

GRAPHIC ARTS MAGAZINE

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WHERE HAS
ALL THE
PAPER GONE?

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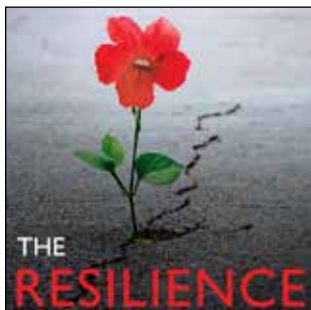
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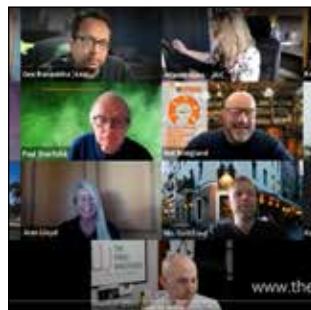
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For the  of print.

Printing industry continues to deal with supply-chain issues

First off, we'd like to congratulate fellow GTA printer turned Premier, Doug Ford, on his second term in office at Queen's Park. As a former executive at Deco Labels, he's taken what he learned from the industry, to lead Ontario out of the pandemic and onto greater heights.

In other news, worldwide supply-chain issues are causing delays, resulting in higher costs for suppliers to our industry. Price increases for consumables such as coated and uncoated papers, inks, toner and plates are being passed along to commercial printers. Many substrate suppliers are also waiting for materials from overseas. What used to take one week for a barge to arrive, is now taking one month or even longer. Shipping container prices have increased in some cases from \$5,000 to over \$20,000.

All this is creating a ripple effect that's being felt by every sector of the printing community. Industry organizations such as the DIA (Digital Imaging Association) and CPIA (Canadian Printing Industries Association) have done their best to help by organizing webinars outlining strategies designed to help

print shops cope with the current situation. Almost to a person, panel members at these events (experienced veterans who represent key sectors of our industry) agreed that it will not be until mid-2023 before this chaos begins to ease. Dan Sparrow examines these volatile challenges, their effects and options for printers in this issue's lead article. I'm confident in the hard work and ingenuity of the people in this wonderful industry to meet this challenge head-on with the same courage that they displayed during the pandemic.

This issue also begins a 3-part series on digital publishing written by students at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University), who are enrolled in its Graphics Communications Management Program. I'd like to thank Hope Ghobrial, Ethan Doyle and Ellis Mukumbaeva for their time and their youthful insights. As we take on new challenges, the wide-format industry continues to grow. Tony Curcio takes a look at the options for commercial printers in his special feature.

Hopefully this summer will bring you much-deserved R&R as we all do our best to cope with current challenges. In the meantime, stay safe, be well – and be well informed.



RYAN MULCAHY, Publisher
ryan@graphicartsmag.com
@RougeBouge



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17-17817 Leslie St.
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So if you have something to say, join the conversation today!

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would like to thank our contributing writers:
Tony Curcio • Hope Ghobrial • Joanne Gore
Bonny Koabel • Paul Shearstone • Dan Sparrow

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Publisher

Ryan Mulcahy

Editor

Tony Curcio

Copy Editor

Paul Phillips

Account Managers

Maureen O'Sullivan

Sandy Lee

Tim Mulcahy

Production Manager

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Web Development

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Canadian Printing Industries Association
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A unique Canadian success story over 40 years in the making

Today Unigraph International is known across North America for the high quality and exceptional on-press performance of its proprietary pressroom chemicals. But the success of this 3rd-generation, family-owned business goes beyond that – well beyond!

If you traced the history of Delson, Québec-based pressroom chemical manufacturer Unigraph International, who are celebrating their 40th anniversary this year, you'd have to go back to the mid-1920s in Montreal. A stone polisher named Wilbert Thibault had been honing his skills at Montreal Litho for over 10 years. In those days, stones (not plates) were used in commercial printing. He likely didn't realize it at the time, but he and his family would eventually become pioneers in the evolution of the Canadian printing industry – notably pressroom chemicals.

In 1933 Wilbert founded Commercial Litho Plate Graining. A visionary, he realized the potential for metal plates and developed an innovative graining method which led to the development of the first aluminum-grained plates in Canada. Along with his son Léo (Former CEO and Chairman of Unigraph) who joined the company in 1951, he played a key role in this transformation. Determined to continue the family tradition, Léo founded Unigraph International in 1982 and brought his sons John and Mike, and daughter Susan, into the company. His wife Ann Louise was also instrumental in the company's success. Today John is President and Mike is Vice-President of Technical Services.



Léo Thibault (left, founder of Unigraph International) with father Wilbert, demonstrating a first-of-its-kind plate processor.

Fast-forward to today

For the past 40 years, Unigraph has kept well ahead of the technology curve by releasing groundbreaking products for offset pressrooms. Today, with hundreds of high-performance chemicals, Unigraph has become the leader in pressroom chemistry in Canada. A typical example is their latest rollout, Uni Lithofount 21-F. This is a Fogra-certified fountain solution for sheetfed presses that is formulated to enhance performance on all presses and any dampening system. It also contains a breakthrough additive to control calcium build-up while reducing ink and water consumption.

In taking an objective look at the company, the following should be pointed out:

- The company has its own R&D Laboratory and is 100% Canadian-owned.
- In 2015, to meet rising demand for products, it expanded its production capabilities and warehouse facility in Delson, Québec.
- The company continues to grow via its large distributor network in Canada and the U.S.
- It continues to manufacture more environmentally-friendly options with low VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds).
- Unigraph focuses exclusively on formulating and manufacturing the highest quality pressroom chemistry – nothing else.
- Unigraph has been dedicated to reducing the cost of the printed sheet and increasing printers' profitability for decades.
- Their technical support team has over 100 years of combined hands-on experience.



John (left) and Mike Thibault

"Technology in our industry evolves quickly and we must adapt," said Unigraph President John Thibault. "We work hand in hand with offset printers and with press manufacturers to develop formulas that optimize the performance of their equipment." The company's products include fountain solutions, additives, alcohol replacements, plate cleaners, protective gums, solvents, roller deglazers, silicone and other products designed to help solve common print problems that occur in the pressroom on a daily basis.

"Our products help to reduce not only downtime, but overall costs as well," said VP of Technical Services Mike Thibault. "For example, just changing to a premium fountain solution can lower a printer's ink bill by 5%. Also, as today's offset presses become much more sophisticated, the chemicals they need must be 100% compatible. That's why we recently invested thousands of dollars to have the top three offset press manufacturers in the world – Heidelberg, Manroland and Koenig & Bauer – certify the effectiveness of our products on their high-end presses."

A special thank you

"At the end of the day, however, it's our customers and our dedicated dealers across Canada and the U.S. that have made us so successful for 40 years. We deeply and genuinely thank them for their support and their loyalty. We look forward to the future and will continue to develop new products to meet the challenges of our industry," the brothers added.

For more information visit www.unigraphinternational.com or phone 1-800-996-9918.

Staff Writer

A 400-year-old quote is still relevant today

In the 17th century, English poet, scholar and cleric John Donne wrote these now famous words: "No man is an island entire of itself.....every man is a piece of the continent.....any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind."

He was commenting on continents, and how we're all personally connected as human beings. Those words still resonate today. The COVID-19 pandemic disconnected people and the current global supply-chain chaos is disconnecting continents. I've always believed that we live in a "global village" and that isolation is bad for humans and for nations. But as we emerge from over two years of a mentally exhausting pandemic, we now have wonderful opportunities to heal.

The recent announcements of trade shows and other industry events are fabulous opportunities to reconnect face-to-face once again. A great example was the recently concluded 40th Annual Gutenberg Gala in Montréal May 26. Though I couldn't attend, I'm told it was a particularly friendly and upbeat event highlighted by a lively cocktail party and the presentation of the prestigious Gutenberg Trophies.

The International Centre in Mississauga, Ontario, will once again be the site of this year's Sign Expo Canada, September 23 – 24, 2022. Officials expect about 2,500 visitors and over 100 exhibitors. The 60th anniversary Graphics Canada Expo is set for May 11 – 13, 2023 also at the international Centre. It's Canada's largest and longest-running trade show for the printing industry.

And let's not forget about numerous in-person events south of the border, the biggest of which is the October 19 – 21 Printing United Expo in Las Vegas, Nevada. Over 4,000 have already registered in just one month (the fastest response in the event's history) and over 600 have booked booth space.

It seems that we're all more than anxious to get back to normal. My only wish is that the lesson of being isolated for over two years remains with us forever, and that we place even more importance on the greatest gift life has bestowed upon us – each other!

Until next time, always remember that we're here to help.



Tony Curcio
Editor, Graphic Arts Magazine
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we've been so successful
for the past 40 years!

Solucan installs second Cyclone C4+ Press

A new Cyclone C4+ Press featuring a new Tonejet Can Primer system has been installed at Canadian can-printing leader Solucan (Trois-Rivières, Québec) to meet increased demand for no-minimum-order can printing in 12-ounce and 16-ounce formats. Tonejet is a manufacturer of advanced electrostatic, drop-on-demand inkjet digital print engines. As the world's first customer for the Cyclone C4 direct-to-pack digital beverage can printer in 2019, Solucan revolutionized the Canadian market for production of high quality, cost effective can printing with no minimum run length. The addition of the new Tonejet Cyclone C4+, used for decoration of beverage cans, will support huge demand from local craft brewers and beverage producers for 100% recyclable direct-printed cans in short runs. The new press also has a host of new features including a bright-white primer for outstanding colour contrast. Unlike other UV

inkjet systems, Tonejet's equipment prints onto cans from any source without any pre-cleaning or other treatment being required. The second press also means that production can continue on both 12-oz. and 16-oz. formats simultaneously.



The Cyclone C4+ Press with Tonejet Can Primer Digital Decoration System at Solucan.

Allen Print installs Duplo DPB-500 Perfect Binder from Sydney Stone

Allen Print (Dartmouth, Nova Scotia) recently installed a Certified Series Duplo DPB-500 Perfect Binder from print-finishing specialist Sydney Stone (Mississauga, Ontario).

Owner Cameron Struthers felt that, in order to remain competitive, he needed to change and grow with the market. So he decided to sell off a much larger perfect binding system in order to focus on high-quality, short-run book printing and other high-end binding jobs.

