CUSTOM INC.



**It was the right place at the right time. Looking back, it seems a bit surreal to even qualify that moment as such, but it is true. We were starting to develop relationships with some of the larger hospitals in the Los Angeles area, so I was in a meeting completely unrelated to what would end up being a seismic event that would change everything for all of us.**



**By Carmen Rad**

The buyer I was meeting with was called away, so I ended up getting pulled into another meeting filled with environmental specialists staring at a bunch of pieces of papers on the wall with numbers written on them. Every area of the small room was covered with names and numbers and notes. The information they were trying to decipher related to the supply chain channels in each country—and how fast, if at all, these channels could get items like swabs, alcohol sanitizer, masks, etc., to the U.S.

It was the beginning of what would become a race to score supplies in the initial frontline defense against the global pandemic. Nearly six months before the top came off of everything, I had a front row seat to the impact COVID-19 would have on all of us. What I remember most from the experience is the fear in each of their eyes.

Everything was about to change.

With a background in promotional products, I knew that my presence there was important, even if nobody else knew it quite yet. After leaving the meeting, I did a quick assessment of what I could do and called the buyer back.

“I found 10,000 masks,” I told him. “I am going to bring you some samples.”

Upon my return, I met with several environmental specialists. They pored over the masks, taking them on and off, and sifting through every part of how they were constructed. They checked every detail — things like the little metal pieces and spaces for ventilation.

One of the specialists handed a mask back to me and asked, “Can you get me a million?” We got them the masks but it required a different level of commitment.

In between wrapping my brain around the intrinsically complex process of having to ship masks halfway around the world, there also was the matter of being able to fund the endeavor. To make this happen, I would have to risk everything. I went into my personal funds after going back and forth with my bank, which said they needed a copy of a purchase order to allow me to secure funding. I had been in business for 26 years—more than two decades of a perfect record of business. I even had an \$800,000 line of credit that I never tapped into.

**“Reinvention is the key to sustainability. As long as we can continue to keep that door open, we will get our opportunities.”**

Companies change course every day. The smart ones are constantly refining, changing and altering their mission statements to meet the ever-changing demands of the spaces they work in. But this was different. CR&A Custom Inc. was a sign company. For decades, we created banners that have been visible across the greater Los Angeles area.

When the pandemic hit at full force, we employed 41 people operating in a family-like atmosphere in close proximity to one another from a 26,000-square-foot facility that handles design, printing and finishing. We had to furlough more than half our team in March 2020, and gradually started bringing people back as production increased. In addition, we needed to take great precautions conforming to the changing policies. Today, we are increasing our team as the event industry starts to open back up. Our hope is to be back with a team of 41 by the end of 2022.



During COVID, while working at a hospital, I received a call from a mom who was working in the emergency room. We had just installed a large "Heroes Work Here" sign. She called me on a Wednesday and said she needed a sign by Friday. Her son was about to graduate and she wanted a graduation-themed yard sign for him.

**"Companies change course every day. The smart ones are constantly refining, changing and altering their mission statements to meet the ever-changing demands of the spaces they work in."**

She was so busy working long hours that she didn't have time to prepare for his graduation. She lived just a few miles from my home, so I suggested she come by and pick it up. She was so excited that she sent me a photo as soon as she returned home.

I thought to myself, "Maybe others might want one, too." So I listed the service on my Etsy store. A few minutes later, I was receiving requests from all over the country, including one from Japan. Orders were coming in almost every seven to 14 minutes. In total, we processed 900 orders from May to June, which helped us keep many of our people employed.

When the graduation season ended, we began creating banners for everything from happy birthdays, baby showers, anniversaries, wedding-themed valentines, medical graduation, etc. Since May 2020, we have created more than 147 collections.

COVID opened up a whole new industry for yard sign and balloon decorators. Women from all over the world created small businesses out of their homes, building backdrops and balloon decorations for their friends, families and clients. I love working with them, helping them to share their sentiments and elevating their services via large format printing technology.

Entrepreneurs know how to live in the moment—to live for the moment. There are just certain things in business and life that you know. We are risk takers and gamblers. Entrepreneurs are supposed to see things—and to think—differently. Deep down I knew this was a risk worth taking.

### **From ground zero**

Encompassing five departments, CR&A Custom Inc. designs, prints, manufactures and installs an array of visual products, including banners, flags, signs, building wraps and fleet graphics. I started the business in 1993 from my home in San Gabriel. I was 26. I had a telephone, a computer, a file cabinet and my mother as my only employee.

There was no outside funding or equity partners. No loan to secure. It was just my mother and I working

from an extra bedroom. With a background in fashion, having studied at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising, I started out making custom clothing, promotional items, and embroidery work, networking with contacts I made as a multi line rep. One of the first items I made was Madonna's Down Under jackets in Australia. The suede jackets were sprinkled with bedazzled jewelry.

