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Adding Enhancement Value & Profit to Print Buyer Relationships

A key emerging trend in the print, publishing, and packaging industries is the growing success of service providers utilizing digital enhancement technology to embellish and decorate color ink output and, by doing so, strengthening both their bottom-line revenues and their customer relationships.

The last 20 years have marked the steady adoption of digital design, workflow, and press equipment in the marketplace (with both toner and inkjet-based systems). The next phase of this evolutionary process will be to extend the flexible benefits of digital technology to the last frontier of job completion: the realm of postpress finishing. Examples of digital enhancement include 2D spot varnish coats, 3D raised dimensional textures, and embossed variable-data foiling (VDF).

A beneficial result of these new developments will be a growing market awareness about new types of sensory-based print applications designed to create a memorable impact in a world of omni-channel communications. The tactile and optical special effects represent a powerful new way to use print as an information medium.

This market trend translates into a very significant opportunity for printers to increase work volumes, new client acquisition strategies, and profitability ratios. The advantages of digital print enhancement—such as lower cost production with no plates, screens, or dies; short run job customization; variable-data

personalization; and minimal setup, makeready, and waste—can also contribute to achieving new business development goals from a marketing and sales perspective.

Therefore, digital print enhancement can be a key driver for future growth and a method of competitive differentiation for all print service providers (PSPs). However, in order to reap the benefits of innovation, printers should explore new methods of promoting their capabilities.

Create a Sample Library

In the print industry, samples are sales tools, and the best types generate new application interest by demonstrating design and production possibilities that make print buyers rethink jobs to expand the scope of future work. Since many print buyers are not yet aware of the possibilities for digital enhancement,



it is highly recommended that PSPs spend time to create a standard portfolio of branded, enhanced print samples for distribution to customers and prospects.

A library of application diversity that illustrates the range of projects that can be enhanced can become a key communication toolset for generating new business. The time and effort that is invested in producing this material should yield dividends by helping to establish a new market presence of referral and reference opportunities. The PSP corporate identity in the marketplace can benefit from being associated with these types of advanced, creative resource capabilities (and, consequently, client relationships can be reinforced for long-term gain).

Outsourcing Options

For those printers who are evaluating growth opportunities, but who have not yet acquired digital enhancement equipment themselves, it is suggested that an outsourcing relationship be established with regional industry peers who already have the capacity in place. Since the outsourcing service provider will benefit from the increased workload, they will likely be very glad to provide samples to the printer who wishes to introduce the technology and test the waters while evaluating a purchase for themselves.

Samples that Sell

One simple and efficient method of generating additional revenue from introducing digital embellishments to existing print buyer relationships is to adopt an “A/B” presentation approach. In practical terms, this means introducing profitable new ideas and options to current jobs (A) with the creation of added-value special effects via samples based on the original artwork (B). The before and after comparison that this technique provides can be extremely valuable in giving print buyers a reason to expand the scope of work, with proof in their hands that illustrates how to give new life to their designs and brand images.

So, a standard best practice to building a new digital enhancement business is to leverage the

critical PSP asset of a customer base to organically add revenue by adding value to existing work.

New Applications Revenue

Another important and compelling point to consider as a business growth strategy is the wide range of applications that can be produced with digital enhancement technology. For example, some traditional commercial printers have used digital decoration to enter new markets (such as small folding carton box, label, and retail point-of-purchase (POP) display segments) that were not accessible to them before.

Cost Reduction

Finally, another key operational area for PSPs to analyze in terms of enhancement technology is increased profitability from lower postpress production costs. Many commercial printers have a model of simply outsourcing enhancement processes to professional trade finishers. These expenses can be eliminated—and project profitability increased—by implementing a new digital postpress infrastructure. Other printers who have done the work in-house with traditional analog methods (screen printing, foil die stamping, etc.) should find that a digital solution can greatly reduce material and labor costs while also greatly reducing production times. This should greatly improve short run job flexibility in service of overall increased business productivity.

In sum, the rising trend of digital print enhancement offers printers everywhere an exciting new opportunity to add value—and increase profitability—to operations and print buyer client relationships.



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