The Duplo DPB-500 Perfect Binder can produce books up to two inches thick at speeds up to 525 cycles per hour. The cover automatically feeds into position, the book block is moved across the milling and notching station to properly prepare the spine for strong glue penetration, and a large glue tank with two heated drums and two side-gluing wheels is used to bind the edge of the cover to the side of the book block. The clamp can also automatically adjust to process variable thicknesses and set the nipping and

hinge scoring station for precision bookbinding – making it ideal for short to medium runs as well as different production environments.



Allen Print owner Cameron Struthers with bound samples from his new Duplo DPB-500 Perfect Binder.

Annual Gutenberg Gala a huge success

The 40th Annual Gutenberg Gala, Québec's premier event for the printing industry, took place May 26, 2022, at Bonsecours Market in Montreal, one of Canada's finest heritage buildings. Hundreds of the best companies in graphic arts attended their first in-person industry event since the beginning of the pandemic. It was a wonderful, upbeat atmosphere highlighted by a cocktail party and the presentation of the prestigious Gutenberg Trophies. As always, the event showcased the enormous talent, creativity and expertise of the province's print professionals. "This evening highlights exceptional pieces made over the past year," said Éric Lamontagne, President of Gutenberg 2022. "But the Gutenberg Gala is much more than that. It's an evening where we can meet suppliers, colleagues and competitors, discuss and compare your realities with those of others, check the state of the market, and see what's being done elsewhere. It's not about how many nominations or how many awards you win. The important thing is to participate, to be part of this industry and to make yourself known. This evening is yours, and it aims to highlight excellence, dedication, perseverance, initiative and ingenuity," Lamontagne added. For more information and a list of the winners, please visit the 2022 Gutenberg Gala website.



Éric Lamontagne

Spicers Canada acquires Duroflex

Spicers Canada (Vaughan, ON) has acquired Duroflex Specialty Papers (Mississauga, ON), a privately owned distributor of specialty products to the printing and graphic arts industry for over 22 years. "Acquiring Duroflex will extend available solutions within our paper and specialty product segments, benefitting both companies' customers and supply partners," said Cory Turner, President of Spicers Canada. Turner added that the acquisition of Duroflex fits with its strategy of continuing to focus on its core strength as a respected partner to Canada's printing and graphic arts industry, while identifying opportunities to expand its customer base and deliver comprehensive solutions across multiple product categories.



Cory Turner

Agfa to acquire Inca Digital Printers

The Agfa-Gevaert Group (Mortsel, Belgium) will acquire Inca Digital Printers, subject to meeting all customary closing conditions and legal approvals. The acquisition will strengthen Agfa's position in high-speed digital printing and bring an additional focus to the packaging printing market. "The Inca acquisition is a major step in Agfa's transformation. Digital

printing is a profitable growth engine for the Group with a tremendous potential that will be further accelerated by the addition of Inca," said Pascal Juéry, President and CEO of the Agfa-Gevaert Group. Inca Digital Printers (Cambridge, UK) is a leading developer and manufacturer of advanced high-speed printing and production technologies for sign and display applications, as well as packaging. The acquisition also includes Inca's portfolio of existing high-speed multi-pass printers, a strong service organization, a newly designed line of single-pass printers for several packaging applications, and joint development of a customized inline print engine in collaboration with BHS Corrugated.



Pascal Juéry

Registration for Printing United Expo 2022 now open

The leading trade show in North America for the printing and graphic communications industry will take place October 19 – 21 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Expect dozens of new product launches, live demonstrations, keynote educational speakers, networking opportunities, and the chance to reconnect in-person with friends and industry colleagues under one roof. Registration can be found online at the event's newly launched website. More than 500 exhibitors from around the world occupying one million square feet have already booked booth space. Leaders in the commercial, digital, apparel, digital textile, packaging, mailing and fulfillment, and wide-format sectors will run live demonstrations of their solutions, many of them award-winning, throughout the event.



Significans, Tilia and Infigo partner to release free online web-to-print resource

Created by UK-based Infigo Software, Significans Automation (Burlington, ON) and Tilia Labs (Ottawa, ON), Web Connect+ will host regular online events giving printers the opportunity to ask questions about adopting a more efficient web-to-print strategy. "I really think we are at a tipping point in society with e-commerce, AI and web-to-print," said Marc Raad, President of Significans Automation. "Unfortunately, printers who don't push the boundaries of automation will be left behind their competitors. This will be a great forum to learn more about what web-to-print can do, and de-mystify a lot of the technicalities, while also sharing what's possible and what could be possible in the future. I'm sure the value and insights we share through the Web Connect+ community over the coming years will be a game-changer for a lot of print businesses around the globe." To find out more about the Web Connect+ series of virtual events, you can follow its dedicated LinkedIn group page.



Marc Raad

SwissQprint launches direct printing on glass

OEM swissQprint has unveiled a total solution for UV flatbed printing on glass, comprising a retrofit glass-printing option and an adhesion-optimized ink set. The glass option and inks are retrofittable to all current swissQprint LED flatbed printers. A pivoting alignment edge with five step-free adjustable horizontal stops ensures precise positioning of glass on the print bed. The latter is covered by special protective air-permeable paper. The vacuum holds down the media, but the paper retains ink printed in the bleed margin. The new print bed stays clean, and with its roll-to-roll option, the operator advances the paper at the touch of a button. Inks adhere without primer. The ink set includes process and light colours, as well as white and effect varnish. A bonding agent is not necessary. The varnish is used for finishing – for example to produce partial frosted glass or gloss effects. With the new technology, both newcomers and existing swissQprint users can capitalize on the current growing trend of direct printing on glass, said the OEM.



The swissQprint glass-printing option and inks are retrofittable to all current swissQprint LED wide-format flatbed printers

Canadian Print Scholarships announces BC In Memoriam Scholarship Recipients

Canadian Print Scholarships (Toronto) has announced that Canadian Printing Industries Scholarships have been awarded to two students in the Graphic Communications Technology Program at BCIT (British Columbia Institute of Technology). The awards were named in memory of prominent British Columbia printing industry leaders and their contributions to the industry. BCIT Student Hary Chow was awarded the Jack Hazeldine In Memoriam Scholarship. Hazeldine was the President of Hazeldine Press, and at various times held the position of President of the BCPIA and Chairman of the BCPIA. He was committed to industry training and education, serving for many years on the CPIA Scholarship Trust Fund Committee, and was a key contributor in developing the BCIT Graphic Communications Technology Program. BCIT student Aoom Sangjunsri was awarded the Bruce Brydon In Memoriam Scholarship. Brydon served as President and Chairman of the Board of Coast Paper and was known for his genuine engagement with staffers, customers and suppliers. He was a NPTA Stanley O. Styles Award winner in 1999. This award recognized industry leadership, innovation, dedication and character.



INX and VerifyMe partner to launch covert brand-protection ink

The INX International Ink Company and VerifyMe have successfully developed VerifyInk – a covert ink technology for continuous inkjet (CIJ) printers. VerifyMe provides brand owners with time-sensitive logistics, authentication, supply-chain monitoring and data-rich consumer-engagement features via unique smartphone readable codes on their products. When used in combination with VerifyMe's reading devices, smartphone integration, dynamic serialization and cloud-based authentication services, the CIJ VerifyInk solution will allow brands to easily launch world-class brand-protection solutions. "This inkjet technological achievement has taken nearly two years of development," said Patrick White, VerifyMe's CEO. "It allows VerifyMe to scale our business into the massive global product labeling and packaging industry that previously was unable to print our technologies. CIJ printers are widely deployed around the world to mark billions of products across all markets. Our new inkjet technology will allow brands to easily deploy low-cost, high-impact brand-protection and consumer-engagement capabilities using large-volume flexo and web printing presses, and infrastructure that often already exists in their supply chain."



Patrick White

Agfa introduces SolidTune for packaging

Characterizing it as "a breakthrough prepress software solution for offset packaging printing that excels by reducing ink consumption and allowing faster turnaround times, improved image quality and less waste," OEM Agfa has released SolidTune. Developed to meet the specific challenges of packaging production, the new technique applies a unique algorithm to the solids and text after screening prior to plate imaging. This process reduces the amount of ink needed for printing by an average of 3%. SolidTune is available on license in Apogee and Amfortis prepress workflows, and can be used with any screening technology. Unlike other solutions, the software was designed with unique edge protection, meaning that the edges of the solids are preserved to keep the print clean and crisp. This helps to create a better, printable 1-bit file for offset packaging printing, where spot colours are often printed as solids. This new approach also shortens overall production times, as the thinner solid ink film enabled by SolidTune takes less time and energy to dry. The technology also reduces problems with ink offsetting from one impression to the next.



U.S. consumers being misled to switch from paper

According to industry association and print-and-paper advocate Two Sides North America (TSNA), anti-paper 'greenwashing' campaigns aimed at consumers do indeed work, unfairly costing the U.S. paper, printing and mailing sectors huge sums in lost revenue each year. But Two Sides' Anti-Greenwashing Campaign is succeeding in eliminating many of these misleading claims, clawing back hundreds of millions for these businesses, according to the latest TSNA study. In their efforts to cut costs, many leading U.S. financial institutions, utilities, telecom companies and other service providers are using unsubstantiated environmental marketing claims (called greenwashing) to persuade consumers to switch from paper to digital bills and statements – suggesting that going paperless is “green,” “saves trees” or is “better for the environment.” The new TSNA research revealed that 65% of those who've seen anti-paper Greenwashing claims are influenced to switch from paper to electronic bills and statements. “This study not only confirms the remarkable success of Two Sides' Anti-Greenwashing Campaign, but also drives home the serious financial risk that greenwashing among service providers poses to the paper, printing and mailing sector,” said TSNA President Kathi Rowzie.



