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TECHNOLOGY ▶ SOLUTIONS ▶ RESOURCES

Prisma Graphic
Member Spotlight on page 8



4 Understanding and Preventing Conflict

22 Four Reasons Why Certifications Help Your Business

Sales Management

Customer Service

Marketing

Left to Right > Top Row

Julie Volz Vice President of Sales \ Robert Anderson CEO \ Rob Nawfel President \ Kerry LaBatt Director of Operations

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Table of Contents

<p>2 Spotlight Education Recap at the TAGA 2018 Annual Technical Conference Bruce Myers, Rochester Institute of Technology</p>	<p>4 Solutions Understanding and Preventing Conflict Jennie Jerome, The Strategic Artisan</p>	<p>8 Member Spotlight Prisma Graphic Sarah Sudar, Printing Industries of America</p>
<p>12 Spotlight Marketing Trends Jenn Strang, Printing Industries of America</p>	<p>14 Infographic Value of Print vs. Social Media Jon Hall and Ligaya Scaff, Printing Industries of America</p>	<p>16 Solutions 11 Tips for More Effective Direct Mail Kristen McKiernan, AccuZIP, Inc.</p>
<p>18 Spotlight Customer Service through Social Media Maggie Graham, Freelance Copywriter</p>	<p>20 Spotlight A New Look at Estimating Bob Lindgren, The Management Guys and Gerry Michael, Falco Sult</p>	<p>22 Solutions Four Reasons Why Certifications Help Your Business Joe Marin, Printing Industries of America</p>

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Education Recap at the TAGA 2018 Annual Technical Conference

Bruce Myers, Associate Professor, School of Media Sciences, Rochester Institute of Technology

The 70th TAGA Annual Technical Conference featured renewed involvement from many educational institutions, and noteworthy student-centered modifications and additions to the conference programs were well received.

Schools competing for the Kipphan Cup included California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly), Clemson University, Grenoble Institute of Technology, Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT), and Ryerson University, with the Ryerson “Rye TAGA” team winning the coveted Kipphan Cup as well as



Annual Technical Conference

the Attendee’s Choice Award. The Grenoble team received an award for technical writing, RIT was awarded for their electronic publication, and Cal Poly received awards for publication design and publication quality. The competition this year was especially fierce, with innovative journals





comprised of quality research submitted by all competing schools. The promised addition of a student journal from the University of Houston for the 2019 conference will likely up the ante for competition next spring in Minneapolis.

Among the programs at the conference was a student-industry focus session, where a panel of industry executives, moderated by PIA's Jim Workman, fielded questions from students in attendance about careers and job prospects. This session proved to be a highlight of the conference for many student attendees. Further, the students were treated to an exclusive talk by keynote speaker Dr. Joe Webb at the annual student meeting. Finally, the student dinner was another well-received event, with networking, socialization, and participation in a fun activity arranged by host school Cal Poly.

Looking ahead, TAGA will be working on adding more school participation for the 2019 conference; it is hoped that the proximity of Minneapolis to the University of Wisconsin-Stout will draw a team from that institution. Appalachian State University, Ball State University, and Western Michigan University, among other schools, will also be encouraged to join the institutions competing for the Kipphan Cup in 2019.

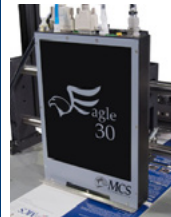
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Jennie Jerome, The Strategic Artisan

Understanding and Preventing Conflict

What causes conflict?

Miscommunication causes conflict and leads to unmet expectations.

Miscommunication is different from misunderstanding.

Misunderstanding happens when we use different words or phrases to mean the same thing. To prevent misunderstanding, we dialogue back and forth, checking in to confirm that what we heard is what the other person meant. We use context clues to confirm or correct our assumptions and ask for more details to provide clarity and understanding.

We are sure that what we are saying and what the other person is hearing—and vice versa—are equal. Because we are using the same terminology in the same context, the possibility for error doesn't even occur to us until the project is well underway and conflict has arisen.

A simple example: You are a new customer service representative for a printing company.

Scenario 1: A woman calls asking for a quote on a four-page brochure. Everything is going well until you ask how she wants the brochure bound. She seems uncertain, so you ask her to elaborate on what she means by four pages: Does she mean four physical pages/spreads (front cover, inside 1, inside 2, back cover) or two pages/spreads printed front and back (front cover, inside left, inside right, back cover)?

