

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:00] DC: This is the true story of two printers, who agreed to podcast with me and have their opinions recorded. Listen to what happens when printers stop being polite and start getting real.

[00:00:13] JM: Hi, this is Jamie McLennan.

[00:00:15] WC: And this is William Crabtree.

[00:00:16] DC: I'm your host Deborah Corn. Welcome to the PrinterChat Podcast.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:00:25] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcast From the Printerverse. This is Debora Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. More specifically, we are here with the PrinterChat Podcast and I'm so excited because it's been a while. Hello, Jamie, and hello, William.

[00:00:43] WC: Hello, Deborah.

[00:00:45] JM: Hello, Deborah. Hello, Will.

[00:00:47] WC: Hello, Jamie.

[00:00:49] DC: The gang is back together. Okay, let's do our catch-up. We didn't even do a pre-catch-up. So, this is going to be fresh for everybody. Jamie, you always have something going on.

[00:00:59] JM: Other than we're really planning for Print Across America, that's what we've been in this planning stages for at least a month now. Every week, we do something else adding this, adding that. What else can we do? Today, we just locked down our manufacturer's reps. They are going to come in at three different time slots. So, each location is going to have three different manufacturer's reps and for different time slots, and then we're going to have Piedmont Plastics, who you know, we've been on the podcast before. They're going to be here

for the whole day. That's awesome. We've got them locked down. That's going to be cool. So, that's one of the things, and we're just going through – the invitation just got put together. We sent an email blast to everybody, and then we're going to do more specific targeting of certain emails to get the people that we want to get in. Yes, that's been a lot of our time, actually, this week. I was off last week, so I've been trying to catch up. But that's what I've been doing for the last day and a half.

[00:01:47] DC: Excellent. We need to coordinate because I've hired a video production company, and now we've added additional functionality. Even if I'm like speaking to one person, everyone will be able to see the grid of all the open houses or people who are watching from all around the world. But we should coordinate at a certain time to pull your locations onto the screen, so everybody can say hello because you're doing such an amazing job. Thank you so much for that support.

[00:02:14] JM: That will be awesome.

[00:02:15] DC: William, what's up with you in Tampa, right across the bridge? By the way, Will and I lived through a hurricane last night, but we're fine.

[00:02:22] WC: Yes, yes, there was a hurricane. It did a drive-by or a fly-by, I guess. It waved from the Gulf of Mexico and threw some waves at us. There was quite a bit of flooding around the area. But we all survived, for the most part.

What's new with me? I don't know. So much. I am back on the grind. I am at Sign Parrot every day from 8am until at least 5pm and have released a good amount of employees at both organizations, both Tampa Printer and Sign Parrot. It's bittersweet, right? So, the thing that sucks, is it sucks to let people go. But we had expenses that were extremely high, and it was no longer sustainable. We had to make the hard decision and do that, and with that, all the managers have had to step up. Really, it was the majority of the front of the house. So, CSRs, some ancillary positions that were kind of backup upon backup, right? So, we were very redundant in a lot of roles and a lot of people to ensure – it was kind of like PTSD from COVID, right? You lose all these people in like a wave. So, it's like you are overstaffed. That was kind of what was happening.

With that, I'm kind of back in the thick and it's been about two months now that I've been on that schedule and been working through workflow, and changing processes, and figuring out where all of my leaks are at. There were many. Sign Parrot was just not doing well, it was failing miserably, to the point that I was hemorrhaging money. So, we've made a lot of changes there, both in staffing, as well as workflow and processes, which we can talk more about as we kind of go through the topic of this podcast.

But it's been a learning experience, it has been enlightening, right? I talked a little bit before about how much different printing and signs are, and how they share a lot of things, and there's a lot of synergy there. But there's worlds of difference as well, which has been a huge learning curve for me. I like to roll. I like to go trial by fire. So, I learned everything the hard way, and that's kind of what I'm doing right now.

So, getting through that and navigating it, and I've been able to make it a swing. Sign Parrot was dramatically in the hole and now it's turning a profit again, and we have some very, very big things in the pipe as far as jobs that are coming in. We're bidding on big installations. We're bidding on a lot of fleet work. We're getting the processes down for wraps. We're getting the processes down for permit work. We're going to be forced to be reckoned with in the not-so-distant future. It's going to take some time and require some patience.