Kathi Rowzie

Heidelberg ends 2021/22 with profit and highest order backlog in 10 years

According to preliminary calculations, offset press manufacturer Heidelberg achieved its own forecast for sales and EBITDA margin for the past financial year 2021/22 (April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022) and returned to profitability. At €2.183 billion, sales were around 14% higher than the previous year. The reporting period showed a clear recovery from the previous year, which had been particularly hard hit by the effects of the worldwide pandemic. The noticeable improvement in the investment climate was reflected, in particular, in the increase in incoming orders received by more than €450 million year-over-year to €2.454 billion. Demand picked up across almost all products and in all regions, with investments

in new presses being the main driver. As of March 31, 2022, the order backlog stood at around € 900 million – the highest level in more than 10 years. “In a challenging environment, we've grown in all core business areas, both in terms of sales and earnings,” said Dr. Ludwin Monz, Chairman of Heidelberg's Executive Board. “The high order backlog provides a good foundation for sales in the new fiscal year. However, the effects of the war in Ukraine are currently presenting us with challenges. We have to deal with economic uncertainty and the significant increase in raw material and energy prices. We'll continue to work on strengthening our core business in the printing sector. This, at the same time, will free us up to expand into new markets.”



Dr. Ludwin Monz

Heidelberg revamps its Prinect workflow

German offset press manufacturer Heidelberg is completely revamping its Prinect print-shop workflow, which will now be available in the cloud. The new workflow suite is now called “Prinect Direct” and “marks a further milestone on the way to autonomous production in print shops,” said the company. All the new workflow's functions will gradually be made available to customers in the form of cloud-based apps. “With the new Prinect Direct cloud-based workflow, Heidelberg is moving a big step closer to autonomous production in print shops in line with our Smart Print Shop concept,” said Christopher Berti, Head of Software Solutions at Heidelberg. “The new Prinect apps eliminate most manual steps throughout a print shop's production process – from job creation all the way through to delivery of the finished print product,” he added. Heidelberg is also unveiling its Smart Product App – the second Prinect app in the new Prinect Direct workflow. This app reliably automates job creation at the prepress stage without restricting design creativity or the possibilities of print production. Existing Prinect Production Manager software, which is compatible with Prinect Direct, still supports actual print production. At the time of the market launch, which is scheduled for the fourth quarter of this year, the Smart Product App will be available for a large number of commercial products. Labels and packaging will be covered by subsequent versions, said Heidelberg. Further Prinect apps will be introduced gradually over time.



Christopher Berti

The paper predicament: Where did it all go?

An in-depth analysis of the complex factors that got us here, and what the printing industry's future might look like.



If nothing else, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown us the complex interdependent relationships among the components of the print supply chain. Living through it in real time, it is easy to observe the cascading effects of disruptive change.

Substrate shortage

In many ways, the substrate shortage is the most tangible effect of this disruptive change, especially from the perspective of a print provider facing a customer, with an order book in hand.

We remember the heady days of 2019, where pallets of substrate languished, forlorn and virtually forgotten in distributor warehouses around the world, waiting patiently to be ordered and delivered, just in time, and at a reasonable cost to printers and converters. Fast forward to today, where we've learned the meaning of the word "allocation," and where one of the most competitive assets a printer can have is a purchaser who knows how to "horse trade." The most demanding brand owners and product managers have relaxed their lofty standards considerably in the face of a binary ultimatum: "If you want it produced, this is the substrate available."

There are no mysteries as to the causes. Every input to this condition has been well publicized, but their collective impact has been underestimated, as the inputs are distributed among multiple industries and contributing job functions. *Y is a function of X*, and the fact that you're having difficulty sourcing sufficient substrate to support your growth is the product of many "Xes".

Substrate demand goes up

The "good news" for the paper industry is that demand is increasing. Overall demand for substrates is up 11% year-over-year, according to the Thomas Index Report.



Printers and packaging converters are receiving multiple inbound opportunities from desirable prospects whose only criterion seems to be the ability to produce in a timely manner. The printers and converters have stopped getting excited about this, based on the aforementioned allocation constraints from their suppliers. Most of that activity is spurred by clients who simply can't get their projects created through their traditional channels, so are shopping around for a printer or packaging converter who can deliver.

A significant source of new demand for packaging converters and printers has been the conversion of products and marketing from institutional to consumer, and the massive increase in online ordering that was spurred by pandemic lockdowns. This has led to a steep increase in demand for paperboard and containerboard. At the same time, with so many consumers staying home and shopping online instead of going out to spend money, relatively efficient institutional packaging has been abandoned in favour of less efficient consumer packaging for the same goods. Each of those home shipments comes in an order-sized cardboard box, so more substrates are required to deliver the same amount of product to the end consumers.

Substrate supply goes down

While demand was increasing, the pandemic was eroding supply. The "just in time" delivery of substrates from suppliers to printers and converters was

made possible by relatively substantial buffer inventories held by those suppliers. Some printers and converters even benefited from consignment inventories as a perk from the suppliers, who took advantage of their client's local storage capabilities. Substrates were considered a commodity and as such had a deceptively complex but well-oiled supply chain to keep it moving.

Pallets of finished substrates did not spend much time at the mill, before being whisked away to supplier warehouses. Well forecast and planned pre-orders kept the manufacturing process efficient and cost effective. Upstream, the sawmills were operating at low to moderate efficiency, according to the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations. Yet they were able to keep the paper mills well supplied and operating in moderate to high plant level overall equipment effectiveness (OEE), with output that easily supported the supplier inventory model. All of this was based on experienced personnel operating well-maintained equipment, in a collaboratively and efficiently executed supply chain.

Then, the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

Depleted workforce

According to mill spokespeople, the first hit was the lockdown and the ensuing sheltering orders. While the government wage subsidies did their part to control the spread of the pandemic, they also caused a good percentage of lower-paid employees to stay home until their benefits ended. Mill production decreased significantly in the early days of the pandemic, then slowly started to recover.

Even if the employees returned to the mills in force, nothing moves without a truck, and not all truck drivers were immune to the lockdown and sheltering orders. It was quickly established that truck drivers were "essential workers," something that we as a society have started to understand with regards to all of the "invisible" workers who actually get things done. Many truck drivers chose to take themselves off the road — some permanently, some just as long as government benefits lasted.

This is all part of a much bigger picture. The "Great Resignation" started long before the pandemic but was highlighted during it. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 47 million Americans voluntarily quit their jobs in 2021, an unprecedented number of exits but also a continuation of a multi-year trend. Baby boomers started hitting "mandatory" retirement age back in 2011. Significant numbers chose to keep working into their seventies but, when the pandemic hit and they were considered to be in a high-risk group, many decided to leave the workforce. Others chose to retire early. Many post-retirement workers had transitioned to jobs that would be deemed essential under pandemic legislation, so their departure was deeply felt. Retailers and service companies responded by offering bonuses and increasing wages for these essential positions, which drew some younger workers in semi-skilled jobs away from light manufacturing.

In response to the pandemic, many print and packaging supply chain partners developed remote working strategies for a good percentage of their workers, putting new stresses on their organizations. The successful ones maintained or improved productivity with remote or hybrid work options. Both successful and unsuccessful were stuck with their new strategies until the pandemic improved, when they expected to return to "business as usual."

However, recalling workers was easier said than done. According to Pew Research, 64% of remote workers felt "uncomfortable" returning to their places of work, and 57% would choose to work remotely. According to a Harvard Business Review study, 36% of workers surveyed said they would seek alternative employment if not given a remote or hybrid working option.

While the pandemic exacerbated labour shortages, it did not cause them. They were part of a multi-year trend that will continue for at least a decade. We will need to evolve in terms of the way we produce and how we work, and most likely immigration reform will be needed to respond to these pressures effectively.

Those labour shortages are having an ongoing effect on the mills that produce our substrates.

The impact of climate change

Then, the extreme weather and forest fires did their part. In the northwest, the January flood in British Columbia has pretty much wiped out gains in softwood lumber and pulp and paper production. Workers could not get to the lumber to harvest it, and they certainly couldn't retrieve it by the flooded and damaged roads and rails. Understandably, energies were redirected to infrastructure recovery and any production was hampered by closed roads and the human toll. Many people lost everything in the floods, and it's really hard to focus on your 9 to 5 job, when your possessions are sitting under six feet of water. Residents are, in many cases, still waiting for aid.



Likewise, drought and associated damage can affect the ability to successfully harvest standing timber and, as large swaths of forest land have been affected by drought, some large mature stands have been lost or put on reserve. Drought-damaged trees are excellent fuel for forest fires, and last year over 2.5 million acres of forest burned in California alone (including the 600,000 acre Dixie fire, which was the second largest forest fire on record). Climate change is having a serious impact on the forests we rely on. When mills have to search further and further afield for suitable resources, transportation plays an even more significant role in production.



Transportation backlogs

If you can't ship your finished production, you can't create more of it, and that is the case for many mills. Road, rail, and marine backlogs are affecting manufacturing supply chains and domestic and international deliveries. This is true across all industries, which often compete for the same transportation workers and resources. Consequently, lumber mills and pulp and paper plants have been forced to scale back production by reducing operating hours.

In this global economy, it's not just our local catastrophes that drive prices up and supply down. For example, early in the pandemic, global players bought up shipping containers at unprecedented rates. This led to a record shortage, and the companies who manufacture shipping containers faced the same constraints in terms of raw materials and labour. Having all of these containers in the field meant that manufactured goods could leave the plants in the shipping containers, delaying the impacts on production (and meeting FOB commitments), but there was no corresponding increase in global shipping – the ports and storage yards filled up with shipping containers, and the well-oiled global port system was put under extraordinary strain.

This of course led to much higher shipping prices that peaked in November 2021, and lead times that frustrated the most well prepared and inventoried companies. The median cost of shipping a 40-foot container from China to the Eastern U.S. coast more than doubled from \$2,559 USD in February 2020 to \$5,822 USD in February 2021. It was not uncommon to be quoted "rush" shipping rates where the price actually eclipsed the value of the goods being shipped – and the promised "rush" timeframe was longer than the usual "normal" delivery timeframe.

The cost of shipping a container has been dropping since March 2022, but it will take some time to normalize. It can still take over two weeks for a ship that arrives in port just to be unloaded. Shortages of truck drivers, rail workers and longshoremen are continuing to drive up freight rates and delivery timeframes.

Of course, once the goods get to their ports, they compete with all other industries for truck drivers to get them to their destinations. Many long-haul truck drivers are independent owner/operators who work for the best-paying client, so the price of transcontinental and local travel went up as availability went down. Now the price of diesel is driving costs up

further, causing some drivers to leave the business, which often operates on razor-thin profit margins.

