[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:00] DC: Today on the Print Report, Pat and I visit some events.

[0:00:05] PM: And I love platforms.

[0:00:07] DC: Welcome to the Print Report with Deborah Corn and Pat McGrew, all the print that's fit for news.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:16] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to the Print Report with Deborah Corn and Pat McGrew. I am Deborah Corn, which means –

[0:00:23] PM: I would definitely be Pat McGrew.

[0:00:25] DC: You are definitely Pat McGrew. Although, once, somebody called me Pat McGrew at a trade show.

[0:00:30] PM: Yes, they did.

[0:00:32] DC: It was oddly enough, you were 10 steps in front of me and I was like, "That's Pat McGrew."

[0:00:37] PM: Good try though.

[0:00:38] DC: If anyone's ever seen me and Pat McGrew, or Pat McGrew and I, it's a little hard to confuse us, but I still took it as a compliment. Thank you, the gentleman, who thought that I was the wise and infamous Patricia McGrew. Speaking of wise and infamous, we have been at a few events, or two events since we last recorded The Print Report. Let me go first because my recap's probably a little shorter than yours and yours is going to lead into a bigger discussion that we alluded to in the pre-pod announcement.

A couple of weeks ago, I went to an event sponsored by or hosted by DirectMail2.0, which is an add-on technology for tracking direct mail, direct marketing. It's called MarketEdge. It was in a new hotel this year, Patricia. They always do it up very nicely. I spoke at the conference. I was only there for one day, and it was actually a two-day conference. When I was there, I heard from the United States Post Office, which is always great to hear from. Then really interesting, there was a company there and I do forget the name, but I will tell everybody that in the show notes, the name of the company will be there because I will add it for the podcast.

It was really interesting, Pat. It was like a loyalty card, but it goes into your digital wallet. Through it, it becomes an entire marketing engagement that includes push notifications and targeted information, depending upon where you are. I really thought that the technology was very interesting and random sighting of somebody from across the pond. I was sitting with Lucy Swanston from Nutshell Creative, rolled up and sat right next to me.

As I know, from being with you going around the world, the rest of the world is really into those digital things on their phone and their digital wallet. I mean, they've been tapping and paying for things on phone and mobile for years. I mean, sometimes my credit card doesn't even work tapping it. It was really interesting because for me, the only thing I have in my digital wallet is actually my credit card that's saved in there. Yet, Lucy showed me her phone and she had a plethora of digital things in her wallet. I wasn't sure if that was an iPhone versus Android situation, because I have a Galaxy, but I just found the technology really interesting and want to get your thoughts on that.

The last thing I want to say about DirectMail2.0 is that there was a really great presentation about artificial intelligence there. One of the reasons why I really do love attending the show is because besides the fact that they share with people, all the 14 different technologies that they offer and how to utilize and capitalize and sell it, they also inter-disperse it with just topical industry subjects.

I met Sarah Ohanesian, the productivity consultant there, just as an example. This gentleman gave the best roadmap to creating prompts for ChatGPT that I have ever been exposed to. I just took a million pictures and I have to say that I used their formula the other day to start myself off on a press release, believe it or not, because you know I have problems writing those things. I

mean, the difference of knowing who you are, the information, who you want to target the information to specifically and the call to action that you want them to take from this information really made it so that I was – I mean, obviously I edited the press release, but I was so much further down the road than I normally was. I even asked you to proof it, then I didn't send it to you, because it was good. I mean, it was better than I usually do. That was a lot of information feedback.

[0:04:56] PM: Okay. I want to circle back to your loyalty cards, and it doesn't surprise me that Lucy would have every single card known to mankind on her phone. She is so well-connected. She lives eats, sleeps, and breathes the UK market in such a deep way that she really is a very knowledgeable person. Actually, I mean, if I look at my phone, you've got a whole lot of stuff in my digital wallet, a lot of my loyalty cards and a lot of them are interactive loyalty cards. I've got all my airline loyalty cards, hotel loyalty cards, all the clothing stores I frequent.

[0:05:33] DC: Really?

[0:05:34] PM: Especially the European ones, because like my [inaudible 0:05:38] out of Spain and my Hunkemöller out of Scandinavia, I have all of those cards on my phone, because when you go into the stores, that's what they're expecting these days, right? If you don't have it, they'll ask your phone number, because the phone number is the other lingua franca –

[0:05:55] DC: Oh, really?