Then, the only other thing outside of that, that I'm excited about that that's kind of in my purview is I will be speaking at the INKISH Non-Event in Copenhagen.

[00:04:58] DC: Copenhagen.

[00:05:00] WC: Copenhagen. That event is in November, November 29th, and 30th, and I will be speaking the morning of the 30th. So, if you happen to be in Copenhagen, during that time, come by and see me.

[00:05:12] DC: I actually mentioned that, and you are speaking at that event on another podcast, The Print Report. We went over all the events coming up. I have a quick question for you, William before I give my little catch-up here. I was having a conversation with someone who owned a wide format signage business last week and got a little heated in the sense that their position was that when it comes to signage and wide format, people only want to speak to

people about that. Because you do have so much experience and so much of your sales do come through online, at least in Tampa Printer, I was just wondering what your thoughts are. Do you think that there's still a both-way for that? Or at the end of the day, when it comes to signs is it really, they just want to talk to people, and that's the end of it?

[00:06:11] WC: When you use the word signs, it's kind of a broad umbrella, right? When you look at wide format printing, banners, pop-up displays, your yard signs, even parking signs, things of that nature, things that do not require installation, you can go online. "I wanted to say this, I wanted them this material, ship it to me." That's a huge, huge market. It's very, very competitive. It actually makes the wide format printing side of things much more competitive, because there's so much available resources for online ordering for that stuff, both in trade, and retail. If you're in the printing business, and you don't broker that stuff, then you need to start. So, just go ahead and get on that.

But the big learning curve has been with vehicle wraps, with signs that need to be installed. And even more so, with signs that have to be installed, right? Is that, a lot of times the customer doesn't know what they need. You'll have someone that says, "Well, I want this big sign on my building, and I want it to light up, and I want it done in two weeks, and I've got a \$500 budget." Sweetie, sorry, but that's going to take like 12 weeks because we're going to have to permit that because it's electrical.

[00:07:13] DC: You guys told me, and we have to remove the other sign that's still hooked to the electricity.

[00:07:17] WC: Right. You're probably looking more close to like \$15,000, \$20,000, depending on the size of the sign. Then people just get sticker shock. Their hair blows back and they're like, "What?" It's like, okay, well, I can throw a sheet of ACM up there for you and it'll cost you 1,500 bucks. We can do that, but it's not going to light up.

[00:07:34] DC: And for all of us who don't own sign businesses, what does ACM?

[00:07:38] WC: ACM is a metal composite. So, aluminum composite. It's a core PVC, and then it has very thin aluminum sheeting on either side. It's like a sandwich. It's very popular in the sign industry. We print on it a lot.

So, there's this huge disconnect in like what people think that they can get for what it costs. If you're not immediately responsive in making that person feel like they are being taken care of, they're just running through the list, right? So, if they're online, and they're searching for sign companies, and you are number one, and you don't answer the phone, they're calling number two, and then they're calling number three. It's really the first company that shows them the most amount of attention and makes them feel like they are going to get taken care of, and is responsive, which it's very difficult to quote and estimate these things quickly. Because there's a lot of moving parts, especially if you're talking about something that's electrical, or permitted, or et cetera.

There's a vast cavern in the expectation for what you can get for what it's going to cost and what the timeframes are. So, educating the client is a hurdle. But to your point, I think that he's correct, or the person that you spoke to is correct in that when it comes to signage, for the most part, people want to talk to somebody about it because they don't know what they need, they don't know what they want. And that goes in line again to the person that's on the other side that's answering that call has to be educated and at least sound like they know what they're talking about to give them those warm and fuzzies. To the other side, there's still definitely a space for online ordering for low level. I kind of differentiate between – I call it knickknacks shit, right? So, knickknacks shit, which is yard signs. I'm going to drill a 24 by 36 piece of ACM or we're going to do some PVC with standoffs or simple stuff. Versus like, okay, we're going to do a 12-foot by 18-foot sign that's 30 feet in the air.