Pulp and paper market dynamics

Pulp paper normally starts with the harvest of trees, usually softwood coniferous trees, prized for their long fibres, and largely as the unusable outputs of the lumber industry. Once debarked, chipped, and chemically cooked to remove the lignin, the pulp of cellulose fibres is drained, sheeted, dried, calendered, and coated. It is then finished and packaged and sent to a distributor who sends it to the company ahead of you in the queue and who still has allocation.

Lumber mills have generally done a very good job of maximizing the outputs they gain from a tree before passing the remainders along. With the current price per board foot, you can be sure they're doing an extraordinary job of claiming the maximum number of board feet. They're also prioritizing getting the finished lumber to market. Recent demand for lumber has been insatiable, driven by a booming construction industry and a home renovation frenzy fuelled by a population that was stuck



at home and suddenly noticed the need for improvements.

Mill conversions

The lumber and pulp and paper mills operate side by side, often competing for the same resources from the same communities. Each is driven to maximize the revenues it can generate from the raw resources. Paperboard and containerboard are specialty substrates that command a good price, meet a market need, and are increasingly in demand. Many American and European paper mills have been retooled to produce

paperboard and containerboard in order to capture new revenues. Unfortunately, new paper mills are not springing up to replace the converted mills. In fact, some older, less profitable paper mills have closed rather than retool.

Mergers and acquisitions

One trend that has a huge effect on market dynamics is mergers and acquisitions. One of the biggest in recent history is the purchase of Domtar by Paper Excellence. Paper Excellence is an enigma. It has been referred to as a small Canadian paper producer, but its spokespersons have confusingly referred to several ownership structures—some on the US east coast, some on the US west coast, and, notably, in Richmond, BC, which is frequently claimed as the head office of this Canadian enterprise. It would appear that the actual company may be headquartered in the Netherlands (Paper Excellence B.V.), and then directly tied to Asia Pulp and Paper. Hardly sinister but, it would seem, needlessly opaque. Apparently, Paper Excellence is owned by Jackson Widjaja, a son (among some 40 children in total) of Eka Tjipta Widjaja, the founder of Indonesian paper giant Sinar Mas Group.

Jackson is the CEO of Paper Excellence, Catalyst Paper, and now Domtar. Paper Excellence has been purchasing underperforming plants for the purposes of improvement, conversion, and consolidation, leading to the permanent closure

of plants in Powell River, BC; Port Huron, MI; Pictou County, NS; and Mackenzie, BC. From a corporate perspective, these closures might be prudent, but each plant produced paper that is not being produced today.

The \$3-billion Domtar deal caught the attention of the Competition Bureau of Canada, which required Paper Excellence to sell off the Kamloops pulp mill, a condition that raises more questions than we have time for here. With a significant portion of Canadian and North American paper production dependent now on one, pointedly opaque, foreign-based organization, one has to wonder what specific advantage there is to having one specific mill not be, currently, under their control. Paper Excellence (Domtar) has announced it sold the plant to Montreal-based Kruger Specialty Papers Holding L.P. for an undisclosed amount in May.

Paper Excellence is not the only company to close pulp mills during the pandemic. Westrock closed its Panama City, FL, paper mill in June. Paper Excellence has temporarily closed its Kingsport, TN, paper mill while it converts it into a 100% recycled containerboard mill, the second largest such plant in North America. West Fraser Timber is downsizing its pulp mill and converting from bleached to unbleached kraft for, you guessed it, containerboard and paperboard applications. In addition, many North American companies have idled or



temporarily shut down operations for months at a time due to pandemic pressures that made operating untenable or unprofitable.

For example, in December 2021, Montreal-based Resolute Forest Products (RFP) shut down operations in its Calhoun, TN, mill for an indefinite period because of “significant financial losses.” The plant had a capacity of 147,000 tonnes of pulp and 149,000 tonnes of uncoated paper (and 60,000 tonnes of tissue). Consequently, perhaps, first quarter 2022 results for RFP were greatly improved. Revenues for the three months ended March 31 were \$945 million (USD), up 8.2% year-over-year from \$873 million (USD). But substrate supply is simply no longer available on the market. Until August 2020, Domtar’s Port Huron mill ran three lines producing 95,000 short tonnes of specialty papers, when it shut down.

This is an open capitalist market where each player is looking for market advantage. Smaller, community-based players are being absorbed by larger players with an eye on efficiency and profitability. In theory, the markets should eventually balance and production should satisfy demand, but, without coordination and with profit as the prime motivator, periods like this are inevitable.

Rising costs = Rising prices

Obviously with demand increasing and supply decreasing, something must give, and usually it is price. We’ve seen

prices blow away historic records and, along with that, our preconceptions about the price elasticity of demand. The pandemic has been extremely profitable for those who could get their hands on substrate. Where customers used to balk at increases in the tenths of percentages, with the pandemic as the excuse, they have not blinked at increases in the tens of percentages. Where two-day turnaround was a “requirement,” clients have learned to be a supply chain partner (not all of them I know).

Pulp and paper mills have not been sheltered from the increases in employee wages. The average Canadian wage rose by 3.4% between March 2021 and March 2022 according to Statistics Canada. In my experience, workers in the print and packaging supply chain have done much better than that. Many of my clients have given blanket increases that raised their lowest paid employees up several dollars per hour with immediate effect. This is in the face of aggressive recruitment campaigns, even billboards, attempting to lure their production workers away with the promises of lucrative signing bonuses and “above market” wages. According to Pulp and Paper Canada, the unionized workers (Unifor) at Resolute Forest Products recently ratified a four-year collective agreement that gives them 20% – 24% increases over the course of the agreement. These wages are variable cost increases that need to be passed along the supply chain and

represent a lasting impact to the costs of your substrates.

At the same time, aggressive environmental goals are being supported with additional provincial and federal enforcement, which will lead to more plants being closed or shut and retooled. Apparently, the Pictou, NS, mill that was shut down was simply dumping its effluent into the sea and had a grandfathered right to do so. Creating effluent ponds and treatment was deemed an unsupportable expense, so taking the write-down seemed the more financially prudent option. Those write-downs aren’t free. They’re passed along down the supply chain.

In this case, the two opaque owners of the plant are suing the Province of Nova Scotia, a government that has already invested heavily in keeping the mill working, for hundreds of millions of dollars for moving too quickly with its environmental legislation that called for the tidal estuary to stop receiving mill effluent by January of 2020. Whether sufficient time was given or not, the mill was unprepared to make the environmental investments necessary to keep the plant operational.

Without a significant increase in the capacities and efficiencies of mills, and a corresponding increase in available workforce throughout the supply chain, it is difficult to foresee an end to this situation. Some new mills are opening, but largely for containerboard and specialty markets.

Communication and life move online

In North America, newsprint mills have been shutting down in response to reduced demand as people turn away from printed newspapers. Production capacity declined 28% from 2019 to 2020 and another 18% in 2021. This was concurrent to demand falling 26% in 2020, 6.6% in 2021, and 6.2% in just the first five months of 2022.

Perhaps this is how this disruption finally plays out. One of my clients publishes a monthly membership magazine that goes to readers of all ages. Over the last 12 months, they have published in three different formats on several different stocks, based upon the substrate that was available at the time of publication. As you can imagine, production costs have soared. Simultaneously, they have run a campaign asking readers to opt for digital-only delivery *until supply chain issues have been overcome*. Predictably, the “digital natives” have signed up without hesitation. They prefer the PDF version for its immediacy, portability and ease of access.

If this example represents a trend of conversion to a digital-only strategy, it would just be following in the footsteps of publishing icons like *Life Magazine* which switched to digital-only back in 2007. Online publishing and digital editions provide opportunities to greatly increase the relevance and timeliness of publications while improving the reader experience. However, as my client has seen with more conservative and traditional readers, adoption is evolution, and full acceptance might be some years away. The fact that it's being embraced at all is completely due to the pandemic and the paper shortage.

A huge number of significant leaps in the way we live and interact were forced on us by the pandemic. For example, experts claim that the evolution of our migration to virtual offices and Zoom meetings was accelerated by years (possibly decades) due to necessity. Perhaps these paper shortages will have a similar effect on innovative commercial printers. Many printers and converters have taken the opportunity to invest in automation and robotics to streamline their operations. Perhaps this is also an opportunity for printers to accelerate their strategies in service, multimedia publishing, and specialty markets, reducing their reliance on “ink-on-paper” client relationships.

It's not always easy. One printer I was speaking with recently bought a fairly expensive piece of equipment in order to print existing work more efficiently and broaden their offering, only to find that, because it used a different type of substrate than they had purchased in the past, they weren't able to convert the work over because they did not have any allocation for that new substrate with their supplier. How can you innovate along traditional lines in a business environment like that?

Packaging converters will continue to benefit from demand-driven growth. It's possible that the increased cost for substrate will make a better business case for recycling mills such as Paper Excellence is currently converting, and that will be how we overcome that substrate dilemma. In the meantime, some of my clients have taken the opportunity to *refine their client list* to ensure that their best growing clients are being well provided for.

What's on the horizon

When I first started thinking about this article, I was overwhelmed by the breadth of the issue and the number of interesting stories shared by my clients and other industry members. It's curious that none were eager to go on the record with the impact that resource scarcity has had on their section of the supply chain. I believe that everyone perceives it as a source of some shame and a failing on their part. It's not. Nor is it a uniquely Canadian or North American or Western issue. Clients around the world in developed nations are faced with the same concerns driven by the same trends.

There currently is no clear horizon on substrate shortages. I don't know what the answer is, but I'm relatively confident that we simply cannot keep doing the same things we've been doing and expect that things will return to normal. Normal has changed. The cheese has been moved. The question is, what are you going to do about it in your particular situation?

Disruption and opportunity are close travelling companions. Why not seize the opportunity to leverage your situation into a business transformation that will secure your company well into the future?



Dan Sparrow, principal consultant at Sparrow and Associates, has vast expertise and experience in the printing and packaging industries with Heidelberg, HP and Esko, advising printers, converters and supply-chain partners worldwide. He

helps business owners and senior leadership teams develop and implement sustainable business strategies. For more information, please visit www.sparrow-associates.com.

Dan can be reached at dan@sparrow-associates.com.

Our Editorial Calendar for 2022 with solutions to help you succeed in a post-pandemic world

These are indeed challenging times. But rest assured that Graphic Arts Magazine and Graphic Arts Media will always support your company's marketing and sales objectives with timely and professional creation, promotion and distribution of your messages that will educate, inform, inspire and ultimately convert our readers into purchasers of your products and services.