[0:05:57] PM: - for loyalty. I mess up the Europeans, because here I am, an American carrying a Spanish loyalty card, right? It took us a while to figure out how to make that one work. Hunkemöller was same thing. I got my first Hunkemöller card – I got my Hunkemöller card in Sweden, God, 15 years ago. Initially, they couldn't figure out what to do with my phone number, because it didn't have a country. It had a 1 and they didn't really recognize it. We always navigated our way there usually with my email address.

Recently, in the last year, they've updated their system to be able to – now I have the card on my phone, so I can go into the stores in Germany, or in the Netherlands, or in Sweden, or in Denmark, or wherever and I'm good.

[0:06:43] DC: I just want to interrupt for one second, because I said loyalty card only because that's what really Lucy had in her digital wallet that she was showing me. The concept here was actually, it's a card for a company. If you went to a trade show, you would end up with a digital card, or something.

[0:07:01] PM: A way to tap back and forth. You can airdrop. You can tap back and forth. Yeah. I've got those too.

[0:07:05] DC: You communicate and have a whole engagement, continuing engagement.

[0:07:10] PM: Ten years ago, 15 years ago, we started doing that with the scanners, right? You used to be able to take all your business cards that you got from a show, throw them into a scanner and it would put them into a database for you.

[0:07:21] DC: I haven't. Still, I use that, Pat.

[0:07:24] PM: I'll get update messages from people every once in a while who were using it. "Hey, we just want to check and see if this is still right." Then over time, the apps came along that made it easier and easier for you to do the phone-to-phone tap and connect with people that way. I've got a ton in my phone. If you think about the technology, that's the thing that's really impressive, because it enhances digital communication and marketing communication to be able to very quickly –

[0:07:52] DC: Yes, and print. Trigger print.

[0:07:54] PM: Because if you're doing it right, if you're doing it right – typically, what happens is if I go into – say, I go into one of the stores I have a loyalty card with, I now have a plethora of baby store cards from Europe. I have the card and it's in my phone and say, I go in and I make a purchase, which I did a couple weeks ago. Sure enough, even though I'm in the US, I got a postcard from the store saying, "Thanks so much for visiting. We value your loyalty. We know you bought a few things for children this age. As they grow, we're here to grow with you." I mean, it was just such a perfect message, right?

[0:08:36] DC: Exactly. At the right time, which is really important. I mean, you felt good –

[0:08:41] PM: I'm going to be watching, because I expect to get more from them, right? Because now they've got in their database, they know how old the twins are. They're five-months-old now, so I expect I'll continue to get cards from them. They are sending me physical postcards.

[0:08:55] DC: Yeah. Let's just use this as an experiment, like a case study. Let's see how long they speak with you. If you go on the website, or something, maybe you're looking for something specific. It'll be very interesting.

[0:09:09] PM: I'm cheating. I actually have somebody in Belgium who is also buying for me on my card.

[0:09:14] DC: Oh, look at you. Bootleg shopping in Europe.

[0:09:17] PM: Yeah. There you go. There you go.

[0:09:19] DC: Okay. Well, it was really interesting. Maybe I can talk to Brad and see. I'll get in touch with the speaker and perhaps, we can have him on the podcast.

[0:09:27] PM: It'd be great. I think it'd be a great story.

[0:09:31] DC: I mean, for me, it was a new channel that I was not aware of because I don't use the channel. But now that I know it's there, I'm going to start paying more attention to that channel, because I just have to say that there is no shorter line from A to B than to someone's phone.

[0:09:55] PM: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. Well, Deb, at the last show you went to, the last bigger show, how many people said to you, "Oh, no. I don't want your business card. Let me just take a picture of it."

[0:10:06] DC: My business card does have a QR code on it for that reason. They were taking photos of it, but then they were probably tossing my card after.

[0:10:15] PM: Right. Yeah. Well, so for me, what I did is I created – so, I have stickers of my business card. The front part of the business card. Now, my business card has information on front and back, as yours does. I always hope people will take the card and actually read it. For those people who are really just there, going to be digital, hell or high water, I have a version that's a sticker that, when I'm at a show, I have it on the outside of my wallet, and I just let them take a picture of the outside of my wallet. I don't even have to reach in for the business card.

