

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:04] DC: It takes the right skills and the right innovation to design and manage meaningful print marketing solutions. Welcome to Podcasts from the Printerverse, where we explore all facets of print and marketing that create stellar communications and sales opportunities for business success.

I'm your host, Deborah Corn, the intergalactic ambassador to the printerverse. Thanks for tuning in. Listen long and prosper.

Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts from the Printerverse. More specifically, out and proud in printing. I am Deborah Corn, your intergalactic ambassador. And we have a special guest with us today. His name is Damon Anyos. And he is currently the Senior Packaging Project Manager at Schawk But he has a career where he's worked both sides of the fences.

Damon, welcome to the program. And why don't you let everybody know a little bit about you?

[00:01:02] DA: Thanks, Deborah. Thanks for having me. One thing that I probably should share with everybody is that my LinkedIn profile is horribly out of date. And my title as of this past January is actually Director of On-Site Services with Schawk who is actually now known as SGK. As a larger entity, I can get into all of that. It's ever so convoluted.

But a fancy title with basically the same day-to-day, which is basically as a print production manager. It's what I do for them. I wear a couple of different hats throughout the year with the cycles of work, right? Sometimes the sort of technical advisement to the clients. Sometimes it's general project management. Making sure everything is moving. But then when it comes down the brass tax, it's a whole lot of printing, and a whole lot of quality control and a whole lot of sitting in dark gray rooms waiting for press beeps to be pulled. That's the gist of it.

[00:01:55] DC: Now, Schawk is a print management services company, right? Do they still calling themselves that?

[00:02:05] DA: Schawk! again, is SGK now. This is a great opportunity to explain this to the masses. SGK used to be sort of the larger parent organization that oversaw a handful of smaller agencies, be they design firms, sort of free media companies, which is what shocked was identified as. And just to help everybody understand that we all sort of share resources and share capabilities. And that SGK as a larger entity can help you do tell us about anything you need done, it made sense to sort of rebrand everybody under that SGK name.

And the S in SGK actually refers to Schawk. Anyway, Schawk Graphics on Kedzie is actually what SGK stands for because that's where David Schawk way, way back in the day started his print shop here on Kedzie Avenue in Chicago. That SGK has kind of carried over into what we do.

Yeah, Schawk was originally what we call a print media company, right? We help our clients do everything leading up to the printing of their products, whatever they may be, right? That's going to be artwork creation. That's going to be design adaptation. That's going to be design exploration of photography. 3D rendering. As well as things that get more technical on the print side of things, like color management and tools of that nature. You name it. For the most part, we can do it prior to it going on press.

[00:03:36] DC: When I knew the S in SGK as just Schawk!, as a singular entity, I have to admit, it was one of the processes that disturbed me in the sense that, in a lot of cases, it's companies like Williams Lea, Schawk and a couple of others go into the big agencies and say, "Hey, we can save you all this amount of money. All you've got to do is get rid of your entire production staff and then hire us as like outsourced but insource to take care of everything." And created some situations with the printers as well. These are the legacy printers. But now kind of the resources are moving over. And there was this whole thing about printers, let's say, paying a tax in order to be involved in it.

I'm glad that you've rebranded because – and honestly, much of what you've described wasn't my experience with Schawk!, which was also that, at one point, they had the Purina account I'm sure. It was a very long time ago. And they wanted me to work on it. But I would have to go to Purina headquarters and work there. Even though I wasn't working for Purina, they were my client/partner. This seems different now.

[00:04:59] DA: To a degree, yeah. We're partners to our clients, for sure. And then conversely, we act to be partners with the other suppliers at the same time, right? We're trying to grease all the wheels so that everything's sort of moving nice and smoothly and we're setting everybody up for success.

What you're describing sort of going to and working for at. Yet, not quite with, right? It was very similar to actually how I started on the account that I'm on. Currently, I work for – the entity is now referred to as Wella. And I think anyone who's ever washed their hair of a certain age maybe remembers sort of the Wella shampoo way back in the day. But it's actually a much larger brand than we probably realize here in the states. Well as huge in Europe. Pretty solid footprint in Latin America as well.