[00:09:24] DC: Right. I don't disagree with anything you said and I didn't disagree with what he said. We've all discussed it before that I still feel like websites can be used as an educational tool. So, for example, you say ACM, and I'm like, "What is that?" But if I understand that, like your website's a resource, and I can learn about all the different types of signage. But I hear you and I don't disagree with large purchases. I want to speak to a human too. You're right, most of it, people don't know what they want. They don't know what they're asking for. So, I think that was a really great point.

[00:10:01] WC: So, it's fun, and I'm going to do a really quick plug here. It's a great opportunity for it. I've basically been taken to sign schools when it comes down to, and I've been applying what I've been learning to my method of doing things and how I build software, and how I build my e-comm. So, all of these little products that I come across, and that I'm quoting and

estimating, I'm building the catalog as I go. And I'm making everything super granular, where like, right now, I'm working on building out trailers where you can actually quote getting your trailer wrapped on my website, based on the height, the length, and the width of your trailer. It'll give you the number. If you know how big your trailer is, it'll tell you how much it's going to cost you to wrap it.

The whole method of how I've always built things is with the idea and that, yes, the customer can go online, and they can do this themselves. But the CSR that we hired that maybe worked at FedEx for a week and a half, or whatever has zero experience and zero knowledge. We can give them this website, and someone calls and says, "Hey, I have a 20-foot trailer. How much is it going to cost me to wrap it?" They're going to say in a matter of a couple of seconds, "Oh, it's going to cost you \$3,600." I'm just pulling a random number out of thin air. That's what's really been fun is like being able to build that in real time. As I'm putting out fires, like building the house to not burn down again.

[MESSAGE]

[00:11:19] DC: Printspiration is streaming across the Printerverse on the Project Peacock Network, and our mission to provide education and resources for print customers, students, and printers around the world has never been more accessible. Watch what you want, when you want, where you want. It's free. Visit ProjectPeacock.TV to access original programming and replays from our online events. Learn about the Peacock partners and companies featured in our shows. Join our mailing list to learn about new episode premieres and series launches and create a free account to make watch lists. Ready for your close-up? Get your Peacock show on air by visiting ProjectPeacock.TV and request your partnership proposal today. Peacock Long and Prosper.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[00:12:10] DC: Yes, I mean, that's what I mean a lot of times when I'm saying about that, like, get rid of the people that you can keep online and keep without asking questions and human intervention, and then have people. To your point, look at you, you just have to downsize people, right? Now, we target those people to only have to speak to the ones that are going to bring in new accounts, or the ones who are going to help get that sign sold after people know at

least the basic information about it. I'm glad I asked you because you're a very good barometer for that. So, thank you so much.

As far as me, Jamie mentioned preparing for Print Across America. Go to printacrossamerica.com if you don't know what that is, as well as International Print Day, where I'm hosting a 10-hour online conference. That's at internationalprintday.org, Actually going to Brussels next week to Labelexpo with my BFFs at HP, where we will be on what they call the patio of the exhibition space there. Really excited about that. October 5th is Girls Who Print Day, and I will be hosting the virtual conference live from the Canon Solutions America Customer Innovation Center down in Boca.

Shortly after that, I'm also hosting a Project Peacock Print Fair in the same location in South Florida. So, everybody get ready for that, and I will certainly be sending out invitations. Of course, I have been furiously preparing for Drupa. I don't know if you guys know, I'm co-hosting one of the forums there. It's called Drupa DNA. It's for startups. It's talking about sustainability, workforce development, and new technology. My co-host is Frank Tueckmantel, and he is formerly of EFI, and we have been speaking with some of the exhibitors that are going to be in Hall seven at Drupa, and to understand the technologies that they bring to the table, and what their sessions are going to be like. A lot more coming on that, but it has been a lot of late nights. Let's just put it that way.

So, everything we're actually speaking about now is related to the topic of this podcast, and I was online a short time ago and I follow Bill Farquharson, which everybody should. He runs a company. His company is called The Sales Vault. He also works with Kelly Mallozzi, who is of course, a girl who prints. And he put out a post and he said, every year I say the same thing, and it's worth repeating. He says, this is a quote, "The three most important selling months of the year are September, October, and November. What you do or don't do, in that roughly 90-day period, will determine how your 2023 ends and how your 2024 begins." I think that is really great advice, Jamie.