She's a veteran designer and explains that four pages always means two spreads printed front and back, so there is no binding required.

You apologize, telling her you are new and thanking her for the information. You send her the quote, she likes the price, and she signs the proposal. You feel successful and are excited to have learned something.

Miscommunication happens when we use the same word or phrase and mean different things.

Scenario 2: Two hours later, a man calls asking for the price for a four-page brochure. You now know exactly what he means, so you shoot off the quote for four pages—no need to include the number of spreads. He signs the proposal and sends over the file. Your

design team works up a proof and just before you send it off to him, you realize the proof has four spreads—eight pages!—not four pages/two spreads. Uh oh...



How do you prevent conflict?

The best way to prevent conflict both internally and externally is to prevent miscommunication. What can often feel like dumb questions are actually clarifying questions, which are invaluable to deepening client relationships. They demonstrate three important points to the other person:

1. You are engaged in the conversation.
2. You are sincerely trying to understand what they want.
3. You are working to provide the best service possible.

At the end of Scenario 1, both parties felt accomplished not just because the proposal got signed, but because they engaged in a mutually beneficial exchange of information which prevented any miscommunication.

How do you deal with conflict when it arises?

Scenario 2 is the embodiment of true miscommunication. It provides three valuable insights about dealing with conflict:

1. Being right doesn't matter.

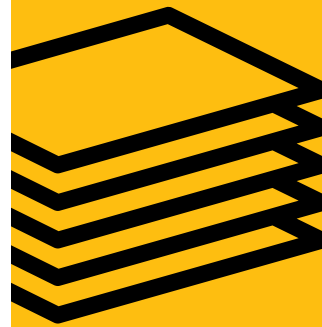
Our first inclination when there is a miscommunication is to defend our position and play the blame game. "I did it right! He didn't use the right terminology!" True, (at least according to your understanding) but does it matter? You still have to let him know there's a problem and deal with any potential fallout.

2. Positional bargaining doesn't work.

So, you grudgingly call him, explain, apologize, and plan to offer him some sort of monetary compensation. You feel annoyed, resentful, and put out. Your good mood from earlier has completely evaporated—all because this guy didn't know what he was talking about.

But here's the real kicker: When he gets your call, he's going to feel exactly the same way. Sure, he'll probably accept the discount, but he's lost trust in your expertise and probably feels he was owed the discount because of the inconvenience.

Coming up with a "solution" on our own, based on what we think the other person wants and what we are willing to give, is called positional bargaining. Positional bargaining doesn't work because it operates on the



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same premise that caused the conflict in the first place: that you know what the other party wants before you check it out with them.

3. Interest-based negotiation is the key to success.

Instead of positional bargaining, the best way to manage and de-escalate conflict is to make the other party feel heard, valued, and important. Often the lasting ramifications of conflict are not about whether or not you solved the problem, but what you did to preserve and increase the relationship.

Finding a Win-win

Interest-based negotiations are based on both parties collaborating to find a win-win solution to the problem. Instead of assuming you know what will fix the problem (and/or what the other person wants), you focus on working together to find a mutually beneficial agreement. No blame is assigned to either party. Instead of calling, apologizing, and offering a solution to fix the issue, you:

1. Use the facts to explain the situation.

Call and explain that it is your understanding that four pages equals two spreads and that the four spreads he



provided actually equal eight pages, not four, so the quote you gave him was inaccurate. Let him know what the new price will be.

2. Let him propose a solution and be open-minded.

Ask what he thinks should be done and where he wants to go from here. Be willing to work with whatever solution he proposes and try to understand what's motivating his approach.

Trying to understand the other person's interests and perspectives—regardless whether or not you agree—creates a sense of teamwork and shows deep respect for the other person and their point of view. Ultimately, it's this respect and collaboration that empowers participants to move beyond problem solving around conflict and create long-term relationships and client success.

Bonus Pro Tip:

Terminology differs substantially throughout the industry. It's always best to confirm where the other person is coming from and that you are both speaking the same language no matter how obvious it seems. Having and sharing a document with your company's definitions for common terms can be invaluable.