But Wella also owns Clairol. And here in the states, Clairol is a much bigger name. And so, I service the Clairol retail brands that are for sale here in North America. The original design of my position was to be what they call an on-site. To go and sit with the client in their offices, which at the time was in the Empire State Building back in New York and be a service there, right? Be able to – just like today, instead of a thousand teams meetings, these were meetings in-person and collaboration and working closely with the design team and the project management teams and ensure that everything was moving as it was.

Even going further back, sort of speaking to the perhaps rigidity of the relationships that you may have had not necessarily with Schawk at the time. But I can remember we have a competitor or two out there. And I can remember being at a marketing agency a million years ago. And one of the beauty brands, I think it was CoverGirl, that I did production art with.

We had to go through their people, right? The people that were doing all the display work. And there was certainly that sense of rigidity. You could only do things a certain way. You were limited to X colors, X ways of execution, all of these kinds of things. And it didn't feel particularly collaborative, for sure.

But I would argue that we – certainly, I. When it comes to the Wella team and their print partners, I strive to ensure that it feels like it's a partnership, it's a collaboration. No one's setting unrealistic terms, or conditions, or digging their heels in just for the sake of doing.

Sure, we have limitations on what we can do, right? Our press only has so many colors. Our budget only had so many dollars. Things of that nature, right? It's a matter of finding the best possible solutions given the parameters that a particular job comes with. But we do that as a team.

[00:07:51] DC: I worked at L'Oreal. That's kind of – and, actually, I just realized. I also worked on Avon. But that was just like retouching images of Salma Hayek, by the way, which you're not allowed to do anymore. Well, you can't retouch them. But we were retouching the hell out of them back in the days.

[00:08:06] DA: Oh, trust me. When I was working on the CoverGirl, we would, every now and then, get some of them unretouched.

[00:08:12] DC: Yeah. Yeah. Let's put it this way. Models are just like us. So are actors and actresses. What I'm saying is that L'Oreal/Redken had a vendor pool. And those were the only vendors we were allowed to use. So I couldn't really source any. I can only source from within our allotted list. Is that the same situation you're dealing with? Or are you able to source vendors if needed?

[00:08:38] DA: No. Fortunately, very fortunately, part of my job does not involve sourcing at all. Wella has a very robust procurement team based over in Europe. They manage all that as far as bidding everything out. Determining who is going to be awarded particular projects.

Where SGK is actually helpful is helping them vet potential suppliers, right? Sort of qualifying printers to help them understand that a printer's capabilities suits their needs, right? Or helping them identify additional resources beyond perhaps resources that they have already identified.

But none of my day-to-day involves any of the shopping, for lack of a better term. And I have lived that life. I used to do display work for Heineken when I worked for another agency some time ago. And it was exhausting, right? It was a lot of back and forth. A lot of wheeling and dealing. And then sometimes, yeah, you're like, "Oh, I really want to use these guys. I know they can do the thing." But maybe you are a little limited. Your hands are tied sometimes. I'm really glad I don't have to worry about that anymore.

[00:09:41] DC: You help the files get created, are a part of all of that, and then you hand them off to the procurement team who works with the printers to get them printed? Is that the process?

[00:09:52] DA: No. It kind of happens in parallel. The procurement team is usually settling on printers as we're kicking off sort of the artwork creation projects, right? Which are pretty lengthy. There's a bit of a development and process involved from working with the design team themselves to sort of land on the designs, right? Working with either additional outside agencies that they work with or doing things like consumer testing and qualifying claims and things like that. There's a little bit of a process there.

But then what SGK will do is we'll take those sort of finalized design, files, sometimes not all that finalized, right? Help them flush them out if we need to. And then our responsibility is creating the myriad versions of all of that stuff, right?

Stop and think about – so like their bread and butter brand is Nice'n Easy, right? Everybody knows nice and easy. You've got 50+ fades of hair color that are available to consumers. And so, we're getting a design or two, right? Hey, here's a version with the hair model. Here's the version with the blonde. Have fun." Right?

So we'll receive all the retouching. We'll receive all the supporting documentation, the copy, all that stuff. They use a version of various online project management tools that then supply us with all the sort of technical data to create UPCs, and all sorts of identifying codes and all this stuff. The ingredients.