[00:15:17] JM: I totally agree with it. I've been following Bill for a long time and it's probably like 15 years or more I had that cut out and put on my desk. This is what I follow. This is the big time. People are getting done with vacations, they're getting ready to get started. This week has been crazy with estimates. So, people are planning for the fall, what they need to do, and then

you just build on that for next year. Because what doesn't happen in the next couple of months will definitely come back. And people will be start planning for their beginning of next year as it comes later in this 90 days that Bill's talking about. So, I am definitely a big follower of that. I definitely push as hard as I can in the next couple of months to get as much as I can done, contact as many people as I can. It definitely lays the groundwork for finishing the year strong, and keeping next year going just as strong. So, a lot of people get that January where it's slows down a little bit, so you definitely want to have stuff ready to go when the New Year kicks off.

[00:16:09] DC: So, let me answer your question about what percentage, if any, are you asked for things that you actually don't do in-house that eventually you're like, you know what I'm saying, you're using this time, you're just planting the seeds. Do you start to notice let's say holes in your equipment list, although I'm sure that there are very few where you are?

[00:16:33] JM: I mean, for equipment, stuff like that. We're using trade shows coming up in October for that. Looking at cutting digital and roll presses. But we've been working on that, we look at that all year long. So, there's a wish list and a needs list. Right now, we're on the wish list, let's get some things taken care of, let's finish the year strong, and then we'll be able to take care of our wish list. But yes, keeping strong with customers and letting customers know, this is what we're looking at. We're looking at equipment that will handle what you're doing. Then, they stay tuned in with you, like, "Hey, when does is that happening? Is it coming? Because we're going to have a job." We got the swissQs with the neon ink, and we've been doing museum work. They're like, "Oh, we were just looking for a customer that could do neon yellow." That's us. It just was at the right time.

Yes, so we try and keep everybody informed of what we're thinking about, and that keeps that conversation going for the rest of the year. Then, plant seeds like, "Oh, we can think of different things to do that we don't just have to do run-of-the-mill work. We can add different things to our arsenal, which helps our customers." So, yes, as long as we keep planning that.

[00:17:33] DC: Getting the Intel now also helps you, what I call, the holes in the wine list. Everybody's asking for A. How can we add to A? How can we enhance A? How can we make A interactive? How can we make A better? How can we put marketing services around A? So, I think it's great advice. Will?

[00:17:53] WC: Yes. I mean, well, to the point of timeline and making your year. It's basically the Super Bowl, right? September, October, November, that is our time to build. But I always take it a step further and I look at things starting in July. July is historically for me, it's always been one of my worst months. It's hot, it's summer, everybody's kids are out of school, everybody's on vacation, you got a holiday, 4th of July is always a weird week, and there's nothing going on 4th of July that week. It's like dead for some reason every year. So, I always start hitting marketing really hard in July.

I look at it from the marketing has some seasoning and has to take some momentum. If you start doing your marketing when things are slow, by the time things are supposed to be busy, which is September, October, and November, then you're ahead of the game. But if you're waiting to do your marketing in September, then you miss the boat. Really again, like to Jamie's point, it's fall, we're going into the holidays. There's so much marketing and printing and opportunity that's happening around the end of the year, that if you're not planning ahead, then you're going to miss the boat, right? Laying that foundation for December is historically for us the last, I think, three years been our best month ever. December's best month ever, every year has been for the last like three years. That's because we start building that pipeline in July and we run through the fall and into the holidays and December is big.

Then, January it falls off a little bit, but we're not like destitute. But we're just a little slower, especially when you compare it to December, but it's well deserved. The team needs a break at that point, because they've been run ragged. We're kind of in a weird boat now where we've downsized some of our staff, and we had a hard no overtime for months, and now that's really dry. So, some of the employees that have been with us for a long time are excited because we're like, "All right, we get to work overtime again now", which is fun and interesting to see because I was worried that that wasn't going to be something that people were excited about.