A promotional graphic for Color Logic. The top section has a dark blue background with white text listing services: 'PROFILE | DEVICELINK | SAVEINK GRAY | RGB | CMYK | MULTICOLOR'. Below this is the 'CoRA' logo, which features the letters 'CoRA' in a stylized, colorful font with a circular graphic element. The bottom section has a dark blue background with the 'Color Logic' logo in white and yellow, followed by the tagline 'Color Focused. Technology Driven.' and the website 'www.colorlogic.de'. At the very bottom, it says 'U.S. Distribution: CrossXColor, Inc. • www.crossxcolor.com'.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jennie Jerome is widely recognized as an emerging business development leader dedicated to crafting memorable brand identity systems throughout the world. Her ability to be at the forefront of digital trends stems from her deep understanding of both illustrative narrative and story. She has worked with companies in both the public and private sectors to create measurable brand value through detailed analysis, design, and implementation strategies that further growth and development.



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Member Spotlight: Prisma Graphic

Sarah Sudar, Copywriter, Printing Industries of America

Technology has changed the way printing is done. Presses are faster and digital presses have become even more automated. Because of this, not as many people are needed on the printing floor. Where they are needed is in customer service and sales. Here, you need to exceed the customer's expectations.

According to Jennifer Decker, Prisma Graphic's Director of Client Services, customer expectations keep evolving, especially when companies like Amazon can deliver in two days or less.

"These client expectations have made an impact whether we want to believe it or not," said Decker.

Prisma prides itself on its customer service and the attention to detail that CEO Robert Anderson implemented when he purchased the company in 2000. Since taking over, he has led it through an evolution—from a traditional, high-end boutique printer to an all-inclusive marketing solutions provider. Prisma has grown its sales from \$1 million per year to \$40 million in 2017.

The success of sales is directly proportional to Prisma's employees and their client service and sales training, an extensive program that can take trainees from three to 10 years to complete.

"I look at companies who hire salespeople and want them to produce reasonable revenue in six months to a year with no experience, but it just doesn't work that way," said Anderson. "You don't build a sales team overnight."



Anderson added that printing used to be fairly easy, but when you add data analytics, marketing supply chain, portals, digital printing, and pick and pack, it becomes a very complex business. If a company thinks they can train someone to sell a complex business in a short amount of time, it's unrealistic.

At Prisma, each trainee goes through an in-depth, personalized program. They start off by working through all of the departments, learning the business, and then rotate to the online division and learn customer service. Before moving into outside sales, they take on a role in customer relations, where they receive mentoring under a seasoned professional. This model creates a seamless transition, so as employees retire, the trainees taking over already know what the client expectations are.

“Most of the people in this industry are Baby Boomers, and we’ve worked really hard to bring in a lot of young people and train them to work with them as they retire out,” said Anderson.



Some of Prisma’s best people have come up through the program, and it isn’t limited to those in customer service and sales. Whether their role is as a driver or executive, all employees participate in extensive training to better understand the workflow of the company.

Prisma places a high value on their people and recognizes their team members as part of their success. They purposefully look for people who bring a



different vision to the workflow, which includes hiring from inside and outside of the print industry. For any job to be a success, it begins with communication. The team has to be able to inform customers and coach them on the logistics of mailing or how to use a marketing supply chain portal. If an employee doesn't communicate well or isn't focused on the customer experience, customers have many other options to choose from. Decker said people remember relationships and they will come back to the ones that serve them well.



Anderson wants team members who are in it for the long term, and he is willing to invest in them at the beginning and take the time to train them well. He looks at it as: "I have 200 families that I'm responsible for, and my greatest personal success is to watch them buy their first house, put a kid through college, and make sure they are happy."

When Anderson took over the company, there were 28 employees. Many are still there with several having been there for over 20 years, and one pressman just celebrated his 38th anniversary. He doesn't want to have a high turnover and seeks to hire employees invested in the vision of Prisma with a passion for growth.

"When we interview, we tell candidates, 'We want this to be your last spot, but not somewhere you feel stuck,'" added Decker.

Prisma is an ever-evolving media company that is focusing on the future, constantly pushing ahead while continuing to always focus on the customer. The plan for 2018 is to find a location east of the Mississippi and shift 45 percent of their online work from its Phoenix campus. With this addition, Prisma will have better logistics for distribution for east coast clients.

"When I look at how a 21st-century printer operates, it's all about logistics," said Anderson. "Anyone can print, but in 2018 it's about having the right people who can execute the logistics and partnerships that help their clients' businesses continue to grow."

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT CUSTOMER SERVICE TRAINING?