2022 Editorial Calendar

Please keep and refer to this 2022 Editorial Calendar. If you have any comments or suggestions, please don't hesitate to contact Joe Mulcahy at 1-877-513-3999 or e-mail joe@graphicartsmag.com. For B2B, digital and social-media advertising opportunities, please contact our publisher Ryan Mulcahy at 1-289-500-8595, or e-mail ryan@graphicartsmag.com.

March / April

(Print & Digital Issue)

- **Cover Story:** Partnering during a Pandemic – How one OEM took client service and solutions to an entirely new level
- **Secondary Feature:** Hot book cover design trends for 2022

September

(Print & Digital Issue)

- **Cover Story:** Offset Printing Update – World's top OEMs raise customer support to a new level
- **Secondary Feature:** The Return to Successful In-Person Tradeshows – What's on the Horizon

June / July

(Print & Digital Issue)

- **Cover Story:** The paper predicament: Where did it all go?
- **Secondary Feature:** Wide-format printing continues to grow

October

(Print & Digital Issue)

- **Cover Story:** The Phenomenal Rise of Digital Textile Printing
- **Secondary Feature:** Recruiting and Keeping Talent

November / December

(Print & Digital Issue)

- **Cover Story:** The Predominance of Digital Inkjet Technology
- **Secondary Feature:** The Year in Review

Deadlines for all printed and digital issues

- **Editorial:** 15th day of previous month
- **Advertising:** 20th day of the previous month

Distribution and posting for printed and digital issues

- Digital issues posted online during the second week of the publication month
- Printed issues delivered during the first or second week of the publication month

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Topics above are subject to change without notice. Please contact us well in advance if you or your clients wish to advertise or submit editorial content based on these or other industry topics.

OUR GOAL: Graphic Arts Magazine and Graphic Arts Media are here to support your company's marketing and sales initiatives by converting our readers into purchasers of your products and services. It's that simple. We can also help you create your print, online and video campaigns with compelling content and eye-catching design.

Digital advertising opportunities

Bi-weekly e-newsletter advertising

A targeted e-mail broadcast sent out twice a month on alternate Wednesdays to our CASL-compliant list of 8,500 Canadian printing professionals.

- Top Position = \$500/month (minimum 3 months).
Size = 700 pixels wide x 200 pixels deep.
- Middle Position = \$300/month (minimum 3-months).
Size = 700 pixels wide x 150 pixels deep.
- Bottom Position = \$200/month (minimum 3-months).
Size = 700 pixels wide x 150 pixels deep.

Sponsored e-blasts

Communicate your value proposition to other industry leaders, companies and prospects via a dedicated e-blast sent to the inboxes of 8,500 print and related professionals across Canada.

- Click rate = 2% – 4%
- Open rate = 19% – 46%
- Can be distributed by geographic region

Cost = \$1,250 per e-blast

Website banner advertising

Leaderboard Advertising

- 1,110 pixels wide x 80 pixels deep = \$1,000 per month
- 750 pixels wide x 80 pixels deep = \$700 per month
- 360 pixels wide x 80 pixels deep = \$500 per month

Box Ads (Each 360 pixels wide x 300 pixels deep)

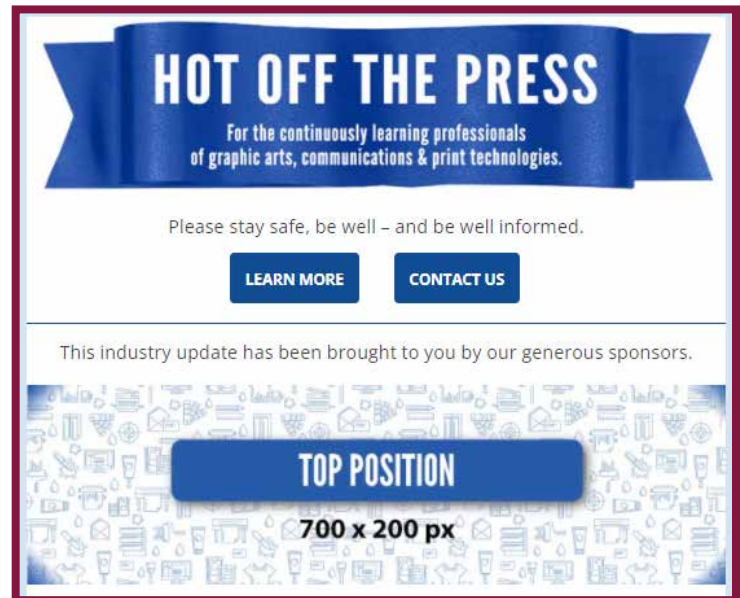
- Top position = \$500 per month
- Middle position = \$400 per month
- Bottom position = \$350 per month

Video advertising

Three to five minute Corporate/Sales/New Product Videos

Expose your company and its products to thousands of visitors through our website. GAM's creative team will direct, film and edit a three to five minute video, then host it for six months on our website. Your company will also receive the files created to use for your own marketing campaigns.

Cost = \$2,500 per video



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700 x 150 px



GRAPHIC ARTS MEDIA

New website
www.graphicartsmedia.com
users (visitors)

- For 2020 = 138,707
- For 2021 = 785,196

7,470 Twitter followers
1,678 Facebook followers
1,608 LinkedIn followers

We're here to help you and your business – right now

As print professionals across Canada continue to endure this exhausting pandemic, and with an uncertain 2022 looming on the horizon due to COVID-19 variants, we're here to tell you that you're not alone. Our team at Graphic Arts Media will always be here to help you during these challenging times. Here are our printed magazine display advertising prices and sizes along with information about paid advertorials:

| # of issues | 1/8 page 4" x 2.375" | 1/6 page 2.625" x 5" | 1/4 page 4" x 5" | 1/2 page 4" x 10.5" | 1/2 page 8" x 5" | Full page 8.5" x 11" plus 1/8" bleed |
|-------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|------------------------|---------------------|--|
| 1 issue = | \$350 per | \$675 per | \$880 per | \$1,200 per | \$1,200 per | \$2,265 per |
| 3 Issues = | \$320 per | \$600 per | \$775 per | \$1,080 per | \$1,080 per | \$1,925 per |
| 6 Issues = | \$300 per | \$540 per | \$690 per | \$995 per | \$995 per | \$1,750 per |

Cover Advertisements

| | | | | | |
|--------------|---------|--------------------|-------|------------------|--------|
| Outside Back | \$3,500 | Small Lug | \$800 | Large Lug | \$1500 |
| Inside Front | \$2,500 | 4.25 in X 1.226 in | | 8.5 in X 1.25 in | |
| Inside Back | \$2,000 | | | | |

Advertorials

Trusted, real-life examples of the benefits of your products and services

What is an advertorial?

One of the most compelling marketing tools is the advertorial or case study. An advertorial conveys information via an engaging, real-life story about one of your customers who's experienced success directly because of your products and/or services. As reflected by its name, advertorials combine advertising and editorial content and can include superlatives and comparisons. These claims ring true because they're usually quotes from actual users of your products or services. The most effective advertorials clearly outline proven financial and business benefits – such as boosting print quality, increasing productivity, cutting costs, reducing waste, improving workflow, and so on. And because advertorials involve real people at real companies in real time, they're much more trusted. Expose your advertorial to our audience of 9,350 printed magazine readers and 25,000 monthly website visitors.

How it works

- Page must be clearly slugged "Advertorial" at the top.
- You supply text and accompanying high-res images or we can write it for you.
- Text limit is 700 words per page. Image limit is two per page.
- We design the page and send you a PDF for final approval.
- You receive an approved PDF for your own promotional purposes.

Cost

\$2,500 per page

The R^3 approach to stress management

In my first article in the March / April issue, I highlighted (due to two years of COVID or the war in the Ukraine), how people are suffering with stress and the accompanying emotional and physical challenges. They lack the needed 'Resilience Training.' The printing industry is no exception. I outlined a stress-management strategy in my latest book, *The Resilience Formula – Strategic Tools for Peak Performance*. Specifically, my unique 3-step approach, (R^3 RECOGNIZE, RESPOND & RESOLVE) finds bedrock in psychology's Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and has improved the lives of so many.

Step 1: RECOGNIZE

Whenever I ask someone "How are you doing?" I usually get "Oh, I'm pretty stressed these days." If I ask what's bugging them, I get a 'macro' answer like "It's COVID, my job, my boss, my family," (etc). But when I ask for a more 'micro' answer to, "What in particular is causing your stress?" too often they can't tell me. Why? Psychology posits that everyone has an inner storyline (*Inner Cognitive Loop*) that repeats in our mind. The "Immutable Law of Attitude, Belief & Expectation" states: "To the degree we believe anything, it becomes our reality, even if we are incorrect."

Thoreau said "Most people live lives of quiet desperation," meaning that when they look in the mirror, they don't like what they see: their looks, job, family situation, future, etc. Sadly, that's their 'inner cognitive loop' that plays in their head 'in the moment' as they go about their day. This leads to cognitive bias. Simply put, whatever we truly believe – positive or negative – we act upon. For many, the problems they worry about become psychologically voluminous and totally unmanageable. They cease to even think of ways to minimize or control them. Thus, the onset of stress and potential mental illness.

There's an old expression: "If you don't know where you're going, any road will take you there!" I wrote: "If your race has no finish line, there can be no end to your race." We must ask: "If you can't clearly identify your issues, how can you control, minimize or eliminate them?" Too often I get "Sure, that makes sense, but it's easier said than done!" And

they're right. But so is learning to play the piano! One must firmly believe that Resilience Training is an art and a science, as are any other desired skills. Resilience skills can be learned.

I highlight in my book, tools or techniques for clearly identifying or recognizing specific problem issues that need to be done before ways to RESPOND are employed. Here's one simple example:

On the left side a sheet of paper, make a column from 1 to 10.

1. Think about each of your problems and list each one of them.

(NOTE: It's no surprise that people believe their problems are voluminous, and they believe there's no end to them, meaning there are too many to count. But, when people put pen to page and list their problems, they list, on average, only three. That's it! From a psychological perspective, by simply listing and seeing that there are so few real issues, the exercise serves to (a) dispel the erroneous beliefs that the problems are too big or too numerous to control, and (b) seeing on paper how few issues actually exist, eases the mind, changing the mindset from 'uncontrollable' to 'potentially controllable.')