But this August was our best month ever in sales, and by a long shot. I won't throw the number out, but it was, we crushed it. Everybody's inundated and everyone's maxed out, but everybody's working really well together. It's a matter of just kind of finding the rhythm where we can all work together and go through those processes. So, it's not just about marketing. It's also about planning on, not about today, and not just about tomorrow, but how can you work more efficiently as an organization, and make sure that you're reducing your waste, reducing your mistakes, that you have happy employees, that you have a workplace that people want to come

to. It's always a process. One thing that I always like to say is you have to work, or you can't work for your business, you have to work on your business. If you're going to work and you're an employee, you're never improving or growing and improving your business.

[00:20:30] DC: Yes. Looking at August, and being that you crushed it, can you ascertain any patterns? Are these new customers? Are these customers who are coming back? Are they buying more? Do you see any pattern?

[00:20:44] JM: Well, we have some clients that have been with us for a long time that are spending more, and we've been fortunate, and that we've had some clients that we've kind of grown with, that have been with us for a really long time. We've definitely gotten a lot of new business and a lot of new clients. There's always new clients and new business coming in. In this kind of change, one of the big things was we had a team of CSR. So, we had four or five people that were answering the phones, and it would take quite a bit of time, an effort for a customer to get to a manager or what I call an adult. Someone that like really knows what they're talking about and knows how to close the sale, versus somebody that's just maybe trying to rattle off information off of a website.

There was this big disconnect and in that the sales were not happening correctly. And really, the business that we were getting into, we were getting into purely by accident, and just by reputation. People called us, they know we have a reputation and had confidence in that. And the lack of experience and knowledge on the phones wasn't being a detriment to us, at least on the TampaPrinter side. On the Sign Parrot side, it was not the same thing.

Teaching and training people correctly is important, but also having the right people answering the phone. So, removing that filter away from the people that know what they're doing was the big change, and what led to the big improvement in sales. Because not only our existing clients spending more, we're converting more for people that are calling us for the first time. That's one thing that I've been saying as well is when you have someone that's calling you for the first time, they're going to have zero patience for you. Zero. You have an existing client you've been working with for a long time, they call you say, "Hey, I've got a client in front of me. Can I call you right back?" "Sure. No problem." First-time caller does that? Nope. They're going to the next company and you lost it. Done. Deal.

[00:22:24] DC: Great. Jamie, any comments on that?

[00:22:27] JM: No. Just agreeing with what Will's been saying and feeling his pain with releasing some people. It's always a tough thing to do. We had a little bit of that here this summer. So, yes, I feel your pain. But yes, we're growing through it and going through the work. But as you said, August is probably turned around. August are usually very strong for us, too. So, that dip at the end of June, beginning of July, and then it just slowly builds from there. As long as you keep doing your marketing and doing that early, you'll finish the year off strong like we've been saying.

[MESSAGE]

[00:22:57] DC: News from the Printerverse delivers topical sales and marketing insight, along with plenty of Printspiration one time a month to inboxes everywhere. Our contributors cover the industry and the future of print media and marketing, with strategy for strengthening your customer relationships, better targeting of your prospects, and practical advice for helping your business grow. Printspiration is just a click away. Subscribe to News from The Printerverse at printmediacentr.com. Print long and prosper.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[00:23:33] DC: This year, I gave myself the gift of a monthly massage, and let me tell you, it's amazing. I look forward to that appointment all the time. Then, I was speaking of course to my massage therapist and I got to the point where I'm like, "You're not marketing to anybody." So, I started helping her to the point where now we're stopped because she has too many clients now, and I can't even get an appointment, so I get very upset about that.

[00:23:55] WC: No. No. You got to play that card, and be like, "I'm the priority. Come on."

[00:23:58] DC: Believe me. I do. Sometimes she texts me and says, she's like, "Okay, somebody canceled. Do you want to come in?" But we have this conversation all the time when she says this to me, and I'm like, "Erin, the worst time to start talking to people is when you need them to do something. Book an appointment. Even if you don't want to try to entice them or give them an offer or something to come in and make an appointment. Give them a free tip how to stretch in a doorway or how to just stay top of mind with them and keep the communication

open.” I think a lot of people out there who are print customers don't feel that way. They feel that I need something now and I'm not looking at the big picture which Bill's plan actually compensates for. My email company also told me something very interesting that the worst time ever to send an offer to anybody is January. Wait until February. Don't do your year end, “Join now”, in January, no. But in February, everybody's over it and you're clear. And I used to have a printer, who didn't give Christmas gifts. Every Valentine's Day, the agency would get a giant basket of everything you want to eat in all day long, in an advertising agency. And of course, you remember that, because it's so separate.