Check out the Customer Service Professional (CSP) Certification on the iLearning Center that Prisma's Jennifer Decker helped design. This online certification will help individuals deliver outstanding customer service by teaching them vital skills in the areas of professionalism, communication, client management, and how to navigate job production situations.

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Marketing Trends

Jenn Strang, Director of Marketing, Printing Industries of America

Marketing can often feel like a moving target. It is hard to know the best strategy for your business. Content marketing is the prevailing movement in marketing currently, and it will be for the foreseeable future. Rather than throwing a handful of spaghetti at the wall, this type of marketing strategy focuses on creating relevant and valuable content to attract a defined audience. The end result is the engagement and retention of the audience member in a profitable, long-term customer relationship. In this article, we will cover some of the current trends in content marketing that you can implement in your business.

User-generated Content

Think about the last time you blindly chose a restaurant, a washer and dryer, or a car without consulting an online review. The fact that we now have access to such a wide variety of content online allows us to harness the power of user-generated content by using reviews and testimonials to your advantage, empowering customers to be the voice of your brand.

Everyone Loves a Good Story

We love to be captivated other people's tales; it's why reality TV is so popular. Using real life examples and case studies to illustrate problems and solutions helps to link customers to the services you provide. It gives them the opportunity to see that they are in a relatable situation, allows them to see you as

more than just a service provider, and puts you in the position of problem solver.

Quality Over Quantity

Ten years ago, when email marketing was a juggernaut, it was all about frequency and making sure that your message was viewed as often as possible. It was later determined that people get annoyed from being pestered so often that they have exercised their rights to unsubscribe. The shift has moved to well-crafted messages, sent strategically, making direct hits.

Brand as Media

Many brands are finding that they have more to say than just a sales pitch; in fact, they have launched their own media. Dollar Shave Club disrupted 51% of the shaving industry in its first year on the market, taking down goliaths like P&G and Gillette. Along the way, they became a media company as well.



Included in their packaging was a small “bathroom notes” insert that resonated with audiences so well that they took it a step further and added an online newsletter and podcast. AirBnb now has a travel magazine to highlight travel destinations around the globe (*opposite page*). Brands are finding that they can help drive sales by not selling at all. And frankly, we in the printing industry are benefitting.

Social Media in Flux

If you've been watching the news lately, it's no secret that Facebook and Mark Zuckerberg have a bit of a tarnished reputation. Will this notoriety stop people from sharing their favorite Gifs, cat videos, and baby pictures? Probably not, but it will get people to start tuning out, and that could cause problems for businesses. Look for other platforms to start picking up the slack in the interim, such as LinkedIn and Instagram (although it should be noted that the latter is a Facebook-owned property). LinkedIn has been slowly upgrading and reinventing itself into a self-promotional version of Facebook in which professionals can promote themselves and their work. This is a great tool for company leadership, customer service reps, and sales professionals to connect with current and prospective clients to promote the company brand.

Video Rules of Thumb

- Video is a great way to give customers a glimpse into your world. Keep the videos short and concise (2–3 minutes max). Be sure to instantly engage the audience by stating the purpose in the first 5 seconds, and make sure your video is mobile friendly. When possible, go live! A few ideas on videos that you can implement right away: company milestones, customer success stories, employee awards and recognitions, turning on a new press or piece of equipment for the first time, or a quick how-to on folds or embossing techniques.

- Whether you implement all or just a few of these techniques, content marketing is a strategy that you should begin to explore for your business. Look for more marketing trends and tips to be featured in our blog in the coming months.

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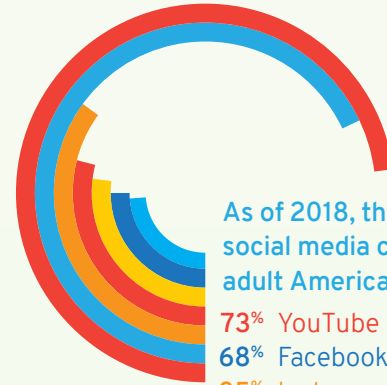
Thursday, August 23 at 2:00 p.m. EDT

Todd Butler will present an informative webinar on the fundamentals of ESOPs. Visit printing.org/esopwebinar to register.

PRINT vs. SOCIAL MEDIA

SOCIAL MEDIA IS EVERYWHERE

When it comes to connecting with people, social media is the obvious place to start. As one pillar of digital marketing, social media has exploded in recent years. Facebook currently has 2.19 billion active users and it's just one of many available platforms.



