

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:01] NT: Does your printing need some passion?

[0:00:04] DD: Your design, some dynamic dimension?

[0:00:08] DC: Are you stuck in a CMYK rut?

[0:00:10] DD: I'm David Drucker, Founder and CEO of Highresolution Printing and Packaging.

[0:00:17] NT: I'm Noel Tocci, Founder of Tocci Made, Bespoke Print Consulting.

[0:00:20] DC: Now, I'm Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. Welcome to Making it with Print, the podcast that takes a deep dive into the conception, creation, and production of amazing printed products.

[0:00:34] DD: If you can dream it –

[0:00:34] NT: You can make it.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:38] DC: Hey everybody, welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. More specifically, the Making it with Print Podcast, which means I'm here with David Drucker, guru of print, Highresolution Printing and Packaging. Hello, David.

[0:00:51] DD: Hey, good afternoon. It's great to see everybody again.

[0:00:54] DC: Yes, and we are also here with Noel Tocci, Tocci Made, [inaudible 0:01:00].

[0:01:01] NT: [inaudible 0:01:02].

[0:01:04] DC: [inaudible 0:01:04]. Excellent. So, gentlemen, today, I want to focus on tips and tricks for achieving print greatness on a budget. I want to start with formulating specs because that is basically the roadmap of the project. That's where you're going to get your estimate from, and it is a great place to recognize red flags and avoid them in the early on conversations. So, when you're on a budget, but you still want to make the piece stand out, how do you collaborate with your customers upfront? And do you involve your printing partners in those conversations? David?

[0:01:47] DD: Good topic. Kind of going through all of this right now and I was called a referral, and they have other printers involved in this as well. During our conversation today, he kept referencing what the other printers had said. But what I did is first, question design. What kind of design do you have? That'll give me direction as far as papers are concerned. And Sappi has a whole line of different types of coated and silk coated and dull coated papers to choose from. And that will certainly help with budget depending on what that design is, and who the audience is.

The second thing is I asked about size because sometimes their size or what they want to do is unrealistic. And by maybe bringing it in, or showing them a different-sized piece, they might tend to change the design a bit. So, for instance, today, we were talking about an 84-page book, I brought in three different shaped books, that would help them to reduce the money that they would spend. In that conversation, they began to have a conversation. There were two parties here. From that conversation, I heard what they wanted to do, and the direction they wanted to go in. It all falls into budget. What I gave them is a choice. All I wanted to do is hear back from them. For me, that is the easiest way to get them to give me feedback on a direction I should go.

All I did was put out samples. The thought went into what samples I was going to bring, put the samples out on the table, and they look at them, and they determined right there the direction they want to go. Now, they can always choose something larger. If they're choosing something larger and it doesn't fall within the sheet size, then you're talking about, there isn't really a budget. They want what they want. But to corral somebody to give them a choice is going to give them what falls in their budget.

Now, also, some budgets might be absolutely ridiculous. The book –

[0:04:13] DC: High or low?

[0:04:15] DD: Low.

[0:04:15] DC: Low, okay.

[0:04:16] DD: Mainly because the people who I was speaking to really didn't have a print background. This has to do with packaging. I know what they should spend is about USD 50 to USD 75 per box. That is what, by the time we're done building it, by the time we're done stamping it, and it's not a large order. So, we have dyes that are involved, and so on and so forth. But when someone comes back and they say we have \$18 a box, what does that say? It says, "Time to check out of this and not waste my time." So, that also tells me a lot as well.

[0:05:00] DC: I have a couple of questions about what you said before we get to Noel. With all due respect, yes, if something's big, and you make it smaller, and it's going to be less money because you figure you can get more on the press. So, you could do more with less paper and all of that. But I think something you said is really important, which is understanding the intention of the piece. From there, if maybe the thing that they really wanted was it to be oversized, then you can start looking at other ways to reduce costs, and not break from their intention or the impact, right?

But my question to you is, you don't have printing equipment. So, are you making an educated guess on what the pieces will cost? Or are you sort of spec estimating them with your printing partners before you're having this conversation about reducing costs?

[0:06:04] DD: Okay. So, an advantage for me and for Noel, is years of experience, and producing similar types of work. So, when I go down in my library, and I begin to pull samples, it's based on the similar quantities that my client, that my prospect wants to run, and knowing what those budgets, how those budgets fell. In three pieces, I'm hoping that they're going to have three choices, and it's a lot more than just taking an order and pushing it through. As far as my suppliers go, my print partners, well, if I already know the size of their presses, and I have

an idea of some sort of budget from past experience, then I dictate to my print partners, “This is how we're going to do it.”