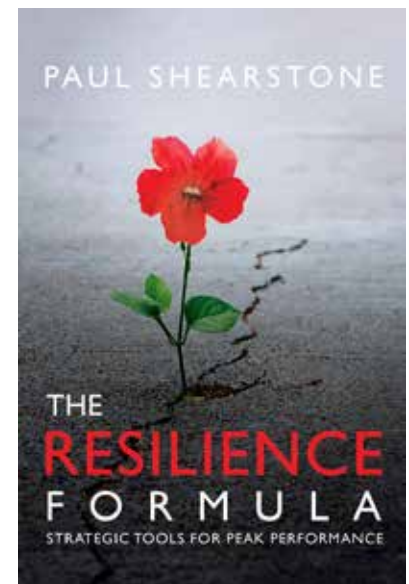
2. Beside each problem write 1, 2, 3.

3. Start with issue #1. What 'specifically' about that problem is at issue and try to identify micro originates causing it. Repeat this for each problem.

(NOTE: The act of clarifying each problem (a) minimizes the task at hand (i.e. only 3 issues), (b) separates the issue so it stands alone (further minimizing the

challenge) and (c), reduces the concern even further, identifying with specificity, the real issues to be responded to in the RESPOND #2 stage. Metaphorically, you have just designed a roadmap for you to follow. This exercise can be psychologically cathartic.

In my next article I'll share psychological techniques to RESPOND – to control, minimize and often eliminate stressful issues that will re-galvanize and embolden the contents within your cognitive loop. Until then, here's wishing all those in the printing industry good mental health!



Paul Shearstone MACP, NLP, CCP is a Speaker, Best-Selling Author, Certified Coach, Neuro-Linguistic-Programming (NLP) Therapist and Psychotherapeutic Counsellor. His newest book, *The Resilience Formula: Strategic Tools for Peak Performance*, is available at Amazon.ca and Chapters Indigo. Please visit www.paulshearstone.com or e-mail paul@paulshearstone.com.

Wide-format printing continues to grow: Are you ready to take the plunge?

According to *Ink World* magazine, the growing demand for wide-format printers for home furnishings and décor, vehicle-wrap applications, increasing demand from the in-plant market, and the availability of wide-format printers in different price ranges and varieties, all create huge growth opportunities for current and new players. The growth, it added, can also be attributed to increased demand in the textile, advertising and packaging industries, the rising adoption of UV-curable inks in outdoor advertising, CAD and technical printing applications, and the growing importance of digital document production in commercial printing applications. All of the above reflect enormous opportunities for commercial printers who are thinking about adding wide-format to their repertoire.

According to reportlinker.com, the global market for wide-format printing equipment, estimated at \$3.4 billion (USD) in 2020, is projected to reach \$4 billion by 2027. Wide-format printing in Canada is expected to grow at 1.8% CAGR over the same period. According to Verified Market Research, the global wide-format printer market was valued at \$8.22 billion (USD) in 2018 and is projected to reach \$11.58 billion by 2026, growing at a CAGR of 4.45% from 2019 to 2026. The company also pointed out that today's wide-format inkjet printers can print on almost anything.

In a drupa-series article, author Sabine Slaughter, a renowned international editor, consultant and journalist who for decades has monitored the transformations in the printing industry, adds that wide-format printing is destined to grow – and with ever more applications.

"The wide and super-wide format market has undergone its digital transition while certain analogue printing technologies, such as screen-printing, continue to complement the overall mix offered by large-format print service



providers (PSPs) to their clients....the wide format printing market is mature, but it has certainly not yet reached its heyday.

"The digital transition means that more and more applications will become digital and this itself leads to highly specialized wide and super-wide printers. Such printers can deal with traditional applications, but more interestingly they enable innovative PSPs to showcase their ability to cater for new and unexpected market-niche jobs. And most of all, to be able to viably produce short runs, personalized and customized projects, even one-offs, that help brand owners to do things not previously possible. Another big growth factor in this sector is, of course, the environmental agenda – a global topic that extends far beyond drupa. As the world tries to reduce its negative climate impact, printer manufacturers, PSPs and clients ordering print are all considering how they can contribute.

"Wide and super-wide format printers have been mainly developed to cater to the signage, advertising, marketing and communications industries. However, they can also make an entrance or even a slight dent in other markets thanks to their versatility which enables certain (mainly short run) jobs within the commercial, packaging and label industries, as well as proofing jobs later to be carried out on analogue machinery. Some can even make forays into areas formerly covered by lithographic equipment such as solar, printed electronics, RFID and all kinds of conductive products.

"For the digital printing community and those considering entering the large-format market, it's important to understand this is a market based on a myriad of unique applications requiring specialized expertise. The list is long and varied – be it vehicle wraps, posters, art, interior or exterior signage, PoP and PoS, décor printing, directional

way-finding, home furnishings, wall-papers, murals, displays, event and floor graphics, one-off signage from a large order that must be customized to fit the exact location where it will be installed (eg. bus stops with specific directions, information or offers) – and many others. Digital printing enables cost-effective and fast turnarounds while offering environmentally friendly solutions with no, or next-to-no, waste. In addition, it's starting to make inroads into the industrial printing sector. And there's no sign yet that it's slowing down.

"That wide-format printing does not only encompass roll-to-roll or roll-to-sheet applications, but also the market for rigid substrates, means a wide array of additional applications as well. Be it for printing on glass, plastics, PVC, PET, cardboard, foam, forex or any other kind of board or film, there are so many stunning effects that can be produced. The biggest advantage of a wide or super-wide digital printer, however, lies in its application versatility – whether in terms of customization, personalization, individualization (when still viable and cost-effective) and its efficiency, all together delivering a final customer impact that conventional technologies simply cannot achieve. Today's market is ripe for innovation, new applications and new machinery, with associated technology enhancements – including speed, colours, ink types and substrates."

Adding wide-format technology to your print shop

Not surprisingly, the main benefit of adding wide-format printing to your current product mix is quite simple – to boost your profits. But there are other important factors to consider. For example, wide-format:

- Can complement your existing offset and digital printing equipment and products
- Is relatively inexpensive compared to expansion into other industry segments
- Requires colour management expertise – an area where most commercial printers excel
- Is typically purchased from OEMs with whom you're already familiar

- Can be learned quickly due to the high automation of today's wide-format presses
- Can be a huge value-added talking point for your sales staff
- Demand is expected to continue as we emerge from the pandemic
- Allows you to print only the amount needed, to reduce waste

Benefits for your customers are plentiful as well. Wide-format:

- Is being adopted by more and more businesses to help them grow as well
- Is surprisingly affordable
- Helps businesses add to their own marketing materials
- Is traditionally a key part of advertising agencies' multimedia campaigns
- Delivers brand messages with more impact via high-visibility graphics
- Creates exceptionally crisp and clear images viewable from a distance
- Is an ideal way for your clients to stand out from their competition, especially at events
- Can withstand constant outdoor exposure to varying weather conditions
- Can achieve the same quick turnovers as your day-to-day digital printing
- Can handle a much wider array of applications in addition to posters and signage (i.e. vehicle wraps, window films, wall and floor graphics, wall-paper, textiles, etc.)



Questions to ask before adding wide-format to your product / service mix

- How much money am I willing to invest? Wide-format printers can range in price from several thousand dollars to more than \$1 million, depending on the technology, size, degree of automation and what options you wish to add. Be realistic as to what you can afford, explore the technology and compare costs. The old cliché "build it and they will come" is a recipe for disaster.
- How much technology do I want? Survey your current core customers and determine the likelihood of selling them wide-format products. While it's tempting to enter relatively new markets where digital printing is growing (such as textiles and interior décor), you might be better served by assessing the needs of your existing customers first, then gradually upselling them to wide-format. Talk to your OEM first.
- What are my current production assets? Unlike many business expansions, moving into wide-format is not that much of a reach for most successful commercial printers. In fact, you might already be producing applications that are appropriate for wide-format digital printing, such as posters or POP materials, albeit in a smaller format.
- Which applications should I pursue? A good place to start would be applications that are compatible with your existing equipment. Which applications will your current clients need in the future? For example, you may be producing direct-mail flyers for a retailer. So consider adding signage, banners, posters or displays. If you're already producing posters, other rigid applications could be added, depending on the equipment you have.
- Will I experience excessive competition? Take a closer look at the market and its competitive environment. Who and how many are currently producing the applications you plan to offer? What are their capabilities? Do they specialize in these applications, or are they general commercial printers like you? What equipment do they have?

What's their capacity? Is the application growing? What are the current profit margins? Are they close to you geographically? Once you've identified a few appropriate applications, it's time to look at the equipment that's suitable and fits your budget. What substrates do you need to print on? Do you need a flatbed, roll-to-roll, or a hybrid device? What are the ink requirements? Will it fit easily onto your production floor? How much automation will be needed? What production volumes are anticipated? Will it fit seamlessly into your current production workflow? Are there any environmental or waste-disposal issues? How steep is the learning curve for press operators?

Wide-format market opportunities

Traditional signage. According to most studies, printed signage (as opposed to digital) is still the most widely used worldwide. This market is primarily separated into indoor and outdoor, with indoor applications currently dominant. Overall, cost-effectiveness remains one of the main factors driving printed signage. Static billboards are still one of the most visible and predominant outdoor applications – but they've been losing some ground to more customizable, interactive and eye-catching options. That being said, most experts agree that they won't disappear any time soon. In fact, the combined use of printed and digital applications simultaneously is gaining popularity.



Textiles. The digital textile inkjet printing market continues to be one of the top growth markets worldwide. Continuous breakthroughs in inkjet productivity, plus the emergence of the 'fast-fashion' business model from retailers, has spawned major advances in inkjet textile printing production. The most common forms of textile printing are dye-sublimation or transfer printing, and direct-to-garment (DTG) printing. Today's inkjet textile printers can also reach amazing levels of vibrancy, durability and quality of detail. However, traditional wide-format inkjet printers (solvent, eco-solvent, UV and latex) are also versatile enough to handle textile printing. Issues in this sector involve print quality, durability, the best types of fabrics to print on, light-fastness, cleaning and scratch resistance.