[0:10:46] DC: It goes into their digital wallet, or it goes into their address book?

[0:10:48] PM: It goes into their digital app.

[0:10:51] DC: Really?

[0:10:52] PM: For most of them, it'll read it, scan it, and put it into their address book immediately. I find that I'm getting that more and more wherever I go. A lot of it a couple weeks ago in Belgium. Actually, a guy I was sitting, talking to in the hotel in Italy, I was sitting there having dinner and I was sitting there looking on my iPad, I was actually reading one of the trade pubs on my iPad. He walked by and he stopped and goes, "Oh, wait. I'm a printer. What is that?" He wanted to know what I was reading. We ended up exchanging the exact same way because I just held up my wallet, he scanned it, and off he went.

[MESSAGE]

[0:11:30] DC: Are you looking to elevate your game, take your bottom-line customer relationships and events to the next level? Then I want to work with you. I'm Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. I engage with a vast global audience of print and marketing professionals across all stages of their careers. They are seeking topical information and resources, new ways to serve their customers and connect with them, optimize processes for their communications and operations, and they meet the products and services and partnership you offer to get to their next level.

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[EPISODE CONTINUED]

[0:12:33] DC: You and I speak about this all the time, about reasons to go to events. One of the biggest reasons is discovery. This is definitely something I was not aware of. I would not have been aware of it, because I don't utilize my phone in that way. However, now that I've seen the potential of this channel, I am in it to win it to learn everything I possibly can about it. That's just another reason to –

[0:13:02] PM: There are some really cool apps out there, too. They can really make your life so much better. When they integrate with your sales management system, then they're hugely valuable. I talk to a lot of people who say, "Well, we've got Salesforce." Salesforce has in their Salesforce store a bunch of apps that you can use that help you do that. So does NetSuite, and so does Dynamics, and most of the other big enterprise platforms have them.

[0:13:29] DC: Yeah. I mean, it's all about this no-code integration now moving forward.

[0:13:32] PM: Absolutely. The more we can do that, the better life is.

[0:13:35] DC: Yeah. Look at me knowing about no code integration. Aren't you proud of me?

[0:13:38] PM: No code, low code. Yeah, absolutely.

[0:13:42] DC: That's a good one. Okay, so while I was in beautiful Clearwater, Florida, watching a pod of dolphins going by during happy hour, I'm not even kidding. I was sitting with Lucy and some other attendees of the show, and we had a complete dolphin –

[0:13:56] PM: Experience, as you're on.

[0:13:58] DC: Well, it's at that time of night that they're all jumping around. I mean, she really got a spectacular show. There was a whole pod of them walking around. Well, so while we were sitting, basking in the sun, you were off in Ghent, Belgium, correct?

[0:14:12] PM: I was, where it was decidedly chillier. It rained or drizzled pretty much the whole time. But it was a fabulous few days. Ghent, if you don't know it, is a little bit north and west of Brussels. It's about an hour by train out of Brussels. It is just a tiny little place that is one of these traditional walled cities. It's got a lot of bridges because it's built over water. It's got its castle, and its religious landmark is the Adoration of the Magi. It is also the home of a lot of software companies, oddly.

Downtown Ghent, if you want to think of it as downtown, a couple of square miles, is car-less. It's a walking city. EV taxis can move through and very specifically built delivery trucks, but it is a walking city. I was there for the launch of the Atomyx platform, which is a new offering from the folks at Four Pees. A lot of Americans may not know Four Pees. They're very well known in Europe, although they do have US clients. They've been around for almost 20 years doing integration work, really high-level integration work. We were just talking about low code, no code. Well, it didn't.

It used to be, you couldn't do those kinds of integrations, right? I mean, you needed somebody who actually understood every piece of software in your shop and understood how to write the right kind of integration and migration code. Four Pees are the experts at that. They do it a lot. They also heavily involved in standards. They work heavily in the PDF standard world and in the color management standard world. They're experts at implementing and in-focus tools and callous tools.

Again, mostly, I think more widely known in Europe, but they do have a decent US community as well. One of the things they started to notice was that they were being asked more and more to integrate different platforms. I have my Salesforce and I have my accounting platform. I have my SAP, or whatever I'm using there. I've got my Microsoft Business Dynamics Platform. I've got my pre-press platform. I've got my inventory management platform. I have my enterprise resource planning platform. I have my management information system. I get a platform for everything.