So, the reason I'm bringing this up is because of something you just said, Will, about technology also has to be an order and workflow and things of that nature, and how a new customer there's zero patience, and a customer with some longevity or a strong relationship, kind of get away with a few other things. There are definitely – apologies are acceptable if needed. One of the things that Bill said that this is a great time to do is to identify, and he uses the word attack, five big fish accounts. I agree with that, but not if your house is not in order, because you're only going to have one chance at those big fish. If they ask for something, or they can't get somebody on the phone, or they get the wrong person on the phone, or they can't navigate your website, or, your job is going to take five days and everyone else is doing the three. That's it. I believe you don't have your chance to go back from being the person who used to be in that seat making those decisions. So, I wanted to turn the conversation to that now, which the three of us usually put it under getting your house in order. Will, since you brought this up before, why don't you kick off.

[00:26:52] WC: Getting your house in order. That's a tall order.

[00:26:54] DC: I mean, under these, of setting up a strong end of this year and moving into next year with looking at who are your prospects out there? What do you need to do?

[00:27:06] WC: Right. So again, one thing that we've been learning that I've been learning is when to say no, and that's always been a lesson in something that's hard to learn, is how do you leave money on the table? How do you decide what you chase and what you don't chase? In printing, and paper, and garments, and things like that, where it's easy to quote and easy to estimate, you quote it, you estimate it, and you move on, and there's not a huge time investment. But in the sign world, there's an expectation where you're spec'ing drawings, you're

creating a design, you're even doing engineer work, and a lot of this is done pro bono in hopes that you get the job. So, there's a lot more time and a lot more resources invested in doing a quote.

That's really what you have to do, is you have to decide what you're actually going to go after and what you're not, and have a broader picture of, "Okay, well, is this going to be a one and done? Is this going to be something that we're actually going to make a margin on? How much of a pain in the ass is this going to be? What's the path of least resistance?" Being able to kind of sift through all of that, and then even harder is training other people to be able to sift through all of that.

[00:28:08] DC: Jamie, you're in a little bit of a different situation, because you do go out and pitch people. Yes?

[00:28:13] JM: Yes, we do that. Yes. But what we talked about was getting your house in order, and we've been talking about our open house, and we've been playing for a while, and then when Printing Across America Day came, that's the day we were going to try and do it earlier. So, we settled on that date, which has made perfect sense. But it has helped with us like, in our plant in New Jersey, they're going through everywhere now like, "All right, there's stuff that's here we've had. We've hauled for clients for a year and a half or a year, we need to move this on, let's clear it out." We're doing a video of how you go through the plant. We're going to have that showing in our PA office and we're going to do a video of the PA office to show how it looks over in New Jersey. When people are over there going for tours, it's like, "This is the other plant."

So, that's helping us clear that, like get things moving graphics getting on the wall, refreshing graphics, refreshing images and stuff like that, window graphics and stuff like that. So, that's getting our – we're getting our house in order that way. Our workflow is in order, that stuff like that. But like you said, going after the big fish. We just had an email a couple of days ago, like, "Hey, looking at the 100 top companies. Here's 25 big fish in our area. Everybody should take a look at this. Are we doing work with any of them? No, no, no. One of them? Maybe two of them? But let's get a plan of attack on how we can go after these big fish." There should be a couple of people. It's not just usually one person going in there because you'll go into a room with five or

six other people and be like, "It's just you? Where's your team?" So, what's the best way to do that?

We're kind of looking at that now. These are the people we should be targeting. What should we be targeting? What do we know that they need? That's what we've been doing recently to get our house in order to start doing this in the next 90 days. But the whole Point Across America is basically got us to, "We need to clean up. We're going to have people here soon." We do little tours every week or every other week, but now we're going to have lots of people here. So, we're going to make sure it's ready to go.

[00:30:04] WC: Do I get to be in Printing Across America? What happened?

[00:30:09] JM: Yes.