It's something standard. It's not wild. It's all going to fit within their equipment. I mean, that's the thought that I go through. Now, there's so much equipment out there and I'm referring specifically to digital equipment that does digital sizes, that you run a larger size sheet with a smaller size book, you get more pages out, you're reducing cost. So, you have to know these factors going into it.

[0:07:32] DC: Yes. I mean, I think you can have a range, David, but in all fairness, supply chains affect costs, ink costs, shipping costs, depending upon where things are coming from. So, I'm sure at this point in your career, you're pretty close in a range of – this is a mid-range piece. This is a high-end piece. Then, you can tweak it down from there.

[0:07:57] DD: So, that's what design does. Design dictates the direction to go. I mean, if we're handing out Burger King coupons on the corner, and luxury stores making postcards, they're not going to use the same papers. They're not going to use the same techniques, they're not going to have the same quality. They're for completely different purposes.

[0:08:17] DC: Okay, interesting. We could probably do a whole podcast on what is design. Noel, I'm very interested. I know you do really expensive high-end pieces. How do you collaborate with your customers upfront when they want to focus on the budget, or they have to? And do you involve your printing partners in those conversations?

[0:08:17] NT: Yes. Great. Thank you for asking, and thank you for both of those answers. It's so interesting. I like to go last and I'm not complaining, I do that a lot because I love to hear your take on it. Usually, it's pretty much the same, maybe with a different inflection.

I heard these things, but I always start and you've heard me on this podcast over and over and over. What are you trying to do? I get in the situation, I was in it three days ago, where I'm one of three bids. Now, they want me to do it. And I know and I'm generally a little more because I think not that I'm better. We think it out a little more.

So, from that though, I will want – in a situation like that, I will want to know, and I even ask. I did it yesterday. “Listen, I know you want me to do this. You've got another price. I don't care who it is. I don't care what the price is. What are the specs?” Because generally what happens is somebody writes the specs and then while we got to get out of pricing. So, I can't do my best work if I'm using someone else's specs, especially if it's a printer, and you know I love printers. That printer has a set of equipment. People like David and I have all the equipment available to us.

That leads to how do we plan the job. And this is what I'm a fanatic about. I did it yesterday. I got a 96-page oblong book. I can run six teams. I got the grain going the right way. I can see squeeze it on 23, 35, most people won't. Will the binder do it? So, it's a conversation along the way. As far as working with print partners or asking them, I'm always polite, but I more or less tell them. I go with the answer and wait for them to go, “Hey, that's a good idea.” Or, “Yes, we can do that.” Or, “No, we can't, Noel. You missed an eighth of an inch here. It won't work.”

So, what I like to do is to figure out what I think the best way to do it is in the economies. And I want to throw something in here. When you're trying to save money, I have heard this since I got in the business in 1980. But they don't even ask, change the paper and give me a better price. So, unless you're over 5,000 or 10,000 pounds, you're not going to possibly get that much savings. And what you're giving up might be part of what you're trying to do.

David made a good point, if I'm doing coupons for Burger King and handing them out on the corner, it's got to print nice, it's got to be okay. But we don't need a premium uncoated stock with the best formation out there. But what you're trying to do, may need that. So, instead of that I would rather trim an eighth of an inch and it always leads back to design. My approach is always designed-centric because the majority of my clients are in the design world. So, you'd be surprised if you go, “Hey, what's important to you here? What's critical about this? Could we trim an eighth inch here? How do you feel about this?”

We kind of take the specs were given, and then we write our own based on understanding, are those really the specs you want? Because there's also a lot of misunderstanding, right? Especially with binding. People don't always understand perfect binding from Smyth-sewn. So, we talk about all this till I understand exactly what it has to feel like and look like, and what it has

to do. Then, we try the other thing, I think that's really important, and I'm sorry to go around and round. The other thing I think is really important is sometimes people want to save money, but they're, "Well, yes, we got this gorgeous book. But then the cover has got to be registered in Boston. Then you got foil." You think, "Well, that's expensive."

Everything you do, if it's foil stamping, that's a process. If you emboss it, that's another process. If you print it, that's a third process. If you kind of limit your processes, and that's where design comes in too, right? It can still be very beautiful without making something that a paper company might put out. So, long and short of it is, you figure out what you're trying to do. I see the specs that they think are correct. And without being rude, I leverage, like, David does, all of the different equipment and possibilities and years of experience to know what could go wrong and what could go right, to make it more efficient to get to that desired result. Generally, that will give you a very competitive price.

[0:12:54] DC: So, I want to address what you just said about finishing and bindery. As somebody who sat in an advertising agency and heard, "Oh, you don't want to do that." Or, "No, no, no, you can't do that." Or, "This is why it's expensive." You start learning at some point that you know what, maybe this is actually a limitation of this particular print shop and not another print shop, right?

[0:13:21] NT: Correct.