My first entrepreneurial pivot came in 1995, when after a series of changes to international textile and apparel trade took hold, I knew we could not compete anymore. The eventual elimination of quotas that opened the U.S. to more imports ripped a hole in our company strategy.

Teaming with my husband, Masoud, who had joined me as my COO, we transformed CR&A into a large-format digital printer. The strategy was to offer different products to the same customers.

As a Latina woman, I have been proud of the exceptional brand we have built in the large-format digital printing and outdoor advertising sectors. Today, CR&A Custom is among only a handful of these types of businesses in the country that are minority (Hispanic) and woman-owned. Located in the heart of downtown LA, our team is a full-service company

capable of designing, manufacturing, printing and installing commercial signage and outdoor advertising formats. That includes billboards, building wraps, trade show exhibits, wall/window/floor graphics, point-of-purchase displays, vehicle wraps and fleet graphics, and more.

Examples of the CR&A brand can be found around the world, from the oversized banners at Staples Center and LA Live entertainment campus, as well as in the work for major brands in the United States, Puerto Rico and Dubai.

I was born in Puerto Rico. My family moved to the Bronx, New York, when I was two years old, where we lived until I was 11. We moved to California. I came to Los Angeles when I was 18. Over the years I have been surrounded by lots of mentors on a wide variety of leadership levels. Being blessed by these relationships has helped me grow into the leader I aspire to be. A part of those aspirations is to continue to give back to the industry, community and networks I serve; organizations like the National Association of Women Owned (NAWBO-LA), where I served as president in 2014 and 2015.

Being a minority, a woman, an entrepreneur and a leader are roles I take to heart. With each step, I understand the balance I must continue to take, knowing that nothing is ever going to be given to me (or anyone else). All I have ever asked for is a seat at the table, and opportunity to go through the door and make my way.

The entrepreneur spirit is alive in me—alive in our industry. As long as we continue to build and maintain relationships, and embrace creativity and innovation, we will prosper.

Reinvention is the key to sustainability. As long as we can continue to keep that door open, we will get our opportunities. ❖❖❖



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*Carmen Rad is the principal founder and CEO of CR&A Custom Inc., a large-format digital printer in Los Angeles that produces and installs all types of signage, from retractable banners, wall murals, vehicle wraps and billboards. With an award winning, in-house design team and the latest state-of-the-art equipment available, the LA-based company assists customers from concept to manufacturing and installation, serving all 50 U.S. states, Canada and the Caribbean.*



# SAVING FACE TO Selling in the current landscape FACE

“Say less...while selling more.” In his bestselling book, “20 Days to the Top: How the PRECISE Selling Formula Will Make You Your Company’s Top Sales Performer in Twenty Days or Less,” renowned sales thought leader Brian Sullivan stressed that sometimes less is more. Regardless of what the current sales landscape dictates, Sullivan believes that in the end, the key to effective sales is knowing what your customers really want, and then giving it to them in the most practical, ethical way possible.

And sure, while the pandemic may have redirected how salespeople sell, Sullivan says the most effective strategy remains getting in front of who you are selling. Is he oversimplifying the process? Maybe. But try some math: If you need to get in front of five new clients this month, you will need at least 15 formal presentations (live or virtual). That means you need to reach out to 45 prospects. If the numbers don't add up, you add more prospect proposals.

"There were three types of companies and salespeople I have worked with during the pandemic," says, Sullivan, founder of PRECISE Selling. "Some were in retreat mode, which means they were so fearful of being perceived as being insensitive to the crisis that they limited their interaction with clients. Others were in a 'wait and see' mode, which meant their client interactions existed, but not at the pre-pandemic levels. And others went into full attack mode. They attacked their clients' pandemic-infused issues and helped them find answers to their problems; they found ways to make their clients and prospects either smarter or happier."

**"Communicating the right story to the right people over the right channel, that's the issue. That's where brands get tripped up."**

**— Joanne Gore, CMO, Taktiful**

In short, a salesperson's job is to be there for his prospects. And in a time when the face-to-face sales approach is slowly working itself back into play, salespeople still have to make a play. Is communication more difficult? Sullivan says it doesn't matter. For example, he recalls a client company he began working with at the start of the pandemic. After three separate two-day seminars, a handful of webinars and some individual one-on-one coaching, the VP of Sales realized they had never met face to face. "You know," the client said on a Zoom call, "we never actually met in person."

Sullivan realized in that moment, that done right, virtual meetings can produce almost as good an interaction as visiting somebody live. “Personally, I can honestly say I have spoken and looked in the eyes of more prospects and clients over the past two years more than at any point in my career.”