As of 2018, the most-used social media channels among adult Americans include:

73% YouTube 29% Pinterest
68% Facebook 27% Snapchat
35% Instagram 25% LinkedIn
24% Twitter

SOCIAL MEDIA'S ADVANTAGES

BRAND VISIBILITY. A social media presence can foster brand awareness and loyalty.

CUSTOMIZATION. Businesses can target key demographics and niche audiences.

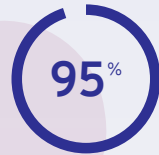
COST. Most social media presences are free to start.

TIMELINESS. Social content can usually be produced and updated quickly.

TRACKABILITY. Analytic tools can easily measure campaign performance.

PRINT MEDIA IS ALIVE AND WELL

Despite social media's widespread use, print media continues to thrive.



of people under 25 read magazines.



of U.S. households either read or scan advertising mail.



of Americans consciously look at billboard messages while driving.



of consumers ages 18-24 react to advertisements in newspapers.

PRINT MEDIA'S ADVANTAGES

At a time when consumers are becoming jaded by advertising, print media beats social in many ways:

TRUSTWORTHINESS. While social media is fighting against "fake news," print media is more trusted.

ENGAGEMENT AND RECALL. Neuroscience research suggests print creates a deeper emotional impact compared to digital ads.

TACTILE. Print can capture all the senses, including touch, taste, and smell.

FOCUS AND ATTENTION. Paper-based reading is less distracting and encourages more concentration.

CRAFTSMANSHIP. Innovative print techniques can turn ads into works of art.

¹ Number of Monthly Active Facebook Users Worldwide as of 1st Quarter 2018 (in millions). 2018. Statista: The Statistics Portal. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/>

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¹¹ Your Paper Brain and your Kindle Brain Aren't the Same Thing. 2014. Raphael, T.J. PRI.org <https://www.pri.org/stories/2014-09-18/your-paper-brain-and-your-kindle-brain-arent-same-thing>



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11 Tips for More Effective Direct Mail

Kristen McKiernan, President, AccuZIP, Inc. *This article originally appeared in NPOA News and Updates.*

Marketers are renewing their interest in direct mail as consumers suffer from email fatigue.

Applying strategies such as precise targeting, customized offers, and personalized communications, marketers are leveraging direct mail's ability to convert. Mail continues to outpace digital alternatives in this regard.

Though direct mail use is resurging, sending the same old postcards to the same old list won't cut it anymore. To take advantage of the medium, marketers must combine their new data-crunching and content-generation tools with creative design and innovative presentation.

Here are eleven tips for getting consumer attention, encouraging recipients to open their mail, and enticing them to take action:

1. Make It Relevant – The slickest, most alluring offers will underperform unless marketers send the mail to people interested in the product. Use



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techniques such as sales history and geolocation to match offers with people most likely to respond.

2. Add Some Mystery – Lumpy envelopes get opened, especially if they don't reveal the contents. Add three-dimensional items to envelopes to raise curiosity. Alternatively, use space on the outside of envelopes to pique the interest of addressees without giving away the offer. Print variable graphics consistent with each customer's interests and demographic profile where consumers will see them before they even open the mailpieces.

3. Personalize – Personalization can be explicit, such as printing known information about each addressee, or it can be more subtle. Use data quality software to verify customer addresses. Then enhance the data with information about dwellings, likely income levels, or other attributes connected with each addressee. These variables will control the images, offers, and text that match each individual's background.

4. Stamp It – Nothing screams "mass mailing" more than a standard mail permit imprint. Avoid the stigma every once in a while by applying stamps to the envelopes and avoiding an over-commercialized look.

5. Try Oversize Envelopes – Be sure to stay within USPS guidelines (unless the budget includes costs for a postal surcharge), but choose an envelope size likely to differ from the rest of daily consumer mail.

6. Change It Up – Marketers can get into ruts. A successful campaign can turn against mailers if they replicate the design repeatedly. If mailpieces for a business always look the same, consumers assume they are familiar with the message and pay little attention. Copy or offer changes will have no impact if customers don't read them because the mailpieces always look the same. Change colors, graphics, formats, and design elements to continue engaging with the audience.