At some point, what you discover is that all of these platforms are gathering data that you really don't have any way to get a high-level view of because they don't share. They don't speak the same languages. The data is in different formats. It's very difficult to make your web-to-print system talk to your inventory management system to make sure you actually have the paper and stock to be able to fulfill the job you just booked.

They started to realize that that was becoming more and more of a problem. They took the last few years to figure out a path to making it through a low code, no code approach, integrate platforms. If you think about it, that's a lot different than integrating two pieces of software. Getting two pieces of software to talk to one another, it's not rocket science, not pleasant, but not rocket science. Getting three pieces of software to talk together. It's logarithmically a bigger problem.

Then when you look at a good-sized printer who's brought in all these different platforms to make their life better over the years, the matrix of trying to get them to talk to each other is pretty massive. They came up with the concept that I fell in love with. It's called integration platform as a service. It's a subscription-based, cloud-based solution that doesn't require you to install a whole set of new servers in your shop. In fact, it might let you get rid of a bunch of servers in your shop if you set it up correctly. Again, that's what the Four Pees side of the business is there to help with. They call it Atomyx, A-T-O-M-Y-X because you need to spell it differently to trade market. IP as a service, or IPaaS is how they call it, is a solution designed to help you quickly and efficiently share data across platforms, so that you can build true end-to-end automated workflows that take repetitive tasks out of the hands of people, so you can redeploy them for the hard stuff.

Dealing with the problem clients, dealing with the problem files, but all the easy stuff and all the even mediums stuff, it will just come in, flow, and go. They did the lunch in Ghent, because Four Pees is based in Ghent, as you may know, and focus is based in Ghent. CHILI publish is based there. Esco is based there. It's like, there's a software shop on every corner. It's like, instead of Starbucks, they have software shops. It was really good.

Now, the interesting thing is normally when we go to a launch event for something like this, you get 20 nerds sitting in a room together, staring at a wall with PowerPoint slides. That's not what

this was. This was more than a 100 people, most of them printers, and we were in a building called The Old Fish Market, which sat at the confluence of two with the rivers, so that out the window behind us were castles and parapets and water, the occasional boat going by. Beautiful venue. Amazingly, beautifully put together, so that everybody could see, everybody could hear, and everybody could ask questions.

Let me tell you, there were questions. I was there with Dave Zwang from WhatTheyThink and Bernd Zipper from ZIPCON. We were there to provide the analytical baseline education. Then the Four Pees guys spent the second day actually going through the platform and how it worked. Sometimes when I go to these things, I think, "Oh, God. Am I really wasting my time? Should I really even be here?" This was one of these cases where I walked away with much more than I brought. The printers I talked to about their pain points, the reason they took the time out of their schedule to get on a train and come, or get on a plane and come, there were some American printers there as well. The other vendors who've already worked with them on the beta versions of the platform and are already integrated into it, it was pretty fantastic.

It was one of those things where it's a long flight to get there. I did get a weekend in Ghent where they were having a light festival. I did get to go walk around the light festival. Then I spent a day and a half just absorbing nerdish technology that I think long-term, a lot of printers, especially mid-tier printers who either don't have an IT staff, or really can't afford to invest more in their IT staff, I think they're going to be excited.

[0:21:38] DC: I mean, first of all, shout out to the Four Pees team. I know I had a conflict of an event. Otherwise, I would have been with you for the light show. Now, I'm jealous, of course. You know how I get.

[0:21:47] PM: The light show was good.

[0:21:49] DC: I get FOMO when I'm not at those things. Next time, Four Pees.

[0:21:53] PM: They only do the light show every three years or so, three or four years. This one is just like, all the stars lined up. I will tell you, it was darn chilly. It was raining, but it was a light show.

[0:22:05] DC: I'm just telling team Four Pees, don't not invite me again just because I couldn't make it this year. That's actually what I was going to ask you about. Just in a really brief overview, I understand that the whole reason this no-code thing is happening is because there was just the reliance and quite frankly, the cost of IT and development. It's never over. I mean, Mark Zuckerberg famously said, "Facebook is never done." It's never finished, right? Technology is never finished.

Again, looking at the landscape of the printing industry, it doesn't look like we have a lot of those no-code IT people out there, especially at this chunk of the industry that needs the most help and really has not had a comprehensive solution. They have turned to individual solutions almost like band-aids, right? Then they get into this workforce –

[0:23:09] PM: Yeah. Then they just make it worse.