## A NEW DAY DAWNING

In her more than 30 years as a corporate marketer, Joanne Gore has just about seen it all. From working with scrappy start-ups and established enterprises, she has helped software, hardware, print and manufacturing companies around the world generate awareness, engagement and growth.

And like Sullivan, Gore says technology’s impact on the engagement process cannot be lauded enough. “Technology came to the masses during the pandemic. And we lapped it up because we needed that human interaction, albeit virtual. Over the past two years, I developed relationships, both personal and professional, that would never have happened had it not been for the global reach of social media and video-conferencing.”

Gore, president of the full-service B2B marketing agency Joanne Gore Communications Inc. and CMO of Taktiful, says that online relationships were nurtured prior to the pandemic, making it all the sweeter. “I learned a new way to sell during the pandemic and I don’t plan to go back. As far as I’m concerned, if you are a B2B company, you need to build your personal brand and begin using social selling strategies to find and nurture prospects, clients, partners and influencers.”

In today’s technologically charged landscape, you have less than five seconds to grab someone’s attention. And those five seconds can take forever. Scrolling. Swiping. Tapping. Gore says brands must find a way to stand out. “Now, more than ever, it’s critical to know who you help, how you help, and why that matters. Everyone in your company, from the floor sweeper to the CEO, needs to be able to answer those three simple questions. And the answers need to be the same. Having a messaging playbook makes it super simple to create campaigns, presentations, website content, sales scripts, training/ onboarding guides. The list is endless. Armed with one, you can pinpoint your quickest time to money and laser-target your lead gen efforts.”

Gore says the smart brands are the ones that have added the power of print in the buyer’s journey. “If you can make it more touch-worthy, that’s even better. Print helps improve the conversion rate, brand recall and retention in your prospect’s journey. I don’t think communication

# YOUR 8-STEP PLAN TO BUILDING THE PERFECT COMMUNICATIONS ENGAGEMENT



SOURCE: BRIAN SULLIVAN, PRECISE SELLING

- ▶ Be prepared and have a call/meeting objective, i.e., what do you want the prospect/client to do/say as a result of your call
- ▶ Build respect and trust and do not sound like a product-pushing salesperson
- ▶ Think and write out the questions you will ask beforehand
- ▶ Focus your presentation on what they said was important to them and not on what you think should be important to them
- ▶ Use success stories and anecdotes to bring your presentation to life
- ▶ Think through and write out the top three objections you might hear and practice what you are going to say when you hear them from a client
- ▶ If the prospect likes what you are presenting, do not let the sale hang out there; guide the conversation to the next step in the sales process
- ▶ Ask for referrals

is the issue here. Communicating the right story to the right people over the right channel, that's the issue. That's where brands get tripped up."

**"Personally, I can honestly say I have spoken and looked in the eyes of more prospects and clients over the past two years more than at any point in my career."**

**— Brian Sullivan, Founder, PRECISE Selling**

Imagine you are a printer that just purchased a new embellishment press. What do you do next? Where are you going to make the most amount of money in the least amount of time, from the most amount of people? Most printers will sell that press the way it was sold to them. They will talk about foils and run times and sheet size. "The client doesn't want to hear that," Gore says. "They want to hear things like: When you see it, you want to touch it. And when you touch it, you're more likely to buy it."

This is where the sales and marketing process intersect. Today, more than ever, the two strategies are co-dependent. Automation platforms like CRM (customer relationship management), MAP (marketing automation platform), W2P/eCommerce, Print MIS/ERP (information and resource management) automatically feed each other prospect, customer and business information 24/7/365. Managing these teams requires a blend of old-school face-to-face engagement strategies and online digital strategies to fuel business demand.

"It's really hard to get it right," Gore says. "Despite all the data and all the insights, sometimes your best efforts flop. But we learn from what works and what doesn't. We then can focus our efforts on creating experiences that lead to business. It's about having clarity on what makes for an ideal prospect—a prospect who you are most likely to convert into a customer. Where do you find them? How do you approach them? When is the right time to add them to the sales funnel? Answering these questions becomes the foundation of your company's sales DNA." 📊

# CHAIN REACTION

Print leaders discuss biggest industry challenges





There are issues aplenty for the printing industry. The challenges are varied and complex. We sat down with three print industry leaders to get some perspective and advice. Gina Danner, President at NextPage in Kansas City; Dean Petrulakis, Vice President at Lake County Press in Chicago; and Tom Moe, President of Daily Printing in Minneapolis shared their thoughts.