7. Dimensional Mail – Yes, it costs more, but open rates on small boxes and mailing tubes are phenomenal. Enhance customer data then use that added information to pare the mailing list. Spend the same amount of money by sending high-converting dimensional mailpieces to a smaller list.

8. Emphasize the Offer – Too often, marketers dedicate more space talking about their companies, products, and services and not enough about the offer. The offer encourages consumers to act. Don't bury the lead.

9. Interact – Direct mail is a gateway to other communication channels. Add elements like Quick Response (QR) codes or personalized URLs (PURLs) to printed materials, enabling recipients to access videos, games, contests, or other interactive content via mobile devices. Marketers can connect QR codes to USPS Intelligent Mail barcodes (IMbs) with software like AccuZIP's AccuTrace product, adding powerful tracking functionality.

10. Make Response Easy – It's a mistake to limit consumers to a single response channel. Make sure they have choices like phone, URL, text, mobile apps, or QR codes.

11. Show Them How to Find You – Promoting an event or a sale? Don't underestimate the power of variable maps. Clean address data and geocoding are the keys to identifying brick-and-mortar locations closest to each addressee by distance or driving time. Marketers have seen outstanding results with variable maps available through AccuZIP.

Direct mail still works, but not in the way it generated results twenty years ago. As in most other areas of business, effectively acquiring and applying data makes a big difference. Consumers expect companies to know something about them and to use that information to market intelligently—even if they've never bought from them.

Fortunately, marketers can easily obtain, standardize, and verify postal address information. Accurate address data can be used to match customers or prospects to databases containing other valuable information. Marketers that enhance data with geographic and demographic data based on addresses can craft relevant and compelling offers, which increase conversions.

Verified address data can also improve campaign ROI by enabling strategies such as eliminating current customers from acquisition campaigns, purging names unlikely to respond (such as trimming apartment dwellers from campaigns aimed at home owners or deleting deceased individuals), and tracking results.

Use the tips and ideas above to improve the effectiveness of direct mail campaigns, plan to track the outcomes, and use the information to refine future direct mail efforts.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kristen McKiernan is President of AccuZIP Inc., a provider of feature rich solutions to manage contact data quality, address hygiene, USPS postal presorting and compliance, and mail tracking and reporting. Reach Kristen directly at kristen@accuzip.com.



Maggie Graham, Freelance Copywriter

Customer Service through Social Media

Social media is no longer reserved for viral videos and connecting with long-lost friends. More and more, people are turning to social media to express frustration, review services and products, and get their customer service needs met.

Your business might have excellent customer service, but you are likely missing a large part of your customer base by not engaging through social media channels.

Here are some quick tips for managing the customer service experience through social media.

Not on social? It's time to join!

If your business isn't on social media, joining a platform is the first step. Your customers are already there and chances are they are already talking about you. You can listen and learn from customer experiences—good and bad—on social media more than any other platform.

Find out where your customers are hanging out.

Rather than stretch your resources to cover several platforms, figure out where your customers are and meet them there. Many consumers turn to Twitter for help addressing an issue, but an increasing number are using the messaging and review tools on Facebook or Yelp as well. All platforms have their pros and cons, but the most important thing is to be where your customers are.

Tell them you'll be there and follow through.

While tools exist to manage customer service online 24/7, you can establish customer service hours for your business and communicate that to your audience. As long as you are available during the hours you set, you can manage the customer's expectations for your service and help them as soon as possible.

Respond directly and genuinely.

Receiving a canned response on social media is just as frustrating as calling a customer service number and being met with a robotic voice. Each customer's experience is unique and should be handled as such. Use their name and, when possible, acknowledge their company or a recent service that your business provided for them.

Don't only respond to the negative.

The people who provide a good review or share a positive experience want to hear from you, too! Responding to someone's positive review or post for your business is just as important as addressing the negative ones. Sharing your appreciation for your customer's business will help turn them into a loyal customer or keep them that way.

Know when to hop offline.

Not every customer issue or concern can be handled on social media. Just because the interaction begins on social doesn't mean it ends or will be resolved there.

Know when it's time to invite the customer to provide more detail through email or a quick phone call.

No matter what, it's still customer service.

The platform may vary, but it's still customer service. If there's an issue, do your best to solve it in a prompt and understanding manner. People tend to hide behind computer screens, but that doesn't mean that their issue is any less real than someone who calls or voices a complaint in person. Keep your tone courteous and helpful while you listen to their concerns.