Jam that through our workflows. And next thing you know, we have 50 finished files that are ready to release to a printer that at that point has long since been identified. Right? It starts in parallel. But it converges pretty, pretty quickly. And then we know who we're talking to in the end in order to knowing who the printer is helps us ensure that we're creating the files correctly, we're setting it up to their specs. We have a huge spec database for all of the printers that that client uses as well as any of our clients, right? So we can check any of them and say, "Yep. Minimum line thickness is this. Maximum number of colors is this. Here's your angles. Here's all the things that you need to apply when you're creating that artwork."

We share it with them. We confirm it with the printer or with the client rather to say, "Hey, everything's out the door. They're ready to rock." And then we start to go into the next stage of scheduling production, and press approvals and all those things.

[00:12:12] DC: Do they have an agency? Or is it an in-house agency? Like an in-house creative department?

[00:12:18] DA: They have an in-house creative department. It's on the smaller side. And it's limited to certain markets and brands. For the stuff that I do for the Clairol retail stuff, again, for North America, there is in-house design. They will bring in some help from some outside agencies just to sort of get the ball rolling. But then all of it is really sort of finalized in-house when it's handed over to us.

[BREAK]

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:13:31] DC: Okay. Last question about the process only because, again, I sort of have a similar experience. At L'Oreal, we had nothing to do with creating the files at all. They were literally given to us as finished pieces other than the specs. But it was just a lot of repeatable stuff. If you go to the Redken 5th Avenue stores or the salons, I mean, it's pretty formulaic. This window cling goes here. This shelf table tent goes here. Things of that nature.

But proofing, you said you kind of end up with the nightmare end of the job where all of the – you have to make sure that the right ingredients, the right color, the right directions. I mean, I don't want to over-complicate things. But is it in a different language? Does it need to be in a different language? Does someone understand the languages? How does that all come together? Because I don't know if anyone's ever worked on something like this. But this is where the actual problems occur and big legal problems, if anything. Including weight, by the way. Even the weight on the box.

[00:14:41] DA: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. [inaudible 00:14:42] big conversation lately. I don't want to misspeak because there's a lot of technical behind-the-scenes stuff that does happen that I don't have a lot of visibility to. But there are – I mentioned like we get a bunch of different documentation that use the sort of ingredients of the designs of the artwork to get everything built.

And then when we get into sort of the QC phase, there's all sorts of tools that basically do sort of compare contrast for lack of a better description, right? We'll have the supporting documents that we were provided. Then they can literally use software tools to compare those words against the words that are in the artwork to ensure that everything is what it was supposed to be.

That's the easiest way to do it. Because to your point, we are dealing in multiple languages, right? It's North America. There's a lot of Spanish. For Canada, there's got to be French. And my Spanish is the worst. And my French is even more terrible. I'm not checking those things. But that's why we rely on the technological tools that we have to do that.

And then there's a lot of trust, for lack of a better term, that a lot of those supporting documents that are being supplied to us by the client, they've been vetted on their end, right? They're working with transcreation firms to give all of that.

[00:16:00] DC: I love transcreation.

[00:16:01] DA: Yeah. To get all of that English language copy recreated basically in the best form of Spanish or in the best form of French that still conveys the same message and is going

to reach the audience the same way. Things like that. We have to trust that that process has been completed. It's been vetted. It's good. Okay. All right. Thank you. On we go to now do our part. A little bit of trust. A little bit of hand-holding as we go along. But there's definitely processes in place to ensure that, at the very least, what has been provided to us was then applied to the final product.

[00:16:36] DC: That's amazing. Just for anyone who's not aware, transcreation is when something is translated from meaning. Not literal meaning. But expression meaning. What is the thing that you're trying to convey? Versus translation, which is a literal interpretation word for word of what a sentence is in another language. Whether or not it will ever make sense to those people.

And just as an example, I was working in an advertising agency and we wanted to use an expression stand your ground. Well, that doesn't translate in every language the way that we mean it in America. Like stand your ground. You know? It doesn't – literally, in some countries, it's like I'm standing here on the ground. I love that you've brought transcreation into this conversation.

Okay. You mentioned part of the process before. I'm not going to say like you kind of skipped over it. You didn't. But now is the time to come back around and circle. Because color critical is probably a phrase that you live every single day. There are certain things that you can't mess up. Hair color happens to be one of them.

Now I know that on the boxes there's always – if your hair is this color, you can expect your results to be within these things. But that doesn't mean that the picture of the model can have the wrong color hair. What is your process for that?