**What are your thoughts on the supply chain and how to keep your sanity?**

**Tom Moe:** The supply chain issues are daunting, and it is not only paper, but all materials including ink, toner, plates and so on. The issues are real, and they require a very good process to deal with it. In order to stay sane, you have to really trust your suppliers to come through, and keep you posted on lead time, increases, freight surcharges and so on. The pricing aspect is a constant change that you need to stay up to date on in order to pass along the increases in a timely manner and make a profit. We hold weekly meetings to go over open orders and upcoming needs. Open and honest communication is a must!

**Gina Danner:** Supply chain issues are best served by setting reasonable expectations with clients, vendors, and the bank. If we don't have paper (or other raw materials) we don't have a business. Using appropriate credit facilities and planning helps, but fluidity is important. Flexibility and commitments are critical and communication is paramount.

**Dean Petrulakis:** To a certain extent, it's out of our control. What we can control is how we communicate proactively with our clients about the challenges so that we can help manage expectations around larger projects. Outside of that we must continue to build upon the strong relationships with our paper partners. It is really no use to drive yourself crazy over this madness.



## What are the silver linings to the shortages?

**Moe:** We have been able to create a better dialog with our customers, on many aspects not just supply chain and paper. The current situation has given rise to increased communication, strategy sessions and more planning on every job. The client is now far less concerned with paper “Brands” and is more understanding of what we can get versus what they think they want. The pending postal increases have also given rise to more communication on data analytics, postage optimization and so on. Clients want/need to communicate and they are still choosing print, so in some ways there has been positives from this current situation!

**Danner:** This supply chain situation has required over-communication and better planning. It has also required us to have more strategic conversations with our clients and ensure that we are planning for longer term relationships instead of just winning the job.

**Petrulakis:** This is forcing us to be more proactive and think less transactional. It is providing opportunities to be a valued partner to our clients in unprecedented times for sure!

## Can you share your top concerns on staffing issues?

**Moe:** Our top concern on the staffing issues are simple, where will the next generation of employees come from? Our area's last location of Higher Education for Print Production has closed its doors to incoming freshman, and will cease the program as soon as the current classes have completed their requirements. While there are still many options for graphic design, print production education is no longer provided in our area. So who will recruit and train the next generation of employees? We have had to create and establish a significant program for recruiting and training new employees. We are working with local high schools to identify possible candidates and we are offering internships as an introduction to our industry. We are working with several other organizations that offer

“pre-employment training” and working to establish a pipeline of workers to enter our industry. Working with the state agencies, we hope to establish an apprenticeship program as well, to train employees for the industry. We are looking to “grow our own” employees and to train them in our process and culture from the start.

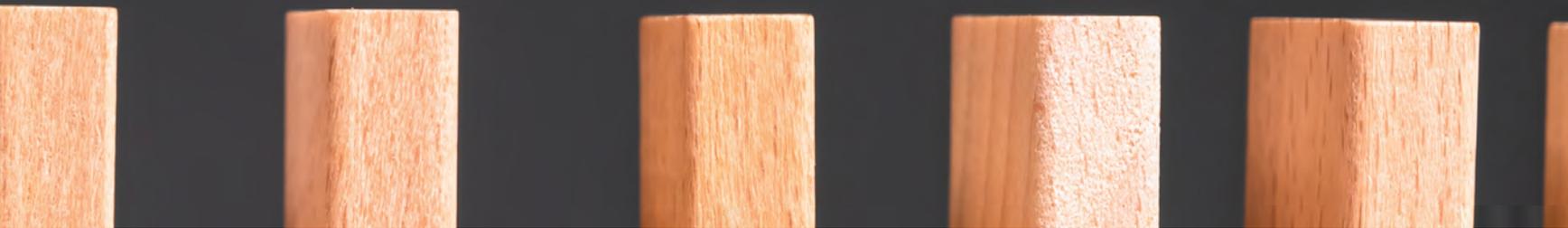
**Danner:** We are all fighting for skilled labor. The reality is that we all need to also focus on staff training and development. We need to hire in younger players and set a vision for them to make the print industry their career of choice. It takes a concerted effort across the plant.

**Petrulakis:** Outside of the general shortage of employees most of America is facing, our industry continues to face real challenges in bringing in young talent to the industry. That has been a concern for many years now. How do we attract and retain younger, hungry talent? This will be a big concern in the years ahead.

## What positive ideas have come from the lack of human resources?

**Moe:** It is forcing us to look at new ways to automate our production processes and to find ways to bring in a new type of employee; less skilled labor to “monitor” machines versus skilled labor to “operate and set up” while running. This will provide some more opportunity for our senior workers for advancement and salary growth, while helping to train the new employees. Working with local agencies that provide employment opportunities for populations that are restricted or challenged, we have found new avenues for employees recruitment and so on.

**Danner:** The lack of staff has required deeper thinking by our middle management staff. They have needed to use highly skilled operators and non-skilled technicians in different ways. They have had to break work down to its smallest denominator and figure out how to get the work done within the time allowed and the staff available. It has stretched their thinking.