[0:23:11] DC: Right. But they also get into a workforce development issue with only Joe, or Jane knows how to do that. We can't repurpose them. What happens if we integrate a new thing for our finishing equipment? How does that affect everything else? What it seems like to me is what you're saying is that all of the APIs from those different softwares, funnel into one place and it becomes one giant dashboard that anybody can manage, or do the print shops need specific people with specific skills? My other question is, does Four Pees offer services around this to help people integrate?

[0:23:56] PM: Sure. I mean, at their heart, they're an integration company. That's something they'll continue doing forever. They absolutely do. I love their approach, because it's a very nurturing approach to their clients. They've had clients for decades who just continue to rely on them to help them whenever they need help. Because their approach is, "Come in. We'll help you get it done. We'll tell you how to keep it going." That is a very much a lot of the culture there.

What I would tell you is that the drive to low code, no code, which is basically, if you don't speak nerd, here's what I'm really saying. Instead of you having to learn a bunch of command line prompts, \\ [inaudible 0:24:42] \\, mind thing, *!, which honest to God, no one should have to know.

[0:24:51] DC: By the way, that's my internet password. Now I have to change it.

[0:24:54] PM: Well, exactly. The difference is that instead of that kind of interaction with the software and with the code to try and get to information or data that you're looking for, what they bring you is a graphical user interface that allows you to drag and drop tasks and things that you were trying to join together. Now, in order for that drag-and-drop interface to work and really do the blinking of things that you need, somebody's got to write the code behind it. Low code, no code doesn't mean there's absolutely zero code.

What it means is that somebody has looked at the things that you're going to try and do and has written the connectors to make them and put them into a task list intelligently named, so that someone who is not a computer science graduate, but who knows the job they're supposed to be doing knows how to link things together, because these connectors are set up in such a way so that when you link your web to print to your inventory management system, "Oops, we just started carrying a new style of paper, and I want to make sure that my web to print system knows that." Now the thing is, do I have a connector that I can just change a couple of things on and create a new connector with, which in an ideal circumstance, I can do myself? Or is this so out – it's like, if a commercial printer who's only ever printed on pulp stock, all of a sudden, starts printing on glass. That's going to take a little bit more maneuvering in the background.

Then you might want to make a phone call to your friends who've provided this interface to you and say, "Hey, I need some help building this new background connector, because on a printing on glass now and it's different." That's the difference. It's the graphical user interface, the GUI is designed to make it easy for normal tasks to be assembled and executed by the people who are the subject matter experts in the process, not coding experts.

One of the things I really like about this approach, and your point about people is so important. It was a big topic in the coffee breaks and the wine breaks at night because there was not a single company there that wasn't having challenges of figuring out what to do with people. Okay, I've got this person who's this expert on this piece of software. I'd like to give them some professional growth opportunities to move into other areas. But if I do that, I don't have anybody behind them. Now what do I do?

Now, so I'm saying to this person, "I know that you would love to do a whole lot more, but I can't afford to move you." What's going to happen is that person's going to leave for an opportunity somewhere else. They're all afraid of it.

[0:27:52] DC: Of course.

[0:27:53] PM: They're looking for ways to be able to make those jobs doable by people who don't have 25 years of experience already. That's what this kind of solution can do.

[0:28:06] DC: I mean, and that has to be the goal, because people will be holding when we speak to printers, you find out, "I don't want to spend six months integrating a system and I'm training this person," and this person decides, "Huh. Now I have this experience and I know how to use lines."

[0:28:23] PM: Oh, it happens all the time, right? I mean, operators do that.

[0:28:26] DC: Right. There's something wrong.

[0:28:27] PM: And print press people do it. No, but we'd like to give them an option to be able to stay.

[MESSAGE]

[0:28:35] PM: If what you're doing isn't helping you grow, let the McGrewGroup help you fix that. Better sales talk tracks, more compelling print samples, and winning workflow strategies can be yours. With decades of experience in transaction, direct mail, and commercial print, as well as years of marketing expertise, we can help with business and production strategies, CCM advice, and develop your content. McGrewGroup is ready to help you grow, expand, optimize, and thrive. Drop us a note on LinkedIn or on our website, mcgrewgroup.com.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

[0:29:09] DC: I just think that at this point in time, it's a dangerous situation for a print shop to be beholden to anybody who has the IT software knowledge. I mean, it was the same way. If you work in a company, those IT people, they're petrified of them. They could trash the servers. I mean, they don't know what they do all day long and they're terrified to do anything. A lot of people are afraid of digital programmers who do their websites.