[0:13:21] DC: Now, if I'm a print shop, and I have all this equipment in-house, and I have really efficient workflow processes, it is having foil or some sort of specialty finishing, might not be as "expensive" as it is at another printer that you work with, who needs to send all of this stuff out-of-house for it.

[0:13:45] NT: I'm going to give you an example. Perfect binding. I do very little perfect binding. Most of what I do is upscale, so I will change it and tell them and make them a dummy, and it's a no-brainer, Smyth-sewn with a soft cover. And you go, "Well, that's a lot of money." It's not a lot of money anymore. If it's a decent run, I can put it on a very large machine and it's not much more than perfect binding. But if you make the dummy both ways, especially if it's less than

eight inches wide, it kind of snaps shut a little bit. Whereas the Smyth-sewn soft cover pulls open, it's more bespoke, it's more upscale.

[0:14:20] DC: But I'm going to interrupt you because what does that have to do with assessing if you're sending it – like, why would you send the job to a printer who's going to have to send all the finishing out-of-house if you still want to make it a good piece on a budget?

[0:14:37] NT: Well, that's the problem.

[0:14:39] DC: I'm just saying that there were other conversations to have with printers about – we're talking to the creatives now. We're talking to people who want to make print, right? If you're being told no or you're being told that the only way to reduce the cost is not to do the foil, or not to do the varnish, or not to do the die cut –

[0:14:54] NT: We're going to do what they want under their roof. That's what they're going to do.

[0:14:58] DC: I'm saying a good question to ask is, “Do you have this equipment in-house? Or are you sending it out?” If they say, “We're sending it out.” You can say, “Great, thanks so much.” I'm not saying you're not going to award them the job, because maybe you want to award them a job because of everything else they do. But there is still another option of finding a printer who has everything in-house, with a tight workflow and automation that can do the job for less money, because they're controlling it, there's no shipping, there's no days lost.

[0:15:33] NT: I would agree, and I have, and what you're saying is, you must have the designers, whoever is working this piece, get to know the vendors they're dealing with. A lot of times –

[0:15:43] DC: That's why I'm asking you if you involve your partners.

[0:15:45] NT: They should bring them in and ask them. What do you do? What do you do in-house? What can you do? What fits you like a glove? I always ask them, bring what is your core competency. Because you're right, a lot of times, there's a list of four printers, they're the usual suspects, and every job whether it's big, small, big, little, it all gets put there. And I will tell you, a lot of printers don't want to send – they don't want to do a \$50,000 job, that's \$30,000 worth of

bindery. You know what I mean? Because they're taking responsibility for \$50,000 and they'll do it for a good customer. But it doesn't fit them well. You're right, if they got someone who could do it all in-house, there's a big savings there, right?

[0:16:23] DD: That's the importance of having good print partners, is for that dialogue, to know what the end result is going to be. Here, this might be different than going to a print shop that does everything. But what also comes with that everything is individual experience. Now, if you go to a die cutter, or a stamper, or an engraver that does thousands of jobs every year, and knows detail of how to do that just the right way, that might be an advantage in cost right there, as compared to going to somebody who has all the equipment, and is hiring people just to push things along, so they don't lose out on work.

I personally can't tell you of any resource that I've gone to, that has all the equipment, where I've utilized all their equipment. I've pulled something out and done it elsewhere. Because of that experience.

[0:17:26] DC: Yes. I agree with you. I mean, in all of the time I worked in advertising, which is more than 25 years, only one printer ever said, "It's just not the right fit for us." And they went out into the parking lot and called me on their cell phone. So, nobody heard him saying it inside the print shop. When he was talking to me inside, he was like, "Of course we can do it. No problem." This is kind of what I'm saying to you. It is my experience when printers say they can't do it for a certain budget or a certain thing. If they have the equipment in-house, they have more flexibility to try to work with you if they can. And if it's going out-of-house, then it becomes a bigger problem, and that's usually when they're like, "Just don't do the die cut and we can do it."

But meanwhile, what I'm saying is that that die cut might be integral to the entire project. They're only doing it for the die cut. So, it's a topic that we're bringing up as a conversation. I don't think there's any right or wrong answer. We just want to explore some of the options, and I think what we're all saying is ask questions, talk to each other, and collaborate with your printing partners at the end who are actually responsible for creating and working with their partners. We come back, Noel touched upon it, but we're going to talk about the paper switch.

[MESSAGE]

[0:18:54] DD: Are you a frustrated creative and want a print partner that takes an artisan approach? Do you want to be inspired with techniques that will enhance your next printed or packaging production? Or are you a printer that has unique abilities and need a liaison to enhance your exposure? I'm David Drucker, owner of Highresolution Printing. I am an independent creative consultant with access to every printing technology out there.