**Petrulakis:** It's forcing us to be more and more creative to produce work on time and on budget with less staff. Our operations team works daily to meet the demands of our clients, and they do so with less staff to produce the work. It's also making it paramount for sales to be more invested up front with operations in setting realistic schedules before a project goes live. We can't just give a casual yes to a client on a deadline request without collaborating with operations. That sets all of us up for failure.

**What new ways to get clients to call you back have emerged over the past year?**

**Moe:** Haha, we simply tell them we have 10,000 lbs. of paper available to the next person to call us back!

**Danner:** Clients call back when there is a reason to call back. The supply chain situation has gifted us with a reason. Using that conversation talking point helps ensure that the right type of client is engaged in the conversation.

**Petrulakis:** A client will respond if the message you send has value and speaks to a need they have now or one they anticipate they will have in the near future. You have to paint a picture of the problem they may be facing and position yourself as the one who can bring the solution to them. But it's definitely harder to get a client to give you their time these days. You have to be someone they trust or someone who came referred to them. ☘



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# APTech to Launch EDgage Live

Higher education marketing community connects with print industry

Heralding a bold new mission to drive Printing Industry growth, the Association for PRINT Technologies (APTech) a couple of years ago launched multiple community building programs. Projects like EDgage and Wellness Marketer were built to create followings within specific verticals like higher education and health, and connect the print industry to them.

After multiple awards-winning content and successful online engagement, APTech is proud to announce the first EDgage Live event to be held in Pittsburgh, Pa. on September 14, 2022. With an amazing lineup that aims to engage with the marketing minds within higher education, EDgage Live was built to inspire new ideas, inform about the latest marketing services, and support the marketing efforts of an ever-changing landscape within higher education.

The event will be held in Pittsburgh's vibrant North Side, next to PNC Park from 12-5 p.m. The program will include higher education marketing and communication experts and industry peers in a truly interactive afternoon of learning and networking. The speakers include Louise Cavanaugh Sciannameo, Assistant Provost for Strategic Communications, University of Pittsburgh; Donna McLaren, the Associate Vice President of Brand and Marketing Communications and CMO, Roberts Wesleyan College; Abu Noaman, CEO of Elliance; Nicholas Scibetta, Vice President for University Communications and Marketing, Carnegie Mellon University; and multiple print and marketing service experts.

The core of APTech's mission is to support the people and companies that print. What they discovered is that there is no better way to elevate the industry than creating relationships with the markets that printers want to embrace. The content platforms and events that APTech has built provide an unbiased and casual vehicle of engagement for printers.

To learn more about the work APTech is doing to connect printers and marketers, visit <https://printtechnologies.org> and to learn more about EDgage Live, visit <http://edgagemag.com>.

**"The core of APTech's mission is to support the people and companies that print. What they discovered is that there is no better way to elevate the industry than creating relationships with the markets that printers want to embrace."**



# What They're Saying About **Amplify**

*BACK IN PERSON. BACK IN BUSINESS.*

"Amplify was a great show that focused on a key growth audience and market segment for Xerox – digital embellishments and creatives/graphic designers. The quality of engagements was top-notch, and it was refreshing to get back to face-to-face events."

**DEANA CONYARD, XEROX**

"We were very impressed with the turnout at the inaugural Amplify event. It was wonderful to see so many people coming together and it felt great to reconnect with our embellishment tribe. We are grateful to everyone who came out and could not have asked for a better platform to have launched our company."

**KEVIN ABERGEL, TAKTIFUL**

"Amplify 2022 was a great experience. The attendees came with a passion and eager to learn about print embellishment. The organizers did a phenomenal job of having a great mix of product on site that appealed to all printers."

**SCOTT DIAMOND, CUTWORX**

"Amplify's focus on post press and its targeted program for technical education made it a unique event in our industry. Attendee excitement related to meeting in person again and a real desire to explore and learn about the latest technical advances from vendors and their peers."

**MICHAEL AUMANN, KURZ TRANSFER PRODUCTS, LP**

Stay tuned for another great program by AP Tech. Visit [printtechnologies.org/edgagelive](https://printtechnologies.org/edgagelive)



CONTACT ADAM GOLDMAN AT 312/940-7504 OR [AGOLDMAN@APTECH.ORG](mailto:AGOLDMAN@APTECH.ORG)





# The Factors

Pricing controls  
and other metric  
best practices

**I**n June, Hopkins Printing placed a large paper order that is scheduled to arrive in February 2023. You read that right. General Manager Roy Waterhouse says the customer was extremely appreciative to be able to lock in the price—a move, that in these days—will help it effectively budget into the new year.