[00:18:13] DA: The intention with the retouching is based in photo accuracy. There's a focus on actual, what they call die outs, right? Where the hair has been dyed, right? Here's how it should look. Here's a big old lock of hair retouching agency. Ensure that the model's hair looks like this. All right. Cool.

It starts with them. They do a whole lot of retouching. A whole lot of back and forth with the client. Get everything to where it needs to be. Ultimately, when it is approved, I am supplied physical proofs of the entire layout with the model, with the hair swatch images where they need to be kind of in situ so that you can see it'll have any sort of background design elements that have been locked kind of with it as well. Because we all know that – well, not all of us. But background colors, foreground colors – the environment can play tricks on your eyes, right? What it is that you're looking at can look different if it's on a blue background. Can look different if it's on a red background. Things of that nature.

That's why the proofs are issued the way they are with any other design elements. And that's why the retouching is even done that way from the ground up, right? There has to be some sort of foundation of a lot designed in order for the retouching to get started so that they know what they're working with.

Ultimately, that's all approved. Proofs are output. Printer gets one. I get one. Off we go and we print. And that's when my eyes come into play, right? Me, the printer, whoever else is in the room. We're sitting there. We're looking at the first press sheet. We're looking at the proofs. We're under our controlled D50 lighting booth. We're in a gray room. All of the things that press approvals entail.

Going over things with a fine-tooth comb, right? Looking at the tones of shadows, the highlights. Whether there's any areas that are blowing out, unfortunately. Are we too green? Are we too hot? Is the model kind of jaundiced? Like all of the things that you have to consider. And then starting to hone in on them, right?

We need a little more magenta here. We need to pull back on the black here. All of those things. What can we do? What can't we do? Oh, well. If we pull back on black, because of the direction that the sheets going, guess what? You're going to pull back on black here too. Well, crap. All right. Well, how can we compromise?

And it's just the whole negotiation. And it goes on and on and on. And sometimes it goes quickly, right? Sometimes it's three, or four, or five polls. It's like, "All right. We got it." Right?

Sometimes it's a lot more than that. And that's just for one shade. And I do 50 of these things for one brand.

And then it goes on and on and on because I have a lot of sub-brands. All of this is starting to give me PTSD already because this summer is our production season. And my travel schedule is actually starting to be finalized right now. And I'm having a nervous breakdown. It's going to be a lot of time at printers, and waiting for next polls and getting dirty looks from pressmen. And all the things that are part and parcel with color approvals. But the short story of it is it's all arbitrary, right? It's all me. It's all my eyes. It's all my judgment.

Again, collaboration with the printer themselves, right? I want to ensure that they see what I see, which is why doing these sort of things remotely never works. I know during COVID, like a lot of people tried to do sort of remote press approvals and stuff. It doesn't work.

If I'm asking somebody to pull back on cyan slightly because of this dumb shadow area, I need to ensure that, "We see the dumb shadow area. All right. We'll do it." Right? "You're getting a little picky, buddy. But, yeah, we'll do it." Right? Those kinds of things.

[00:21:40] DC: Yeah. The negotiations with the press people.

[00:21:45] DA: Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. You try to make them your friends, right? You bring some donuts every now and then. You do what you got to do. But, yeah.

[00:21:51] DC: Yeah, particular — I used to — I would stand there and I would just be like, "Look, dude. I am not moving until you take down — give me two down on the cyan and then I'll leave you alone." But at the end of the day, I would sit there and I'd say, "Admit it looks better. Admit it looks better. Admit it looks better." And they'd be like, "Fine. It looks better." I was like, "That's it. That's all I want."

[00:22:11] DA: Or even the reverse. I'm the first one to say, "Hey, man. Look, I don't know if it's going to work. But I do want to bring in the — have you bring the cyan down." If it doesn't work, I will tell you it doesn't work. And I will ask you to go back to the thing that we had just a minute ago. And I have no bombs about that, right? I'm not going to know if we don't try.

[00:22:25] DC: Yeah. You're absolutely right. And sometimes it's great to defer to them and say, "Look, it's a little too pulled back. You use your skills. Show me another one."

[00:22:37] DA: Yup. Yeah. You tell me. You tell me. You're out on the press. You're out on the press. You know what I want. How can I achieve this?