These are just a few tips to get you started on the path to customer service through social media. It may seem intimidating at first, but keep this advice in mind and you will be connecting with your customers in a new, meaningful way in no time.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

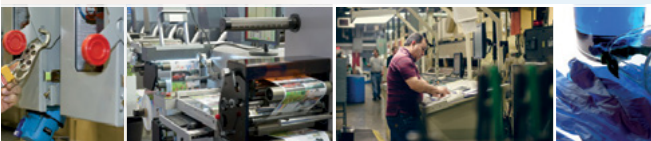
Maggie Graham is a freelance marketing and copywriting professional based in Pittsburgh, PA. She has over 10 years of marketing, writing, and media relations experience and uses that knowledge to tell her clients' stories in powerful, meaningful ways.



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A New Look at Estimating

Bob Lindgren, The Management Guys and **Gerry Michael**, Falco Sult

The recent spate of published stories, product releases, and version updates concerning new or updated management information systems (MIS) for printers has seemed to indicate that only if a printer spends thousands of dollars on the newest and best MIS can it hope to survive. While there are very important considerations for printers in both financial and managerial information systems, the continuing insistence on investment of scarce capital in such systems is questionable at best. At the root of such systems is an apparent belief on the part of those who are marketing them that without the very best and most accurate understanding of costs, it is impossible to successfully compete on the basis of price. One might think that actually managing the business itself is secondary to measuring the results of such management. We respectfully disagree.

Printers have traditionally seen the estimating function as the way to answer the question: “How much should we charge the customer for their job?” Hence, the estimating system has always been seen as a crucial element of the sales and marketing process.

Far too often, estimating systems are sold (or bought) on the premise that without these systems, costs cannot be recovered. The same argument is used to support the use of fully-burdened costs for estimating. Markets for printing are more rational than people sometimes think; that means that market-based prices can provide for both a return of investment costs and operating costs, but also can provide for a reasonable profit if the equipment is productively utilized and managed. In effect, markets set

targets for costs that smart managers will see as appropriate targets for their efforts at managing the firm.

Estimating as Production Planning

What is the point of estimating at all? Of course, we understand that “job costing” is an important element in most work-in-process inventory valuation methods, but accurate accounting is no justification for the very significant investment of both dollars and time that most firms must undertake to support system implementation and maintenance. Proper estimating can perform a valuable role in the management of a printing firm by assisting management to optimize the production process.

A properly structured estimating process can point the way to better production planning, thereby minimizing the production cost of each job. First, the concept of cost must be correctly defined. When a job is to be produced internally, it is reasonable to assume that it will be done by utilizing currently available but unused capacity at the company. Therefore, the real “cost” of producing that job is only the amount that will actually be expended: production wages, materials, click charges on digital equipment, outside purchases, etc. The costs that should be used here are not the fully burdened costs typically embedded in estimating systems, but rather the marginal costs to the company if the job is accepted.

In some cases, alternative production paths will change paper sizes and may impact possible buyouts as well, but even these decisions can be adversely affected if the attempt is made to estimate using full cost rates.

For example, it may well be that using an outside bindery to fold a fairly long-run job appears to be less expensive if fully burdened rates are used to estimate that aspect of a job using the company's currently owned folders. But these types of rates typically include a significant amount of costs that will be incurred regardless of whether the job is done in-house or sent to an outside bindery. These costs are simply irrelevant to this decision.

Of course, there are many reasons to use outside suppliers, not the least of which may be limited capacity to meet required delivery dates. But the fact remains that the decision to produce internally versus buying out a portion of a job can be negatively affected by the manner in which a job is estimated and the costs used in the analysis.

Implementation

In the real world, many jobs have only one possible production path in the plant as currently equipped, so no analysis is required other than the correct production planning and scheduling process. In those situations where multiple paths are possible, a simple and quick comparison will provide the answer.

Let's walk through how this approach might be implemented. First, identify the major work centers of the production process in the plant. Here we will assume a fairly simple printer with traditional capabilities only. Work centers would generally include the following:

- Significant presses (offset/digital)
- Significant finishing systems (binding/finishing lines)
- Mailing systems

For each of the above, define out-of-pocket hour costs (i.e., actual hourly labor costs) and click charges (if applicable).

Create a simple spreadsheet (or modified estimating package) to include these components. Note that the most important aspect of this step is having a clear understanding of the production standards (units per hour, etc.) that you are currently meeting or have adopted as goals or targets. This is much more important information than the calculation of fully burdened costs, but these assumptions are critical to this process, so they need to be measured over time and adjusted as required.