I work hand in hand with creatives and printers, creating projects that are complex, require meticulous detail, and precision, from concept to completion. Want to see what I mean? Go to guruofprinting.com and get inspired.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:19:36] DC: Hey, everybody, welcome back. So, it is so common that when budget becomes a conversation, printers, more likely than not, will start with suggesting that the paper gets switched out. Assuming that it's something that could be switched out. You're not already starting at a level of where it can't be switched out. And there are other cases where, I remember I worked on a large, global, high-end exclusive hotel chain. It took us six months for them to finally approve the paper stock that was now in their brand standards.

So, you couldn't come off that paper stock even if you wanted to. I mean, I guess technically you could, but we weren't supposed to, and I certainly did not. But there was no switching that paper. That was not going to happen. So, what is your best advice for finding an alternative stock when a paper switch is suggested and possible? And where can you look for savings around paper when it's not?

Noel, let's start with you, since you're the paper guy.

[0:20:55] NT: The first thing I always do if it's any amount of paper, I've built some really good relationships with the mills. So, I can often ask them, and a lot of times the mills call directly on my customers and say, "Hey, you really want this work. First of all, what's the very best you can do?" Because this is specified on classic craft store, [inaudible 0:21:16], or Neenah, or Mohawk

Superfine, and you know they're going to switch that spec, at some point when the money's too much. It's a USD 60,000 job, and you have USD 30,000 worth of paper, that might get switched.

So, I start there. Then I look for an alternative within the same line. I'm not favoring any mill here. I'm giving two examples. Mohawk, I did it yesterday. A client of mine, I put them on Superfine years ago, it's a much bigger book. So, we're going to go via. I called the mill and said, "Anybody can do this. I really need good pricing. You want this business, I want it." And we saved about USD 100, a 100 via is going to print every bit as well. I have confidence in that. You can do the same thing with Neenah. If you go to some of the Sundance sheets.

So, those are the two things I start with. The other thing is, I mentioned that before, papers sold by the pound. A lot of times you think it's going to make a huge difference. But the difference it made – if you have a USD 25,000 job and you're talking about saving even USD 1,200 sounds like a lot of money. But think about it, I always use the recipe analogy. We have four more people come in today. "Oh, we should get three-day-old mead, it'll be cheaper." You're going to laugh. It doesn't make any sense. You don't want to change the feeling or what you're trying to do of the job by changing the paper. And everybody goes, "Oh, Accent." They're really good papers. There are no bad papers. There are papers that are fit, and that's what you're talking about.

Accent is wonderful. There's one I won't mention the name I don't like, but I'm a picky pain in the neck. But Accent, Cougar. They're great sheets. But the differences there opaques. Superfine and Crest are not opaques, and there's a different formation. But you can work around it, particularly with the advent of UV and now LED UV technology. They don't make it so it sits up and it's garish and it looks coated. They allow you to print correctly. Uncoated paper makes it hard to print correctly because of dot gain, and that's fine. Dot gain is fine, right? You can overcome that by making curves. But that's not printing. That's pre-press. And there aren't a lot of people that do it really, really well.

That's my two cents with the paper. I just think before you throw away the baby with the bathwater if you will. You want to think about how important it is and what's important. I always ask, what's critical about this, right? Is it the shade? Is it the surface? Is it the opacity? You can usually find the sheet. To give you an idea, the two I meant like Accent and Cougar, they're

probably almost half price to say Crest. That may be – and not fine. If they don't diminish the job, and you don't open the book and go, “What a beautiful job. What's this paper?” If you don't do that, then what's the problem?

I mean, you can't just change the change, because some people will shop, “Look at this, I saw it online. Look how cheap this is. It's white paper.” I've seen it, they show you a sheet and they lay it on, “This is beautiful paper. Look at it.” I go, “You're showing me a white piece of paper on the – do you understand that inks translucent and the paper is nothing until you put something on it, then you know what you got.” That's my two cents, maybe my 10 cents. But does that kind of make sense? I just think –

[0:24:29] DC: It makes total sense. I mean, sometimes, there is a significant difference in the whites. Some of them skew a little blue or a little creamy. So, sometimes you have to go with the brighter sheet. The other thing I would say is that, for me, it's probably people weight more than paper. The mill and the stock mean. That is something I noticed immediately. I don't know, have you guys ever got like kind of flimsy business cards and you're like, “What in God's name?” A minimal 100 pounds, cover stock, right? Or 80, at least? I don't know what the minimum would be. But sometimes you get them and you – what I think is nobody cared about this card.

David, I want you to chime in now about what is your best advice for finding an alternative paper stock when a switch is possible? And how can you look for savings with paper when it's not?

[0:25:31] DD: Okay, I'm going to take a step backward in time. I'm going to go back to the time when recycles came out and they were growing, and they were a really big thing. The fibers of recycled papers are a lot shorter than virgin papers.