[00:30:08] DC: You're the only one who's not paying attention to us. Will have only been talking about it since July. But you were busy on the beach in July.

[00:30:17] WC: I was not on the beach in July.

[00:30:19] DC: When were you not working?

[00:30:19] WC: I was at work.

[00:30:20] DC: You were working in July. Okay. I mean, he is not gangster –

[00:30:24] JM: You were living early in July.

[00:30:27] DC: There was a whole bunch of, "Oh, I'm home with the kids now. I'm so relaxed. Look at me. I'm Mister relaxed." Gangster lean. Always back working.

[00:30:36] JM: But yes, you're involved in it. You don't only know yet, but you're involved.

[00:30:39] DC: Yes. You should have an open house, I could come over. You're right. You're 10 minutes from me.

Okay, so great. How do you set up for the end of the year? Is that basically holiday printing only? We've spoken before about setting up new business meetings with customers, not sales meetings, and where you find out what their business goals are for the first quarter, for the second quarter, and then come back and give them a plan with how print can help them achieve their goals, based upon things that they've printed before, based upon what you can add to it to make it more valuable to the recipient, or more engaging, or cause more engagements. Of course, everybody helps their business grow in that. But when we're thinking about just finishing out the year strong, are we really just talking about holiday printing?

[00:31:32] JM: No, we're not. No, I have a meeting set for September that, a couple of our bigger clients, they do things all at the end of the year. It's all for their push for January. So, November and December are busy. September, we'll be having meetings like, "All right, we're going to need 20,000 packet folders to make you get ready for the beginning of the year. You're going to need the brochures. You're going to need all the other pieces." Most of this is like financial marketing and stuff like that. So, they send out a packet to every person that buys a policy. So, that's one of the customers and we do it with a couple other people. Some of it's a little scaled down. But, hey, at the beginning of next year, you should have all this ready for your launch, for you, making sure you're hitting the ground running in 2024. So, let's think about it now. These are the things that you usually do throughout the year. Let's get them all done in October, November. They can all be staged in December. Then, once you hit the ground running in January, it's already printed, it's ready to go.

We'll do the mailing, you can do the mailing, whatever you want to do it. We work a couple different ways out, whether it's kit pack and shipping. So yes, that's a lot of things that we're doing in the next 30 days is trying to help customers plan for the end of the year and that. Yes, the holiday stuff is definitely coming and there'll be that 75% of people that wait until two days after Thanksgiving to get their holiday things together, and then I'll have like 25% that are ready November 1st. Let's go. Let's get this done. I need the mail before Thanksgiving. So, that'll slowly spread out.

[MESSAGE]

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUES]

[00:32:58] DC: I have a question for you, Jamie. I just want to bring it back to you going after the prospects and things like that. In an advertising agency, when we used to put together RFPs for brands, we would have to give them pricing. The pricing in an advertising agency isn't dependent upon supplies, the supply chain, and the cost of paper. So, how are you, and Will, if there's a plus, how are you navigating this now with – at the end of the day, are you just pitching what you could do for people? Are you giving them basic pricing for typical job that you think that they might do, which is a great idea, by the way if you're doing a pitch, to bring some price ranges with you. But I was just wondering, have things leveled off to a point where you can just operate “as normal” whatever that might be, or you still caveat the hell out of essence.

[00:34:23] JM: Papers calm down. It's like quotes are good for 30 days instead of five days now. That's kind of leveled off. I mean, there's little spikes here and there little things. But ye, we're basically going in like working on a proposal now. Here's a program. Here's what it's normally looks like, 4-colors, 16-page plus cover. Here it is with embellishments. So, we're going to put a foil on the cover. We're going to put some neon. We're going to put some drop gloss on there. We're giving three options good, better, best. Here's what you can do. This is ready, and they'll do it for the end of the year. We're still – and then that price should be good unless something crazy goes on.

[00:34:58] DC: You'll honor it, regardless? Wow.

[00:34:59] JM: Yes, usually.

[00:35:00] DC: No caveats? No, “Hey, in case?” Wow, everybody call Jamie the printer.