In practice, doing this sort of analysis for the most common types of jobs in the plant will produce a set of simple rules that can be used to make optimum production decisions. However, this is not what should drive the price offered to your customer. That is really determined by the market, not by your costs. Keep in mind that the most critical factor upon which this approach relies is an understanding on the part of the printer of the ultimate value of the work to the end user. Basically: What is the market price for the job? That has to drive pricing, not some artificial estimate of full costs.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Gerry Michael is a CPA/consultant who has focused his practice on the printing industry for nearly 35 years, first as the founder of GA Michael & Company and later as Graphic Arts lead partner at Carlson Advisors. Currently he is a consulting principal with the firm of Falco Sult, Inc.

Bob Lindgren is the former Executive Director of Printing Industries Association of Southern California and is now a business and management advisor with The Management Guys. He has worked with printers both in Los Angeles and Chicago for more than 50 years and has an MBA in accounting and finance from the University of Chicago.



Four Reasons Why Certifications Help Your Business

Joe Marin, Vice President, Education and Training, Printing Industries of America

What sets apart industry certifications from training courses and classes? There are some major differences between the two, and while all training is a good thing, there are some clear benefits to industry certifications. Certifications are structured, granular, and test knowledge at a very detailed level. Certifications cover topics in more depth, are usually eLearning-based, include supporting reference materials, and require passing an extensive certification exam to validate the information covered before obtaining the certificate.

An investment in certifications for your staff can be beneficial for your employees, your customers, and ultimately your business. While there are many advantages of having certified staff, we'll explore the top four reasons why certifications can lead to a happier, more knowledgeable staff who delight your customers.

Better-trained Employees

A certified staff member shows that they have taken the time to be the very best they can be in their field or industry. The advanced, in-depth training offered in certification programs means that your certified staff adhere to industry best practices and standards and execute projects with increased efficiency.

Employee Recruiting and Retention

Finding, hiring, and onboarding new employees in any business can require a significant investment of time and money. Employees with certifications tend to stay with organizations longer, reducing hiring costs and minimizing disruption to the business. Millennials, in particular, want to work for companies that invest in them and offer a path for personal and professional career growth. If you want to attract and retain the best employees, investing in an industry certification is a great starting point.

Makes Your Business Stand Out

Is competition high in our industry? You bet it is. A certified staff shows your customers and your competitors that you have more to offer and that you care. Think about it: what kind of company do you like to do business with? What makes you want to work with these businesses? Often times, it's the credibility of the company and its staff and not always who has the lowest price. Differentiate your organization from

The screenshot shows an eLearning interface for a module titled "1.1 Introduction to Lean Manufacturing". The main content area displays the title "The Value Stream and Waste Elimination" and a key message: "As you drive out waste and flow your product more quickly through the value stream your operation becomes less costly and more responsive." Below this text is a diagram illustrating the value stream. It features a horizontal arrow labeled "START" on the left and "END" on the right. Above the arrow is a yellow bar labeled "LEAD TIME", and below it is a purple bar labeled "COST". The diagram suggests that as waste is eliminated, both lead time and cost are reduced.



lesser-qualified competitors. Clients will trust you more if you keep your staff up to date with industry standards, not to mention it can also give your sales team one more pitch to help close a deal—and that one deal could easily make up for the one-time cost of certifying that employee.

More Productive Staff

Regardless of the industry, study after study shows that certified employees are more efficient than those who are not, and who doesn't want that? They often look for better ways to do things in the areas they have control

over, giving them more of a sense of ownership in their role within the company.

Printing Industries of America's iLearning Center contains many courses, and most are free to Printing Industries of America printer member companies. There are also important industry certifications that support the ideas and benefits cited in this article. One is the Improvement Professional in Print Certification that validates the expertise of printing industry professionals who help companies achieve operational excellence by using the concepts of Lean manufacturing. Another is the Customer Service Professional Certification, a program that provides best industry processes and practices for CSRs in a production print environment. These certification courses are presented with context, go deep into a particular subject or topic, and include exams to assess the learner's knowledge.

ABOUT THE iLEARNING CENTER

For more information on the iLearning Center and industry certifications, visit www.printing.org/ilearning or contact Joe Marin at jmarin@printing.org.





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