So, at least for what I do, where you're taking something, you're stamping it, you're folding it every which way, you're die cutting it, you're gluing it, it's got to open up, it's got to close the same way. Those papers became a challenge. But we use them and we learned to go around the issues that we were having.

I have always felt most papers today are recycled. They have some recycled content in it. So, for that, I prefer to go on to number one sheets, whenever possible. But I think the best thing to

do is putting in front of your clients, different types of sheets, so they can see what – is there a fuzziness to the paper?

Going from a Superfine to a Cougar is a huge step. But sometimes, that doesn't matter. Sometimes what it's being used for, in the funnel, in the funnel, when you're gathering all your information, the end of the funnel is whoever receives that book, or that product. Are they really going to know what the difference of papers is really going to be? That's something that I think you need to discuss right up front. Who's going to really, really know, and are we doing this, and using this specific paper, because you feel good about it as the buyer? What are we really using it for? I think that's what dictates.

A lot of people are used to saying, "I want to use the Superfine. I want to use the Navajos. Smoothest sheets because of experience." But I have to tell you that number two sheets have come a long, long way as well, and those have to be introduced as well. Maybe they just don't know enough about it and they don't have enough of an education. So, I think that's the majority of it is that upfront education, and who that end user is going to be.

[0:27:48] DC: Yes. So, a couple of times in the advertising agency, we had to get a little crafty with what we were doing, and I would definitely categorize it as that we only, only touch what we call like throwaway print. We knew what was going through the mail and most likely, it wasn't going to sit around. We didn't know it was going to touch it for a long time. It wasn't some sort of museum piece or something that we were trying to win an award for. We wanted to save the money so we could use the budget and other ways for the clients.

I mentioned it before, but changing paperweight does lower the price of paper. So, that is something just you can look at if you're using a really thick stock, you might be able to go down a weight or two and that does save you money. The other thing I didn't even realize you could do until a printer told me, that we actually, on a couple of jobs used, I can't believe I'm going to say this out loud, glossy paper. But then we put an aqueous coating on it so you didn't know it was glossy underneath it. That was a significant savings because honestly, we didn't care what was underneath it. Whatever it was. Give us the cheapest thing you have. We just need it to not be glossy at the end of the day and we know it's not going to stay around.

The other thing is that there have been a couple of times where I've spoken to my printer. I've never called a merchant directly, even though I know that you can call paper merchants and ask them for help. But I have spoken to my printers and said to them, "What do you have lying around the shop floor that you haven't used for another client yet, or is leftover or something?" If I know it's going to be a one-and-done, and I don't need to necessarily do reprints or need a family of papers, because I need different weights for different things. That is a way, it helps the printers get the paper off their floor, right? And you can sometimes, just catch them at a good moment, as well as asking the next time they've got a really fancy job printing. What's left, and maybe you could jump on the press there. It doesn't always work out, but conversations are possible. Have you guys had that experience?

[0:30:25] DD: I have a phobia. And my phobia is using paper that's been sitting around. Because I've had it before where I've used a paper, similar to what you just said, and when I went to score and fold it, we had issues with a cracking, and you can't go back to a mill at that point, and say that I've had an issue with it.

So, I agree, and that is a way to save money. There's definitely an economic in there. But personally, me, I don't do that.

[0:30:58] DC: Remember, I said throw away print, not something I necessarily care.

[0:31:02] DD: Totally understand. I totally understand what you're saying and what its purpose is. But for me, the short way is the long way. It's me. It's my experience of going down that road before, even buying paper that seconds or – if it's a short, small job, it's really not going to make that much of a difference in price. Usually, paper that's sitting around is leftover, not quantity. So, you're not going to be able to do a big run with it. You're going to have to bring in your paper. So, what you're suggesting is really for a short-run production.

[0:31:44] NT: Yes. I can't allow myself to do that. I try to do things that are too critical. And to do things correctly, which is what I tried to do, you have to not eliminate, but you have to control variables. Paper is a variable and when you're printing at a high level on paper, it's got to be fairly new paper and it has to come into the shop and acclimate. So, the chances of getting it exactly the way you want, if it's something that you can, I don't want to say get away with, but

it's not so critical. But you have to know going in. You may not be able to do exactly what you plan to do, because you don't know where it came from, or how long it's been somewhere, and nothing better than fresh made paper that's acclimated. That's why it was specified.

But we do get in those situations and they are around. People will go, “Hey, I got this here.” It happened to me not too long ago in a critical job. They go, “No, I got coated matte.” This was a USD 100,000 job. We're doing a press proof. I go, “What is this?” After I saw the pressroom. “Oh, we found out it was mislabeled in the back and it's been here in a yellow.” I got, “You're kidding me.” I should listen to myself. It was a good idea that then had to be explained and reprinted on the correct paper. Especially, with coated paper, the shade can, over time, doesn't make a bad paper, but it doesn't make it like all the other papers that maybe you're printing on.