[00:22:45] DC: Right. And they know the press. They know what it will do.

[BREAK]

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:23:40] DC: Okay. Are you guys having any conversations, whatsoever, about utilizing digital printing for packaging in your world at this point?

[00:23:54] DA: None that I'm aware of. And I will say that it's been a while since I've been involved in anything. A million years ago. A million years ago. One of the first little printers I worked at when I lived in Charlotte. This is early 2000s. They had one of the first Indigos. And, man, we thought we were hot shit, right? Because we were, right? No one knew what it was. What is this wonderful machine that constantly jams and the technician is always here all the time? And this was like before HP bought it and anything. This was the original, original Indigo.

If memory serves, there's still a sweet spot when it comes to digital printing as far as quantities to keep sort of things feasible from a pricing standpoint. And certainly, the Clairol brands like Wella as a larger entity, they're exceeding those quantities I'm sure by far.

However, I bet digital printing would offer a slew of solutions to some of the challenges that we face, right? As far as not quite personalization isn't the right word. But the ability to differentiate a bit more –

[00:25:05] DC: Yes. Customization. I call it customization. Yeah.

[00:25:08] DA: Right. Customization. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That's probably a better phrase. To really be able to do that, right? To sort of still keep things sort of unified as like a design family. But then to really have sort of elements of nuance to particular shades, or sub-collections, or whatever the case may be. And to do that much easier than having to, "Well, no. You want to do a sub-collection. Guess what? It's this whole separate run. We've got to do all new plates for everything." Like the whole shebang. I'm sure, digital printing offers opportunities to do that.

And again, like we talked about earlier, a lot of that is finding the right supplier and being involved in those conversations. Starting those conversations, right? And with most large clients, it's hard. It's scary to find new printers. To qualify them. To forge a relationship with them. To trust them from a quality standpoint. And to find the time to do it, which is why SGK adds value there, for sure, right? And helping any of these brands find additional suppliers qualify them. Things of that nature.

But it's a process. It's a major, major, major process. And I think this is why sometimes brands, or clients, or whatever you want to call them, they get stuck in a rut, you know? You find printers. You trust them. All right. They got eight-color press. Okay. Cool. What else can we do? A varnish. All right. Some foil or some stamping. Fine. Embossing. Great. All right. There's only so many ways to skin a cat. And they kind of get stuck with it. Sometimes it makes innovating at shelf a little tricky.

[00:26:42] DC: Speaking of varnishes, and foils and things of that nature, we did have a conversation before this podcast where we talked about sustainability as being a big topic in your world right now. Can you address that?

[00:26:58] DA: Client-wise, though Wella brands are very big on sustainability right now. There's multiple initiatives that they apply to any particular project. Whether that's utilization of FSC-certified board. They engage a couple of different third-party organizations to help in recycling education, for lack of a better term, right?

In North America in particular, there's an organization called How to Recycle, which explains, wait for it, how to recycle the various components that you will find in the kit. Because it's not just a box that we're dealing with. Inside that box is an aluminum tube, a laminate tube, a plastic bottle, a paper leaflet. All of these – plastic gloves. All of these different components.

And sometimes it's not particularly clear what you can do and what you can't do with these things when you are done with them. How to recycle as an organization helps educate consumers on that. Additionally, there's been a huge shift into utilization of PCR materials, post-consumer recycled material, for a lot of those inner components, right? Those plastic bottles. The caps. The aluminum tubes. All that stuff. A lot of that is, if not 100%, mostly 100% recycled material already.

Additionally, they have started to move away from the use of foil, which, for a very long time, was just ubiquitous in the space, right? You want your box of hair color to pop a shelf. Guess what, buddy? It's got hot foil stamping on it, right? And they're starting to move away from that primarily because of the environmental considerations.

And then on the SGK side, sustainability is a huge thing for us as well. We have an entire division that's devoted to advising clients on sustainability initiatives. Of what they can do. What they can't do. And helping them find sort of solutions to achieve their sustainability goals.

[00:29:02] DC: I mean, it sounds like you have things under control. I just have a follow-up question that I would just ask you not necessarily as a representative of this client. But if you received like research from the printing industry saying that some of the techniques for foil and

cast and cure are actually recyclable in a perfect world, do you think that you would be more willing to reintroduce the topic? Or do you just think it's like been there, done that? Time to move on from shiny stuff.