**“You may be able to offer discounts to some customers to keep them at the current price level. Be strategic and control it to maximize revenue and profit.”**

**— Saloni Vastani, Professor,  
Goizueta Business School**

Historically, most of Hopkins Printing’s projects are quoted and produced within a short amount of time, which helps it control costs. In today’s inflation-laden landscape, the Columbus, Ohio-based printer’s estimating department remains diligent to update the material cost standards in its estimating system.

Make no mistake about it—inflation is having a dramatic impact on Hopkins’ current costs. The printer has seen increases in paper costs between 30% and 40%, with many other supplies posting similar increases. “Most of our business is custom quote to the particular job, so the paper and other costs are included in the quote to the customer,” Waterhouse says. “We have found more customers thinking twice about doing print because of the additional cost and the additional postage for direct mail.”



While the inflation-fighting strategy that has been the most helpful in these unpredictable times might not be the one that jumps to mind, it is one firmly planted in the 45-plus-year-old company's mission statement—honesty. "We have found the best way to deal with these inflationary times is to be honest and up front with our customers," Waterhouse says. "The conversations are sensitive, but they are required."

Customer interest has remained a strong tenet in the Hopkins Printing playbook. Over its long history, it has always maintained tight controls around costs, so nothing has really changed in that regard during this recent inflationary stretch. In fact, in an effort to maintain profitability and secure better pricing, the Hopkins team has had to change suppliers and/or products throughout the plant. Much of the credit goes to its efforts to spend more time analyzing its project load.

"We have had to have tight controls on tracking costs and keeping costs updated within the MIS system," Waterhouse says. "This allows us to analyze each project through each department to determine which areas need improvement. We find the more we know about ourselves, the better we can serve the customer while still being profitable."

### Where we are; what we do

Last quarter, P&G announced its financial performance, noting an increase in sales of 6%: 3% driven from price increase and 3% from volume. Earning increase was only 1%, leading to the conclusion that the 5% increase was offset by increasing costs.

Saloni Vastani, Professor at Emory University's Goizueta Business School, says the story is not new—costs for companies have gone up. From issues related to supply chain driving the higher price of raw materials to higher labor costs, many businesses are trying to figure out if these costs should be passed along to the customer and, if so, how to pass it along.

His recommendations are two-fold:

First and foremost, strategically evaluate if you want to share the costs: partial or full. How inelastic is the demand for the product/service? What does any change in volume do to your costs? What are the competitors doing, and how may they respond to your price move?

"Remember, no response is also a response," Vastani says. "Evaluate the context in which your business is operating, and if you are the market leader or a follower before talking price."

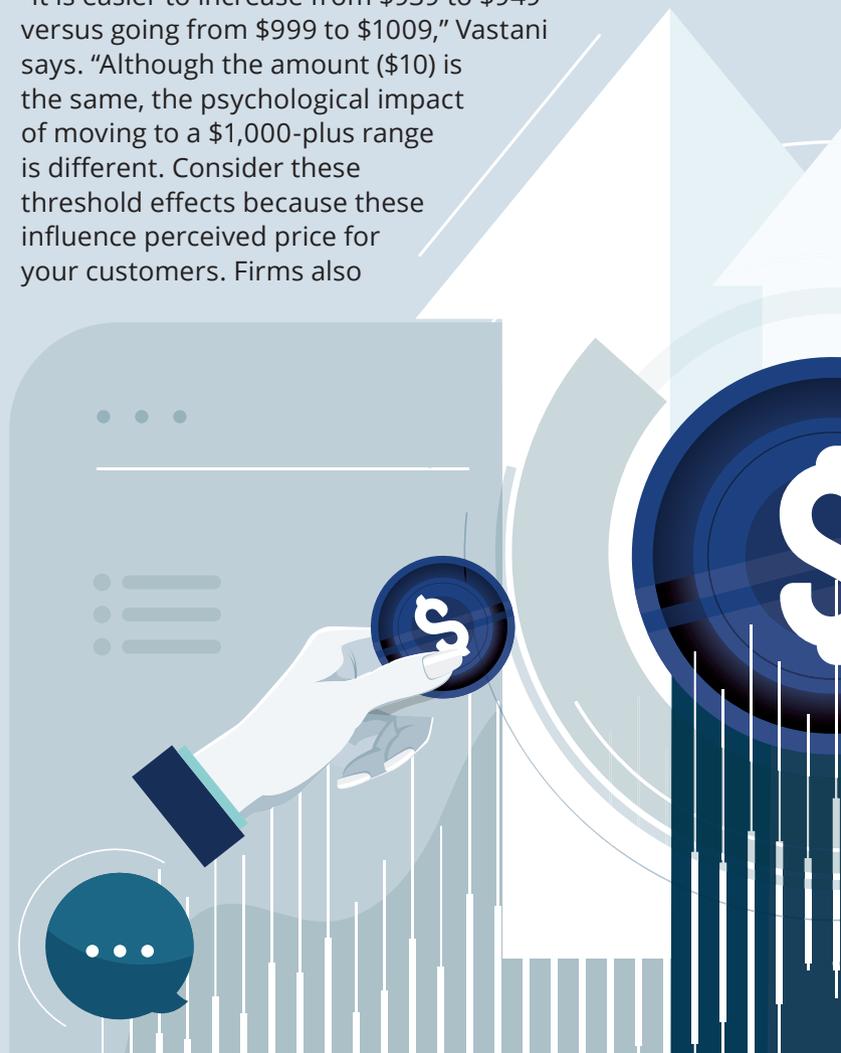
**"We have found the best way to deal with these inflationary times is to be honest and up front with our customers. The conversations are sensitive, but they are required."**