Packaging. The inkjet packaging market, including packaging prototypes, is another lucrative market. This includes flexible packaging, labels, folding cartons and other applications. For example, several equipment manufacturers now offer inkjet systems specifically designed for small-run packaging as well as high-volume label production. Some inkjet models are also being integrated with flexo units to create hybrid label production. Plus, hybrid presses with inkjet print heads can also apply variable data. This could lead to the adoption of inkjet in this sector more quickly.

Corrugated. Wide-format printing for corrugated folding cartons is a market that's moving quickly to inkjet from its traditional domain of flexo. New inkjet presses can now deliver single-pass printing that includes cyan, magenta, yellow, black, orange, violet, and white LED-cured inks. Many experts see this as a game-changer. Also, a wider selection of available corrugated substrates has created an environment for growth. Variable-data versioning, last-minute changes, rapid responses to customer demands, and accelerated time-to-market are driving forces in this sector.

Interior décor. The décor market for homes, corporate offices, hotels, cruise ships and restaurants has opened up new opportunities for any print shop with a wide-format inkjet printer. This includes wallpaper, wall hangings, furniture, drapes, shower curtains, window decorations, paintings on canvas and a host of other non-traditional materials. Reasons for this continued growth include a real estate market that continues to hold its own, increased availability of home décor products via the internet, growing consumer preferences towards more eco-friendly products, higher disposable family incomes, and more homeowners wishing to renovate their houses.



Industrial. Industrial inkjet printing applications continue to experience growth. These include home décor and laminates, ceramics, electronics, glass, aerospace, automotive, biomedical, and more. All of these can be printed using a variety of specialized analogue methods as well as inkjet technology. While new equipment has expanded specific applications, new inks, coatings and functional fluids are also becoming widespread. While analogue printing methods are still widely used, digital inkjet is gaining ground in industrial printing.

Photography and fine art. Wide-format inkjet equipment manufacturers have rolled out some amazing technology to spur growth in this area. Museum-grade fine-art prints, small-format and large-format full-colour and B&W photographic prints, art cards and other high-end products can now be produced cost-efficiently. The OEMs have also taken particular care to ensure they that their digital printers can accommodate the non-traditional media used in this sector – such as cotton rag media, premium photo



papers, exhibition-grade canvas, and a variety of unique coated and uncoated stocks popular in this segment.

Specialty printing. Many printers consider specialty wide-format printing to include printing on non-traditional substrates such as glass, wood, ceramics, polyester, linen papers, lanyards etc. For example, OEM swissQprint recently unveiled a total solution for UV flatbed printing on glass, comprising a retrofit glass-printing option and an adhesion-optimized ink set. And while printed

items in this sector usually involve shorter personalized runs, this market still represents significant revenue opportunities. Inkjet equipment manufacturers have also developed presses that can print easily onto differently shaped, non-flat objects as well as non-traditional media.



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Now that COVID-19 travel restrictions are winding down, trade shows and business travel are increasing. If you're looking to export outside of Canada or grow your export markets, the CanExport program, a government-funded initiative, can assist you.

About CanExport

The CanExport program offered by the federal government was introduced in January 2016 and will provide up to \$50 million over five years in direct financial support to small and medium-sized companies in Canada looking to develop export markets. CanExport is expected to assist up to 1,000 exporters per year across the country (up to \$10,000 per company on average). Companies applying for CanExport may apply as many times as they wish during the year. The company must, however, wait for one application to be processed before submitting another. If you're denied once, you may apply again and be accepted for funding. Each application is processed separately and previous denials don't affect future applications.

Eligible activities for funding

CanExport provides financial support to Canadian companies for a wide range of export marketing and sales activities. Qualifying travel activities include:

- Business travel to visit prospects
- Participating in trade shows outside of Canada
- Market research
- Adapting marketing tools for new markets
- Legal fees associated with a distribution or marketing representation agreement

Ineligible funding activities include (1) ongoing core or operational activities, and (2) activities in a market that's already 10% of your export sales. Large countries such as the U.S., Brazil, China and India can be divided up into multiple markets.



Available funding

The CanExport program:

- Reimburses up to 50% of eligible expenses
- Requires that the company match funds on a dollar-for-dollar basis
- Provides a minimum contribution of \$10,000 (requires that the total cost of eligible activities be at least \$20,000) and a maximum contribution of \$50,000.

Timelines for filing an applying

Companies can file an application for CanExport funding at any time. Once you have filed your application, you can expect to hear if your application has been approved within 60 business days. CanExport will notify companies whether or not their application is successful. If you're approved, funding is retroactive to the date you submitted your application.

Eligibility

To be considered for funding, a company must meet the following basic criteria:

- Must be a for-profit company
- Must be an incorporated company or a limited liability partnership (LLP). Sole proprietorships are not eligible for funding.
- Must have a Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) business identifier number

- Must have between 1 and 500 full-time employees. All employees must be on payroll and receiving T4 slips during the year. Sub-contracted employees are not included in the employee count.
- Must have sales of between \$100,000 and \$100 million in annual revenue declared in Canada in their last complete fiscal year.

Limits on funding requests

Companies can apply for a minimum contribution of \$10,000 per application (total cost of eligible activities must be at least \$20,000) and a maximum contribution of \$50,000 per application (total cost of eligible activities be at least \$100,000). Consultant costs for the production of a market study, for market research, for business-to-business (B2B) meetings and matchmaking are limited to 25% of the total cost of the activity/project.

Receiving funds

If your CanExport application is approved, you must first spend the money and submit all travel receipts to the government. Once the government has received proof of payment of the travel expenses, a refund cheque will be issued.



Bonnie Koebel (CPA, CGA) is President of AKR Consulting Canada – a Mississauga, Ontario firm specializing in government grants, subsidies, tax credits, refunds and rebates since 2003. She can be reached at bonny@akrconsulting.com.



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A label press for mid-volume/high-volume converters

The AccurioLabel 400 will allow users to expand their businesses in the growing markets of digital label production and packaging. This new model targets mid-volume to high-volume label converters, commercial printers and large brand owners, providing “affordable, top-quality digital label printing.” The press will be officially available in the spring of 2023. New features include the ability to expand applications with white toner, print speeds up to 130 feet per minute, and further running-cost reductions due to longer durable parts' life. Available in 4-colour and 5-colour options with print resolution equivalent to 3600 x 2400 dpi, the AccurioLabel 400 single-pass toner production press prints on substrate widths up to 10” or 13”. A multiple-touch panel monitors three different areas of the new label press. Konica Minolta's Intelligent Quality Optimizer, the IQ-520, improves automation with much higher levels of control. The IQ-520 enables real-time control of white toner opacity, colour stability, automatic calibration, density adjustments and profile creation.



Konica Minolta AccurioLabel 400 Digital Label Press

OEM's first DTF printer for North America

Epson America's first direct-to-fabric (DTF) printer in North America – the Monna Lisa 8000 – can print on a wide variety of fabric types. The ML-8000 features 8 new 4.7” PrecisionCore print heads that deliver crisp print quality at speeds up to 1,744 ft²/hr. The ML-8000 accurately reproduces complex patterns, colour gradations and “photographic-like detail” to meet designers' needs. It's available for install with either Epson Genesta Pigment, Reactive, Acid, or Disperse ink, while providing high-performance printing on an array of textiles – including cotton, viscose, polyester, nylon, silk, wool and blended fabrics. The printer features a hot-swappable ink system that holds up to 20 litres of ink per colour, and automatically switches from an empty ink pack to a new ink pack mid-print for uninterrupted production. Epson Precision Dot Technology and exclusive Micro Weave, Multi-layer Halftoning and Lookup Table functions work together to reduce banding, graininess and degradation. Other features include auto nozzle cleaning, nozzle verification technology, fluff blower and an ink-mist extraction system.



Epson's Monna Lisa 8000 direct-to-fabric printer

A digital production press with improved automation

Canon U.S.A.'s imagePress V1000 places a strong emphasis on improved automation. Tasks such as colour repeatability and registration alignment are simplified for printers who produce a wide range of applications – from direct mail and business cards, to booklets, posters and other marketing collateral. The press is the first of the OEM's new “V” series designed to provide vivid output, closely monitor production and allow printers to provide additional value to their clients. Capable of printing up to 101 letter IPM, its POD-SURF (Surface Rapid Fusing) allows the press to maintain its speed on coated and heavy stocks up to 400 gsm, even when printing complex and mixed-media jobs. With its Inline Spectrophotometers (ILSSs), operators can easily perform advanced colour adjustments such as engine linearization, colour profile creation, G7 calibration and colour validation. The V1000 can also auto-duplex stocks up to 400 gsm in weight and 51.2” in length. With its new Precision Registration Technology, duplexed sheets are mechanically adjusted four times to help alignment remain accurate during long production runs.



Canon imagePress V1000 Colour Production Digital Press

OEM's first press for high-end wide-format applications

The Acuity Ultra Hybrid LED is Fujifilm's first foray into the high-end, wide-format market and offers “ease-of-use, ultra-high print quality, a competitive ROI, and the ability to print on both rigid and flexible substrates.” Available this Fall, the 3.3 metre printer has speeds up to 218 m²/hr (RTR) and resolutions up to 1200 x 1200 dpi. It utilizes proprietary inks to support the printing of 'near-photographic' interior graphics, banners and PVC signage. Along with media loading and unloading tables, a robust catch mechanism protects against accidental damage, and secure locking allows for media-feed accuracy during every print run. Its GUI includes additional functions that can handle rigid media at up to six sheets simultaneously. An intelligent vacuum control system automatically turns on the correct vacuum zones needed for any print job based on the width of the media, and the vacuum motor power constantly adjusts to maintain optimal media hold-down. Fujifilm's new ink range, Uvijet UH, created especially for this new model, includes six colours (CMYK, Lm, Lc) available as standard, and white ink as an option.



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Three proven ways to ensure an excellent user experience in digital publishing

This is the first of a 3-part series on digital publishing written by students at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University), who are enrolled in its 4-year Graphics Communications Management Program, Canada's only degree-granting program for future leaders in this field. We thank them for their time and their insights.