[00:29:38] DA: I think it would probably – I would certainly share that information with them, right? So that they know, "Hey, here are some more sustainable options to maybe achieve. Some of the looks and finishes that we had used before." But then, to your point, right? Is there also the we're moving on from a look and feel standpoint? We're modernizing. However you want to call it, right? Like we don't necessarily want to take steps backwards.

But sometimes those innovations at shelf involve all these sorts of things. Coating, and foils and whatnot. If they know that they have access to them and they also adhere to their sustainability goals, then that's a win-win.

[BREAK]

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[00:30:54] DC: Excellent. Okay. I'm going to send some information your way just so you can peruse it at your pleasure. And I'm happy to introduce you to some people if that works out that way. I put out a post about out and proud in printing and asked people, "Hey, if you want to jump on this podcast for pride month and share your story, let me know." A handful of people did. You were one of them. Why did you raise your hand for this?

[00:31:23] DA: There's something about this industry, about printing in particular. Where, throughout my career, for the most part I've always felt like the only gay in the village, for lack of a better term, right?

[00:31:37] DC: You probably were.

[00:31:38] DA: Yeah. I mean, I probably was. And I know I was in most of the situations, right? Especially when I was more like on the manufacturing side. Just to give you very brief overview. I got my start – I went to school for journalism but ended up working on the school newspaper that learned just enough about layout and working on a Mac to be dangerous.

And so, my first job-job at a school was actually in what we call the composing department at a local newspaper, right? Basically, taking the pages and pasting them up, right? Setting the ads as you need to. Bring them out. Running them through a wax. Or smacking them on resin-coated paper using non-repro blue pencils everywhere to markup what's supposed to go. Like it's incredibly archaic compared to what we do today.

But it's me, some other dude, some other dude and then two old ass white dudes that had been there since the dawn of man, right? They used to do it like with the actual letters and the – I don't even know the terminology of it. That's all –

[00:32:38] DC: They used to set type instead of using the typesetting machine. Yeah.

[00:32:41] DA: Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. I know I was the only homo there, right? That was one thing. And then bounced around to the printer here, a service bureau there. Stuff like service bureaus, right? I talk about aging up. And always, always was the only one.

And that was all upstate New York, which is where I'm from. Moved away. Moved to Charlotte, North Carolina because it's super progressive. And same thing. The printer I was there – was working with there. I was the only one until I wasn't, which was really weird. I was leaving. I decided to move on to greener pastures. And I'm biracial gay from upstate New York. They hired a gay black guy from New Jersey. And I was like, "Did you put this in the ad?" It was very confusing.

And he and I had a little bit of overlap for a little bit. It was like two of us, right? We got to cut up and be gay at work. And it was really nice. And I think, from that point, I suddenly became less concerned about sort of — not hiding. I was never really hiding. I was out. But I didn't lead with it as a conversation starter.

When I left North Carolina, I moved to Florida. I moved to Tampa. And this was before Florida was a fascist state. And it was just easier from that point on, right? Again, worked at a little print shop. No problem. I'm a gay guy. Okay. Cool. Went and worked for a flexo company. Like a whole label manufacturer kind of thing. Fine. I'm a gay guy. No biggie. Right? Fine with it. But still, in sort of a solitary way, right? I was still kind of the only one.

And it wasn't until I moved to Chicago, switched over to sort of the agency side of things, right? Then it was like, "Oh. Hey, y'all." Right? Then there were some numbers. There were some strength in numbers just in general diversity. But also, not being the only gay in the village anymore. Even if I might have been in the production department, right? It's like, "Okay. Well, at least I know. There's the guy over in the account department that I can go grab lunch with." Right? There's more than one of us floating around.

But it was initially very intimidating. It made you question — made me question my path in the industry. Not that I ever really saw one. My path just kind of — I don't know how it happened. But just kind of got laid out before me and I followed it as I followed it. But I guess maybe never encouraged me to forge a path, right? Because —

[00:35:13] DC: You were like holding space to sort of see if you could end up manifesting your authentic self. But it wasn't manifesting until you actually went to the agency world where it is a white party every Friday and appetizing agency.