[0:29:39] PM: Absolutely.

[0:29:39] DC: I'll tell you that I will admit publicly that I've had more heated arguments with printers than I ever would with the web developer, because what am I supposed to do? It goes back to, I don't know how to change a tire. Other people think it's so simple that I should, but yet, I don't. But yet, I could do a logo on illustrator and other people can't do that.

[0:30:00] PM: Exactly.

[0:30:01] DC: If you can get yourself into a situation where a person with reasonable intelligence and who can follow a process, and you can simplify that process, so that it's accessible to those any person with some training, everybody is better for the industry and I'm really glad that you brought that up.

[0:30:26] PM: It's what excited me. There was one elephant in the room and I think it's just for anybody who's curious about these things, when you start looking at software as a service kind of platforms, which is what this is, everybody goes, "Oh, my God. What's it going to cost? Oh, my God. If they're doing this much for me, is it going to bankrupt me?" I think that it's always worth having conversations with the vendors who are offering as a service platforms, many of them take a long-tail drip approach to how they price.

There's a very low-cost entry point, then there's maybe a, you think you're going to need more help entry point and then there's an enterprise entry point. The folks, the Atomyx platform have also taken that approach where there's a small, medium, large, and actually, extra-large approach. The other thing that they've done is that there are actually three sub-platforms. You might not need all of it. You might only want some of it. They've got a layout integration platform, a preparation for pre-press integration platform, and a management one. For my

money, if I could only pick one, I'd do the management one, because it's the thing that assembles your dashboard for you, so you can get a view into things. I'm really excited about it. To be honest, they also launched a little bit ahead of full completion, and software people do this all the time.

[0:31:53] DC: Yeah, of course.

[0:31:54] PM: You get it out there and start throwing stone and get people to throw stones at it, and so it's not completely built out. It'll come over time. But there'll be at drupa with us, Deb. God bless them. It's going to be a lot of fun.

[0:32:07] DC: Yeah. We'll have links to everything you need to get in touch with Four Pees and the companies I mentioned from DirectMail2.0 in the show notes. As I like to say now, it's not what it costs, it's what it's worth. It sounds like, there is a big value in just stress relief. People don't understand. I say this all the time to printers. I'm like, "You don't understand. If I feel comfortable and I feel like, everything's under control, there is no value, there is no price I can put upon me being able to sleep at night, because I know you have my files and everything is going to be okay." There's no two cents a piece fighting with another printer that is going to make me go – not gonna work with you for that peace of mind.

Now, you mentioned drupa, and I just want to wrap up this podcast, because you actually experienced something firsthand that we discussed in our last podcast about this – let's call them the drupa downers, right?

[0:33:14] PM: Oh, yeah. Oh, God. One of the speakers at the launch in Ghent was a lovely German man called Bernd Zipper, who I have stalked for years. I just think a lot of him. He is a big thinker. He was the leader of the online web-to-print universe in Germany at first, and really, Europe. He's one of those guys who, if he's speaking, I'm going to sit there, wrapped and listen. He was talking a little bit about drupa. We were all talking about drupa. It was on everybody's lips.

Couldn't find a printer there who didn't plan to go. Everybody has it on their list. It's going to be important for them. Some of them are going for three to five days. Some of them are going to try

and come in for a couple of days. But every single person there is going to be at drupa. One of the things that Bernd said is that being at drupa is one of the most important things you can do as a printer because it is the place that you not only get to come and see things, but you get to talk to people. Talking to people is the most important thing. He had quite a few slides in the deck for his presentation. Stop complaining, stop whining, stop being down about things. We're in this big, vibrant industry where new things are introduced constantly. How can you not be excited about coming to a show that is this big, this vibrant, and has such a rich history?

I loved hearing Bernd say it. But I loved hearing the printers I was talking to express how important they thought going to a live event was, first of all, they took time out of their schedule to come to Ghent for this launch. They're looking for something. They've got problems. They've got pain points they're looking for. They felt that coming and talking to other printers and to the Four Pees team and to the other vendor support partners who were there from Mark's Ware and HP, they felt that those were important people to come spend time with.