— Roy Waterhouse, GM, Hopkins Printing

Second, if you decide to take the price partial or full, consider the three levers of making the price change: level, timing and communication.

**Level:** By how much do you increase price and for which products and services? A blanket price increase across all products is usually not the best approach. Strategically consider which products have some room to absorb price—maybe SKUs that are more inelastic or have some room to increase before crossing a price threshold.

"It is easier to increase from \$939 to \$949 versus going from \$999 to \$1009," Vastani says. "Although the amount (\$10) is the same, the psychological impact of moving to a \$1,000-plus range is different. Consider these threshold effects because these influence perceived price for your customers. Firms also



reduce the package size and keep the price the same. This tactic is known as Shrinkflation.”

**Timing:** The beginning of the year or season is a good time to implement these changes. If you are a market follower, let the market leader take the lead and follow quickly if demand is inelastic. If it is a price sensitive market, you may want to delay the increase and gain some market share before taking the increase. In such cases, you can wait three to four months after the market leader takes the price.

**Communication:** Craft a well-articulated message explaining to your customers why the prices are going up. Customers want to be treated fairly and taking the time to explain your situation will be well worth the effort. Also, train and inform your sales team and call centers with the reasons.

“You may be able to offer discounts to some customers to keep them at the current price level,” Vastani says. “Be strategic and control it to maximize revenue and profit.”

Vastani says pricing has a significant influence on driving customer behavior and often is used to manage customer behavior. Higher prices deter consumers and lower prices incentivize people to buy more. “For decades, airlines have used dynamic pricing techniques to manage demand. Fast pass lanes in many cities are dynamically priced to keep cars moving in that lane. Parking meters in Los Angeles are adjusted to dynamically price spots to reduce

## A new playbook for CEOs

### Build digital, integrated, transparent and agile supply chains

A recent McKinsey & Company survey of supply chain leaders found that an overwhelming majority had problems in their global manufacturing and supply footprints. In response, many moved to increase inventories and find new sources. Here are several areas they say you can pursue aggressively:

#### Make your entire supply chain visible

Push your company to collect the data required to understand industry dynamics at the “tier-n” level. Map and prioritize suppliers by the importance to your business.

#### Identify and manage potential supply chain risks

Depending on your company’s sector and needs, factor in a range of risks, including those involving finance, regulation, reputation and data security. Operational-risk management is particularly important. Examine vulnerabilities inherent in the concentration of suppliers in the same area, the visibility of operations and processes, labor, manufacturing, and delivery.

#### Make seamless end-to-end planning a priority

End-to-end planning involves several things. On the supply and demand side, you must plan for longer lead times and earlier ordering. The financial implications of increased transportation, energy, and materials costs on working capital must be understood. The reorder points and stock of critical materials in inventory have to be reviewed. Production programs must be reprioritized in the event of foreseeable shortages.

demand during peak times. However, a firm’s pricing strategy can have an enormous impact on even the public welfare space.”

As we learn more about what motivates humans, not just as consumers, but as people, can we use it to drive people to more prosocial behaviors that benefit firms, consumers and the environment? Vastani says that Prosocial Pricing strategies have the power to improve the quality of our lives, create a sustainable planet and likely even save lives.

“So, perhaps, Public-Private-People-Partnerships should be the new 4 P’s added to the pricing playbook.” ☐☐☐

# Q&A

## SABINE LENZ, FOUNDER, PAPERSPECS

### GET CREATIVE NOW: PAPERSPEC'S SABINE LENZ ON ENGAGING WITH TODAY'S CREATIVES

Inspiration. Insights. Access. If you're looking to create an engagement with that "wow" factor, Sabine Lenz says you need a bit of each of those—and more. As founder and president of PaperSpecs, she has created an innovative resource for highly committed creatives who are in love with the tactile experience provided by paper and print.