[00:35:32] DA: Exactly. Right? It's much more inclusive. Much more accepting. And then I think from that point on, then I probably found a little more gumption to start to forge a path. It's like, "Okay, now I see what I can do with this knowledge." Right? With this work history. Still not fully knowing necessarily where it could go. I would have never expected that I'd be doing what I'm doing right now.

The concern I guess is that I'm sure that there are others entering into this field or reluctant to enter into this field out of a similar concern. Because I don't think – when it really comes down to it, printing, right? The manufacturing end of it. I don't think that's changed all that much, right?

[00:36:12] DC: It's a conservative industry. Yeah.

[00:36:15] DA: Yeah. When I go on press approvals, like I'm the only gay guy there. I know I am, right?

[00:36:20] DC: You might be the only person of color, as well.

[00:36:22] DA: Well, I'm in Mexico. So not quite.

[00:36:24] DC: Oh. Now you're maybe the only American in there though.

[00:36:29] DA: But they're very welcome. They're lovely people. I love going down there. But I know, you know? It's like I'm the only one, right? And it's cool. It's fine. There's no intimidation, like there used to be, right? Yes, my gay ass is going to sit here and tell you to bring that cyan down to two fucking points just like I said 20 times. And I ain't going nowhere until you do it. I don't know what to tell you.

[00:36:50] DC: Yeah. I mean, such great points. And you're right. Visibility is not just about can I achieve this job. It's about – especially now, the Gen Z'ers love using the word comfortable. Are they comfortable where they are? And part of being comfortable where you work is being comfortable being yourself.

And the printing industry right now, which I just really stick in with the printing industry even though I consider the creative industry part of the printing industry, because we need each other. But they have diversity way more under control than the printing industry. And in many places of America, there are pockets of it where it's — New York, Chicago, Miami. There's plenty of stuff going on. But there's other places where it's still a very conservative industry.

And one of the things that they're always talking about is we need to attract young people. We need to attract young people. I'm always like, "Well, there's probably a lot of ways you can do that. But it's going to start with making sure that everybody is comfortable and protected where they work." How do you think that is achievable? And not necessarily in the printing industry. But in general. Is this achievable? How do we get there?

[00:38:14] DA: I think it's even – I don't know that I know how we get there. But I think what adds a layer of complication to it is those spaces where that sense of safety isn't almost a given, is an automatic, tend to be trades, right? Versus if you work in marketing, or you work in finance, or whatever, right? You know, everyone's sort of college educated. They're a bit more open-minded. Blah-blah-blah-blah. Printing is a trade, right? You're not necessarily going to college to learn how to run a printing press. You may have picked up an apprenticeship somewhere. Or your dad used to do it. Or you got an uncle that got you a job. Or whatever the case may be, right?

It's a different mindset. It's a different environment. And I think that certainly adds a challenge as far as creating a culture that invites that sort of diversity, invites different, invites people for who they are. I think maybe people like you and I, we're here to save the world.

But, yeah, our exposure to that aspect of the world, right? And showing that, "Yeah. You know what? I'm not maybe what you're used to." Or you, Deborah, or maybe not what a pressman is used to, or a printing company is used to, or whatever the case. But you know what? We had a really productive day today. And we did great work. And you're really smart. And you're good at your job. And we learned a thing or two from you. And you learned a thing or two from us. Look at that. That was awesome, huh?

That kind of exposure. I know it sounds hokey. But I think that kind of exposure certainly is a path to something like that to creating those environments or at least just planting the seeds when someone does come in and they're other, right? They're different than what the industry is particularly used to. That otherness or that difference is not a disqualifier. If anything, it's an asset now.

[00:40:02] DC: I just want to thank you so much for taking your time to join me on this podcast and share such great information about what you do at SGK. And, of course, participate out and proud in print. Everything you need to see what Damon is up to at SGK will be in the show notes, to connect with him on LinkedIn. I'm going to send you some sustainability information from this specialty finishing people.

And until next time, everybody, print long, pride long, and prosper.

[OUTRO]

[00:40:39] DC: Thanks for listening to Podcasts from the Printerverse. Please subscribe. Click some stars and leave us a review. Connect with us through printmediacentr.com. We'd love to hear your feedback on our shows and topics that are of interest for future broadcasts.

Until next time, thanks for joining us. Print long and prosper.

[END]

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