[0:33:07] DC: Do you ever call paper merchants and ask them if they've got extra stuff for – sometimes people order things and it doesn't work out and they're sitting on a bunch of stock.

[0:33:18] NT: No. The mills. I'm going to give you, maybe it's a little-known secret. They know me. I asked them once a month all the Big Mills for their discontinued list. It's sitting there. They're not selling it on their website, because they don't want people to use it and then want more. They might have 11,201 sheets. Unless you ask, it sits there. I do it all the time. When there's a big budget, and it's good stuff. It might be Superfine that's in a different size they don't sell anymore, and they no longer sell it. Now, you don't want to wait too long, because most of that's good paper. It's sitting in the mill.

But yes, the mills have tons of stuff. They'll send you an Excel doc with hundreds of items on it, and you just might find what you're looking for. Sometimes you go, “Oh, my goodness, they have just what” – and it's cheap. It's 60% of the price or less. But you're not going to get it again. If it's getting discontinued, that's a one-time thing.

[0:34:08] DD: Blown up, sir, if you get a reorder.

[0:34:14] DC: Okay, that's fair. As long as everybody knows what's going on, then, at the end of the day, the client is making the ultimate decisions or giving you approval, or understanding. I mean, Noel, that's something that we get like a cover your-ass email from me with like 900

caveats and I want 50 signatures that everybody knows, that if we have to reprint this, can't guarantee it's going to be on the same stock. And if it's on the same stock, it is not going to be at this price. So, as long as everybody's clear on that going in, it is a way of creating print greatness on a budget. So, thank you for those suggestions. When we come back, we're going to get into actual projects that David and Noel have worked on, that they have been able to evolve the budget.

[MESSAGE]

[0:35:07] DC: Printspriration is streaming across the Printerverse on the Project Peacock Network, and our mission to provide education and resources for print customers, students, and printers around the world has never been more accessible. Watch what you want, when you want, where you want. It's free. Visit ProjectPeacock.TV to access original programming, and replays from our online events. Learn about the Peacock partners and companies featured in our shows. Join our mailing list to learn about new episode premieres, and series launches, and create a free account to make watchlists. Ready for your close-up? Get your Peacock show on air by visiting ProjectPeacock.TV and request your partnership proposal today. Peacock long and prosper.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:35:59] DC: Welcome back, everybody. So, I am assuming that across your storied careers that you have come across a project that started as maybe, a very lofty goal of greatness, and you were still able to achieve it. But you had to do things a little differently. Who wants to share a story first? Noel is being – oh, they're both pointing at each other. Okay, Noel, let's start with you.

[0:36:38] NT: So, this has happened to me several times where people are on a budget, but it's very high-end and I do a lot of work in the high-end real estate market. So, what that typically means is you have nine different opinions and you decide on a design and then you'll have to follow up those specs, the paper has been specified. There's a budget, this is what we want to do it for.

Typically, I'll do press proofs and will show samples and one of those nine people will go, "Well, that's our brand. Why are we doing that? I thought we were foil stamping?" And it can morph. I had this happen in December, all of these things had to be done for Art Basel in Miami. This is USD 100,000 worth of work turned into USD 300,000 worth of work, because, "Wow, that's beautiful. We need more of it." "Oh, it's okay." And they kept changing what they did. We did some portfolios overseas. Someone said, "Oh, wouldn't it be nice if it had stitching in it or so forth?"

I mean, I'm getting too detailed. But my point is, sometimes showing something beautiful can make people understand that, "Wow, this is really possible. But what if?" It's kind of a nightmare for guys like David and I, because it's a moving target, and it's always changing. In order to effectively create something, you have to plan it and go in order. Get the materials, produce it, bind it, and get it where it needs to be. It's kind of impossible when you're going back and forth.

Typically, what I just described would mean, I have been ready to bind a job and someone says, "No, I don't like the paper. We're switching." And they'll pay to reprint it on a different stock, or press proofs, three and four press proofs. It's maybe not the best example in something you were talking about. But it does happen and I find it happens now, more than ever. People think they're on a budget or they think their budget is X, but they realize that that budget isn't getting them – they love what it's getting them, but they want more. Or they believe in the power of print, which sounds stupid. But they do. I watched them go, "Wow, this is great. People are reacting to it." So, we upgrade from there.

It is frustrating to make something that way, because it's the Wild West. You're returning paper you're starting, you're stopping. You're trying to address every voice in the room, which is really difficult. I'm not sure that's the best example. But that's my example.