Through videos, webinars, blog posts and speaking engagements, PaperSpecs provides all of the hands-on tools and resources designers need to not only be creative, but also to thrive in an ever-evolving creative landscape.

The former principal and art director at Australia's b design, Lenz saw a gap in the education and connection channels for creatives. She created PaperSpecs to be a premier community for graphic designers, building a remarkable following of the most progressive agencies in the world.

We sat down with Lenz, often referred to as the "Paper Queen," to get her thoughts on the landscape of design and the challenges her followers face.

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#### How do you see designers and agencies defining themselves in the current landscape?

While designers still deliver graphic design, web design, and branding solutions, their overall role has evolved. They now have "a seat at the table" so to speak. They often are involved in strategy, offering a unique point of view based on insight and research.

The McKinsey Design Index is a commonly known metric showing the actual business value of design.

#### What are the biggest differences that design firms are dealing with today?

Probably more than other industries, design studios and agencies have embraced the work from home—and beyond this, work from anywhere—model. Many studios have a skeleton staff that comes into the office regularly, while the majority of team members work remotely from literally anywhere in the world.

While the studios are embracing this, it makes it harder for printers to connect with them and share new technologies or ideas with them.

#### What are your thoughts on the current role of print and paper in marketing?

We live in a digital-first world where everyone starts and ends their day looking at a screen. As a result, studies have shown that digital fatigue has increased exponentially since 2020. This is where print—well done print—really has a chance to shine, to stand out and make an impact.

Because print is relatively rare, it has the potential to be special. It is a fresh, welcome surprise. Quality printed pieces often are perceived to possess authenticity and credibility because they are tangible and feel real.

For example, direct mail done right can be very effective and, more than ever, consumers respond well to print. In other words, something you can hold in your hands creates trust.

Smart marketers are leaning in to print and producing high quality marketing materials and packaging. While the recipient might not be able to pinpoint what speaks to them, few will be able to say, "I am impressed with this digital foiling or blind embossing." They know they are in the presence of something special and that speaks to them.

### **Share some of the biggest challenges you hear about from today's designers.**

Like everyone else, creatives are frustrated if they cannot get the paper they are hoping for. And frequently the paper they can get is not even close to their expectations.

Beyond this, we hear from a lot of creatives who are disappointed that the overall production quality their usual printer provides has gone down. Many seasoned craftsmen, press and beyond, retired during COVID, and their experience now is greatly missed.

One of our PaperSpecs PRO members said they had to reject the reprint of their business cards not once, but twice, as the PSP was not able to hold registration on a rich black background. The printer—the same one they had used for years for this project—even went so far as to recommend they remove the CMY and just run a simple black instead of a rich one. Sadly a true story.

PSPs who did everything they could to retain their experienced workers are reaping the rewards now.

### **What advice can you offer those who want to use print within their campaigns?**

My advice has not changed over the years: Involve your printer early in the project. This is more important now than ever, as in many cases, paper must be ordered now if the project will be printed within the next three to six months.



As well, there are so many fabulous technologies available now to enhance a project, even on smaller print runs. Having your PSP chime in and make suggestions about how to take a project to the next level is tremendously helpful and greatly appreciated.

A PSP willing to contribute to the creative process and provide quality samples will be welcomed with open arms. 🎨



**"A PSP WILLING TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE CREATIVE PROCESS AND PROVIDE QUALITY SAMPLES WILL BE WELCOMED WITH OPEN ARMS."**



# STAY GOLDEN

## Direct mail campaigns worth the extra cost

In the day and age of digital marketing, direct mail can seem like an antique strategy. The cost of a direct mail campaign is about twice that of an email marketing campaign—is it worth it? SmallBizGenius says yes. Here are some statistics they gathered that prove that direct mail is worth its weight in gold:



**UP TO 90%** Up to 90% of direct mail gets opened, compared to only 20-30% of emails. (Data & Marketing Association)

**ONLY 44%** Only 44% of people can recall a brand immediately after seeing a digital ad compared to 75% of people who receive direct mail. (Marketing Profs)

**21% LESS** Direct mail requires 21% less cognitive effort to process than email. (Canada Post)

**CPA \$43.90** Email's cost per acquisition is \$22.52, significantly less than direct mail cost-per-acquisition, which amounts to \$43.90. (Data & Marketing Association)

**57%** 57% of email addresses are abandoned because the users receive too many marketing emails. (Marketing Profs)

**30%** When asked, "Which is more effective at getting you to take action?" 30% of millennials said direct mail, while 24% said email. (Data & Marketing Association)

**90%** 90% of millennials believe that direct mail marketing is more reliable than email and 24% are likely to share it with other people. (USPS, Valassis)

**9X** The response rate for direct mail is up to nine times higher than that of email. (Data & Marketing Association)

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