[00:35:08] JM: Yes, right now we're doing that. It's not crazy right now. It's like, January comes in maybe – our paper guy suppliers are very good at letting us know that, “Hey, something’s going to happen.”

[00:35:15] DC: Postage creates creases and things like that?

[00:35:18] JM: That’s different.

[00:35:20] WC: Prices are going up still. I mean, the prices are not going up. They're not going down. They didn't go down, they just leveled off. They stopped going up. They maintained and the supply chain has maintained, to where we can get whatever we need to and we're not having to store crazy amounts of inventory too. Because that was the other hit is like not only were prices volatile, but we were having to like buy shit in bulk, so that we would have the materials to do the jobs when they came in.

[00:35:47] JM: And the price went down a month later.

[00:35:48] WC: Right. But before you could just order whatever you needed whenever you needed it, and we're kind of getting back to that. I've seen a lot of specialty stocks come back around. We've been asking after some of that stuff. So, some special coatings and blades and colors and things like that. The mills are actually producing stuff other than just standard coated and uncoated stocks, and kind of the same thing on your substrates and your medias as well, your role media, it's all pretty much open back up too, and you order it on demand. You need a roll of this, you order a roll, you get it the next day, versus, “We got to order 10 rolls of this to make sure that we've got this shit for the next two weeks.”

[00:36:26] JM: But as you said, postage did just go up. So, people know that. It’s August, so it'll go up again in the middle of January most likely.

[00:36:32] WC: It's a government entity, man. They're in the hole. They've been in the hole forever.

[00:36:38] DC: It’s just went up in July now. It's going up in January again?

[00:36:41] JM: They haven't said it yet, but it's been that way for the last couple years. It's always the end of January.

[00:36:46] WC: I don't think it's going up again. They went up pretty big. The July jump was a pretty big jump. Biggest they've done in one shot in a while.

[00:36:52] JM: It's the biggest in a while, but I'm sure there'll be something in January or the beginning of February. There'll be a slight increase.

[00:36:57] DC: Okay. That is just crazy. Will, I just want to say that you still have my favorite paper shortage story. "Hi, anybody who has paper, I'm willing to get on an airplane right now. Get it from you, rent a U-Haul, and drive it back to Tampa." And he was not kidding.

[00:37:16] WC: I was not kidding.

[00:37:17] DC: As long as he could – he was five minutes from the airport. He's like, "I'm going to get on a plane right now. Who's got paper?" I would have gone with him too. I would have gone, "Let us go get paper." It would have been so much fun.

[00:37:28] WC: We made it through though. We made it through.

[00:37:29] DC: You did. But that was just amazing, that you were just like, "I'm done. I will go to the paper at this point. Screw those trucks, screw those trains. I'm doing it myself."

[00:37:38] WC: I legit still have shit on my floor that was like random stuff that I bought because I could get it at that time and I didn't know when I was going to be able to get some more paper and we're never going to use. It's just sitting on a fucking pallet in the corner.

[00:37:47] DC: Oh, my God. Awesome.

[00:37:50] JM: We got a stock of light green envelopes because that's all that was available and we use them –

[00:37:54] WC: Not that drastic, but yes.

[00:37:55] DC: All those people who took my coin envelope advice, sorry if you still have them. During the time, it was good idea to use – try to think out of the envelope, typical envelope sizes. As like there's somebody's probably in the middle of the country going, every time they're going through the plant and they turn around, they're, "Freaking, Deborah Corn and those coin envelopes. What am I going to do? Am I going to open a bank? What am I supposed to do with these things?" Too funny.

Okay, gentlemen, thank you so much for your time. Until next time, everybody. Thank you for listening. Print long and prosper.

[OUTRO]

[00:38:33] DC: Thanks for listening to Podcasts From the Printerverse. Please subscribe, click some stars, and leave us a review. Connect with us through printmediacentr.com. We'd love to hear your feedback on our shows and topics that are of interest for future broadcasts. Until next time, thanks for joining us. Print long and prosper.

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Mentioned in This Episode:

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The Sales Vault: <https://salesvault.pro/>

Jamie McLennan: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jamieprints>

DMR Graphics: www.dmr-graphics.com/

Innvoke: <https://innvoke.com/>

Will Crabtree: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/will-crabtree-b130a346>

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