[0:39:04] DC: It falls under that gist, because you can, doesn't mean you should. If you're concerned about your budget, now you're adding things to it. I mean, how anyone can think that that doesn't increase cost is crazy. But I've been there a million times. Yes, it's a difficult conversation to have. David?

[0:39:21] DD: I know the clients don't know what they want until they point out exactly what they're looking for. I said it earlier about putting samples out, but just three hours ago, I was in the city talking about producing a perfect bound book for a client, and they were comparing me to another printer. That printer did exactly what they wanted, the client wanted, but I came in from left field and showed them something different. That changed the direction that they were going in. I realized at that point that it has nothing to do with budget. People want what they want. If you're going to introduce things to them, that they may not have been introduced to before, then how are they going to be able to make a decision? I've learned, and I've gotten more productions that exceeded the budget and also exceeded –

Let me put it this way. I'm in a three-bid basis, I offer something different. I understand what you want. But look at this. Now, all of a sudden, the channel of direction, of who they want as their vendor for this, changes. Those other guys who bid against it, have just forgotten. They're totally in focus. Because now that I've introduced it, and it's changed, are they going to go back to those other vendors that make them jump through the same hoops?

So, the only way that I can get out of that “budget”, is by a secondary introduction to something they might not have known about before.

[0:41:11] NT: I would add to that. David's 100% right. It's a better example. I mean, I do that all the time too. Make the job mine. What happens, David, what you're describing is, you have, like I said earlier. Everything's available to us. So, you go, “Well, why would you bind it that way?” Well, they're doing it probably because the printer is going to do it all in one shot, which makes sense. But when you show the book, like I described earlier, and it lays open better, and to designers they go, “Yes, that's what we're looking for.” Now, it's not a competition, because you're actually going to be more competitive at that because you can do anything anywhere. That happens all the time.

But you're right. They don't know what they want until they see it. And a lot of times that does elevate the job. It doesn't even make it a lot more expensive. But it can make it a better job. And it does separate you from the competition. There's no more competition because now the guy is like, “Wow, why would I do that? You don't want that.” But they do want that. They just didn't know they wanted it because they hadn't seen it. Samples are the king.

[MESSAGE]

[0:42:12] NT: Hi, I'm Noel Tocci, founder of Tocci Made. The printing industry has changed quite a bit, and I've learned a lot since I joined my brother's small, but mighty printing company in Newark, New Jersey, back in 1980. Over the years, while focusing primarily in the design and creative communities, I've come to understand and believe wholeheartedly that powerful, effective, and impactful print communication always lives at the intersection of great design, appropriate materials, and thoughtfully curated execution. Making beautiful work is a journey from concept, or idea, to desired result, Tocci Made is here to help you find your way and create work that is not only effective but something you can be proud of. Head to toccimade.com and find out how we can help.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:42:58] DC: I agree with both you guys. But I want to say two things. First, show me something new. Show me something different. Show me whatever you want to show me, but don't just disregard my original job, because at the end of the day, I still, more than likely, if I'm an advertising agency or any publicly traded company, I have to have three bids. So, even if I'm going to go with your idea, I'm going to have to go back to those two other printers, and use your specs, and get costs.

Now, I'm also assuming that you're only showing me something that would be in the same range as what I've asked for, you're not asking me to increase my budget by showing me an idea or saying, "Here's exactly what you want. Before a little more, we can do this." Now, depending upon who your vendors are, if they have everything in-house if they have a process for it. If you're working for someone, like you mentioned before, David, that's done it a million times, you still might have the better pricing at the end of the day.

But I would say that, with all things equal, and all estimates within a close enough range of each other, I would always go with the person who brought me the new idea. So, I agree with you on that. I also wanted to echo something you said that when we did Project Peacock, and we did the advertising agency visits in the conference room, we were always showing specialty

finishing, that happened to be from Scodix at that time. And every single agency we would go to, they would just start, “It's too expensive. Our clients don't want to do it. We've tried.” They weren't, by the way, specifically speaking of Scodix. They just see specialty finishing and they that's the first thing they think. I'm not saying it's specific to a Scodix process.

What I used to say to them is, “Okay, your clients don't have to do it, but if you're not the one who tells them about it, what do you need it for? You're just an order taker.” So, it's okay sometimes to bring things to print buyers and designers and say, “Look, I know this is out of your budget, but I just want you to be aware that it exists out in the world. And that still keeps you very valuable partner to them.”

Quantities is something that is also interesting to play with in certain circumstances. I have been involved in creating premium mailers for the Louis Vuitton Cup, which is like a yacht race in – where is it? Is it South America or South Africa? I don't know where. I think it was a new – I don't know where it was, but it's a yacht race, the Louis Vuitton Cup. Now, just by the fact it's called the Louis Vuitton Cup, you probably know that this is an – and yacht race, right? So, we're not talking about low-end items. And what we actually did was we ended up mailing Martini shakers that look like the port. And what's the other side called? Starboard. There's two different color lights, apparently.