Digital publishing will only continue to grow, but in order to sustain its success, content must exist within a high-quality user experience. User Experience (UX) is a major element in the digital space and users are starting to place more value on their experience – sometimes even more value than the content they're consuming! Satisfying this need requires three major components. Firstly, the content must be easily accessible. Accessibility in publishing allows for the largest impact by ensuring that content is reaching the most people possible. Secondly, digital interaction is one of the significant emerging trends in digital publishing as it distinguishes content through an enjoyable experience. Lastly, connection to an audience can amplify a user's experience. This involves a variety of different methods in order to understand exactly what consumers are looking for, and then taking further action to satisfy those needs.

1. Accessibility

One of the biggest and most prominent aspects in the future of accessibility is the switch to mobile devices. According to an article from LinkedIn by M. Pui, the smartphone is becoming the largest source of news for users. This makes news easily accessible at all times, in a way it never was before. Rather than checking emails, watching TV or reading printed publications, mobile is the easiest way to reach users with 92% of people now owning a smartphone (according to an article by Quasa). Ensuring that all digital publications are compatible with mobile devices

allows an organization to reach a greater audience, with a more personalized experience through individually tailored media. Ensuring that all digital publications are accessible from a mobile device to all groups of people is the best way to produce an effective UX. Aside from generating higher traffic, accessibility should also be a basic and essential human right. In addition to legal requirements, accessibility should be prioritized for all digital publications because groups should never be excluded from accessing content.

2. Interaction

In order to create effective digital publications, it's important to consider differentiating content through the use of interactive tools like audio and video. An article from PaperLit reveals that readers desire interactive content and it's becoming a growing standard. By fulfilling this desire, the end result is a more effective UX. Additionally, this allows for more audience engagement. By adding multimedia content, publications are transformed into interactive experiences rather than static PDFs. With the growing demand for a more engaging and compelling user experience, it's important to consider how the experience of a publication can be developed and improved (with the goal of increasing engagement) through the use of interactive media.

3. Connection

Arguably the most effective way to achieve an excellent UX is connecting and collaborating with an audience.

Using a client-centered approach, where the users' needs are the main consideration, allows for the creation of more personalized content. Customizing users' media through personalization according to their desires will ultimately result in more engaging content. This can be done through surveys, questionnaires and analytics. To provide the best user experience, connective elements can be embedded right into a publication. Using these tools to fully understand how content is being received will also allow organizations to adjust accordingly, creating a better UX and a more successful publication in the long run.

Regardless of the quality of the content released into the digital world, the overall experience provided is what will stick with users. Excellent user experiences should reach as many people as possible through accessibility. Specifically for digital publications, there should be an interactive experience in order to satisfy users' desires. Finally, these initiatives should always be measured for effectiveness and engagement with a target audience. In the future of digital publishing, UX is what will separate strong digital publishing from the weak.



Hope Ghobrial is a promising graphic designer, currently enrolled in the Graphics Communications Management Program at Toronto Metropolitan University (formerly Ryerson University). She has completed various design courses, interned as an assistant graphic designer, and currently works in media marketing.

The “fastest inkjet on the market”

Kodak's Prosper 7000 Turbo Press is a new inkjet web press offering print speeds of up to 410 mpm (1,345 fpm) or up to 5,523 A4/letter ppm, which is almost 35% faster than its nearest competitor, said the OEM. It enables commercial, publishing and newspaper printers to compete more effectively with offset, and to shift more long-run jobs from conventional printing processes to inkjet. The new full-colour perfecting inkjet press supports a maximum web width of 648 mm (25.5") with a variable cutoff length up to 1,372 mm (54"). Three optimized print modes allow printers to optimize their production to always print with the best combination of speed and resolution. The Quality Mode, which is “roughly comparable” to offset printing using a 200 lpi (80 L/cm) screen, is best for direct mail, catalogues and magazines. The Performance Mode (offset equivalent 133 lpi / 52 L/cm) is ideal for textbooks and other medium-ink-coverage applications. Turbo Mode (85-100 lpi / <40 L/cm) is aimed at newspaper printing with its low-ink coverage.



Kodak Prosper 7000 Turbo

Wide-format flatbed handles larger sheets

The Fujifilm Acuity Prime L LED UV printer brings all the benefits of the standard Acuity Prime series to printers who need to combine high productivity and high quality printing on larger sheet sizes. Offering a maximum print area of 3.2 m x 2 m and print speed of 202 m²/hr, the Acuity Prime L features 6 vacuum zones and 16 media-location pins, and can print side-by-side jobs with its dual zone function. Uvijet HM – an ink system formulated specifically for the Acuity Prime series – provides excellent adhesion to a broad range of substrates. The new ink range is optimized to produce high quality, vibrant images. A new jettable primer improves adhesion for particularly challenging substrates. Available with up to 7 ink channels (CMYK, plus white, clear and primer), the Acuity Prime L “offers the ultimate versatility and value by providing the flexibility for print businesses to customize it to their own needs,” said Fujifilm.



Fujifilm Acuity Prime L

Flatbed for high volume large format

Canon's new Arizona 6100 Mark II Series is designed for high-volume, large-format graphics. They're reliable, easy-to-integrate printers with speeds up to 220 m²/hr (2,368 ft²/hr), for print environments with volumes of 20,000 m² (200,000 ft²) up to 300,000 m² (3,000,000 ft²). The series consists of two models. The Arizona 6100 XTS Mark II was designed for printers who use a more varied range of substrates, as it can print on almost any rigid media. With the XTS version, independent control of vacuum zones means that users can simultaneously handle multiple boards, unusually shaped substrates, and staged/staggered jobs for continuous printing. The Arizona 6100 XTHF Mark II is aimed at packaging and can print on more challenging substrates that may not adequately seal the vacuum area. On this model, Arizona High-Flow technology achieves maximum pull-down and hold-down with a suction power 15 times stronger than the Arizona XTS.



Canon Arizona 6100 XTS Mark II

A spectrophotometer with video targeting

The eXact 2, a non-contact handheld spectrophotometer, was designed to bring ink, print and packaging workflow together in one device. It's also the first colour measurement device that connects to a full ecosystem of software tools – including InkFormulation Software, ColorCert Suite for print quality control, PantoneLIVE digital colour libraries, NetProfiler for device optimization, and the new X-Rite Link fleet management platform for real-time insights into device performance. Using Mantis video-targeting technology, the eXact 2 enables operators to measure and verify customer requirements two times faster and with higher accuracy, said the companies. With the eXact 2, which comes in three models, operators can capture colour measurements on paper, corrugated and carton-board substrates. The eXact 2 Xp captures film, plastic, foil with white opaque, and other unique substrates. The eXact 2 Plus offers advanced paper and flexible film control with the ability to measure metamerism, opacity, and absolute / relative colour strength.

The eXact 2 Spectrophotometer



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The future of trade shows and live events

Over the last two years, corporate marketing budgets were either scaled back or completely divested, as companies scrambled for new ways to generate leads. Now that live events are back, organizers, exhibitors and manufacturers are working around the clock to deliver. According to *Forbes*, virtual events are not only here to stay, they're going mainstream. When Totem, an event-tech company, interviewed delegates at International Confex at London's ExCeL, they found that 37% expect to work on even more virtual and hybrid events in 2022 than in previous years, while 27% expect to see the same number as the last 12 months. Only 18% expect to see fewer. More than half of those surveyed cited networking as the most important feature of a virtual or hybrid event. Data and "other" were tied at 19%, while being on-demand mattered to only 9%.



The rise of NFTs (Non-Fungible Tokens). Organizers of the annual Coachella festival in California will issue exclusive NFTs as lifetime passes to the event. Due to their transferable nature, users will also be able to sell their NFT to someone else. And due to their secure yet easily-transferable nature, they also act as a deterrent to counterfeiting and illegal reselling. Increasingly popular as giveaways in attendee swag bags, JPMorgan gave attendees of its first Crypto Economy Forum, free NFTs as an incentive to attend (one of which was immediately put up for sale with a price of \$1.8 million, although it's not known if anyone bought it!).

How the Metaverse is impacting engagement. In 2022, Warner Music is planning on hosting performances inside the Sandbox, which will take place in its own custom-built, decentralized gaming virtual world venue. These events take place in persistent worlds, like Fortnite or Horizon Venues, rather than within sessions that exist purely within virtual-event platforms like Zoom or Teams streams. Universal Music unveiled digital avatars of leading artists, including

Justin Bieber, Rihanna and Shawn Mendes. The idea is that stars will have a persistent look even as they travel between metaverse venues, just as they would look in real life when performing live in different real-world locations.



Tips to planning a successful event. Chris Jordan, product launch expert at ExedraBridge, has been running successful, in-person trade shows as health restrictions began to lift in the UK. For him, the key to successfully running smaller, more intimate events, relies on a few key factors, the most important of which is: location, location, location. Other considerations include revealing who else will be there and what to expect, piggy-backing on larger events, making it much easier to register, get there, park, etc., communicating early and regularly, making one person responsible (not sales) and outsourcing if necessary, creating an event plan to make sure everyone knows why they're there, stress testing, having a 'Plan B' for everything, and of course, feeding everyone.

In April, I hosted a session in The Crown Pub (www.thecrownpub.org), a virtual pub in a real world that began as a way to bring together print, graphics and marketing industry folks at a difficult time – the onset of the pandemic. Today, the group continues to grow its base

of global followers. I was joined by Kelvin Gage, the treasurer and resident emcee for the Global Board of Dscoop, facilitating events in Korea, Austria, Spain and most recently Denver, Colorado, and Jonathan McGrew-Malone, EDP, CMP, G7 Pro, and Senior Director of Engagement at Solimar Systems.

We talked about what it's like to be a show organizer, as well as an exhibitor, as 2022 trade shows and events return to life, addressing topics similar to those above. These included the future of virtual events, trade show survival tips, the use of print before, during and after an event, and event plans and marketing budgets. Watch the live replay here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LQ83NtYUykM>.



Whether you're planning your first event, or simply the first in a while, visit [Joanne Gore Communications](#) for help preparing and conquering your next show – with tips, checklists, lead-generation strategies and more.



Joanne Gore, President of Joanne Gore Communications (JGC), is a B2B marketer who's passionate about print, and has spent more than 25 years helping software, hardware, print and manufacturing companies around the world stretch their marketing dollars with programs that generate awareness, engagement, and growth. Follow Joanne on LinkedIn

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