However, we were like, “We can't afford to send this to a thousand people.” So, what we did was we pulled out 30 people who had to get the highest-end mailers possible. The sponsors that the yachting club people, the VIPs. Then, for the other boxes, we didn't put those premium gifts in. We sort of didn't do as much finishing on them. I mean, those people still got a great piece, but it wasn't the same. We were able to stay within a budget by segmenting out who got what and how we created what. So, that's just another way of looking at something in a bigger picture, and still be able to do amazing things, but maybe not for everybody.

The last thing I wanted to mention was just a crazy job that we ended up not doing. I don't even know how this happened, other than the fact that when I sent the file to the printer to make a T-shirt, they came back and said, “So, Deb.” By the way, whenever you hear the call starts that way, it's not good news. You sit down. And they're like, “We're not really sure how this worked out this way, but it has.” And that T-shirt will actually require 17 colors, or I guess 17 passes,

because of the way that they set it up. Because we obviously didn't understand what was required for screen printing at that time, by humans, by the way, not digital.

So, we ended up just not doing that at all, and took a little like, “Ah, how do we make a T-shirt class from somebody?” But sometimes, it's just like, “Okay, we've shot for the stars. Our only other option is just one-color ink on a shirt. We don't want to do that. So, let's move on to the next thing.” That was a lot that I shared. Any comments on it? Noel?

[0:48:15] NT: Yes, I think you're exactly right. I think it's hard to say, you just don't know. Yes, it's a stupid saying, but you don't know until you know, and it's a process. You learn along the way, and you learn something different every time. I think you never say never. Even like when we talked earlier about, sometimes switching papers or finding alternatives, or what you just described. I think it's how you go through the process. Are your eyes open? Are you using every bit of – if you're buying printing, are using every bit of the relationships you've built with these suppliers? And if you're a supplier, are you using every bit of experience you have knowing the customer in what's possible to really exhaust everything?

Things go wrong in the middle sometimes, but I find if you build the relationship and you do the things I just talked about, they can work out, and you can learn something that you'll keep forever. Does that kind of make any sense?

[0:49:16] DC: It totally does. I mean, I learned not to ever let a designer just go crazy and making a T-shirt design. I certainly learned that. David?

[0:49:26] DD: Well, number one, shame on that vendor, because they had –

[0:49:31] DC: My T-shirt vendor?

[0:49:32] DD: Your T-shirt vendor. Absolutely. If you show them a design, or in the relative understanding of what that design is, and that vendor did not tell you upfront how to break down those colors, then he's learning on the back end. Today's different with digital because you can print everything CMYK. But knowing that, did your vendor see the design?

[0:49:58] DC: Yes. When I sent the file over. When they were estimating the job, they were like, “Ah, we just want you to understand what you we’re looking at here.” They actually stopped me. They preempted the disaster. Because they're like, “We don't want to estimate this unless you understand that this” – and by the way, advertising agency. So, we only needed like three T-shirts for the meeting. You could imagine, this guy was like, “It's going to cost you like three grand for the T-shirt.” It wasn't that much. But I have paid almost USD 1,000 for one shirt or one hat before. Back in the day when it wasn't digital, and someone had to do it and you got to – we even had to buy the shirt and bring it over them, because they're like, “We don't have one shirt here.” But did you want to say anything else, David? I'm sorry. I didn't mean to cut you off.

[0:50:48] DD: No. My feelings. This is my feeling, is that you should have been told upfront how to prep those files. And if you knew that you will work –

[0:50:57] DC: Okay. I want to preface this again by saying crazy designers in advertising agencies. It looked like a graffiti wall was splashes of different colors all over it. And each of those colors was a pass on the screen press, even though they were only using it for a little yellow dot. So, I just really want to say, in this case, like I don't always defend printers, believe me. But in this case, that printer stopped us from getting into a situation where I was getting an estimate and I had tell everybody, we couldn't do it. They gave me my options, and the designers did not want to do it that way, because they wanted something crazy and we just did something else.

[0:51:40] DD: I'm good with that answer. Thank you.

[0:51:43] DC: Okay, I'm sorry.

All right. Well, now that I've got David to agree that you shouldn't do like 17 colors or anything that requires 17 colors, passes on the screen press. I want to thank everybody for their time and attention. Gentlemen, it's always a pleasure speaking with you. Check out the show notes. Connect with David and Noel on social media. Check out their websites. Get in touch with them. If you want to do something crazy or something normal. If you have a big budget or a small budget, they will get it done. Until next time, everybody. Print long, Make it with Print long and prosper.

[OUTRO]

[0:52:25] 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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