But they said, going to drupa is where I'm going to rub elbows with people I've never met before, and they're going to have solved problems that I'm trying to solve right now. Sometimes I'm going to meet them over a beer.

[0:35:32] DC: Or a currywurst.

[0:35:33] PM: Or a currywurst, or at the goulash cannon. They're going to meet them in the cafeteria. They're going to meet them at one of the evening events sponsored by one of the vendors. There's always wine and cheese, and beer. They're going to have a chance to actually talk to people who are solving problems, and you don't get that on a Zoom call, and you don't get that even in the best open houses that vendors put on. You still don't get quite that level of engagement and understanding and problem-solving that happens at drupa.

[MESSAGE]

[0:36:09] DC: It's back. Citizens of the Printerverse, it is time to make your plans to attend drupa 2024. The world's premier printing event returns May 28th through June 7th in Düsseldorf, Germany. With 18 Halls filled with the products, services, and companies you need to drive your

business forward. drupa also offers visitors a variety of topical daily programming with speakers covering packaging, textiles, sustainability, and trends shaping the industry. Stop by hall 7. I'm co-hosting the drupa next age forum with Frank Tueckmantel. Drupa dna offers 11 days of sessions, interviews, panels, co-located events, global networking, and of course, a little fun awaits. Visit drupa.com and get your ticket to the future of your business today. Links in the show notes. Drupa long and prosper.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

[0:37:13] DC: Yeah. Obviously, I agree with you. We are definitely supporters of the opportunity of drupa, the promise of drupa. I do have to say that I'm not seeing as much, "Are trade shows dead out there these days?" I just know from being at Label Expo in Brussels, oddly enough, also another Belgium thing, towards the end of 2023, that everybody in there was – the show was so great for exhibitors at Label Expo, that it actually energized them to what is their next big show. There's obviously other shows going on around the world. But for them, their next big show was going to be drupa, and they were more enthusiastic, to your exact point, based upon the attendees and how eager they are to learn new things and to bring new things back into their businesses.

This probably has a lot to do with the shift that the industry is seeing, where the baby boomers and the older, whatever they call them, the golden generation, or whatever, has finally, after COVID, is like, "Okay, I'm letting go now." They are merging. They are handing it over to their kids, who could be 50, 60-years-old, or 30-years-old. But regardless, all of those people have been chomping at the bit to change things, to modernize. We understand why the past owners didn't, because they wanted to keep things status quo, keep their equipment clean. If they had to get rid of everything and the land or merge, I mean there are some printers that are merging and they're just taking the other printers' equipment and client lists, and that's it.

There's other people who are utilizing it to expand their footprint and have multiple locations in cities and regions. I mean, there's a lot of interesting movement there. But there is movement. I think that is the most important point. That doesn't mean that only the digital technologies and the software companies are of interest. There's plenty of movement in the offset space. Packaging, flexible packaging, I think, might end up being the star of drupa. The odds, if you did

the odds and what was the most favorite topic it is probably not that. It's probably in the mid-range. But I'm going to be placing my bets on flexible packaging.

[0:39:47] PM: I'm putting my money on finishing. I agree with you, the flexible packaging is a huge opportunity, because the equipment prices, what you can do digitally today that you couldn't do five or eight years ago is amazing. Because a lot of the same vendors support the flexible packaging area that support the general commercial printing area. I think we'll certainly see those things at drupa. But for me, I think the star of the show is going to be finishing, because in the last –

[0:40:12] DC: Oh, you need finishing for flexible packaging, so makes sense.

[0:40:15] PM: I think across the board. Because the last eight years have seen so much innovation in the finishing area, whether it's book finishing, a marketing collateral finishing, the things that you can do now with motion cutters that take you well beyond what you would do with die cutters and can bring the cost down. You start thinking about all the new folding options and the integrated lines. For me, finishing is going to be this really interesting – it's going to be like being in Candy Land for me, because I think that there's going to be so many really cool things that we've heard about, maybe we've seen a webinar, but we haven't been able to see the machine. Sometimes it's doing an awful lot of things, it must be gigantic. Then you get there and you go, "Oh, wait. That will fit in my shop." That's the value of coming to see it.

[0:41:09] DC: Yeah. I do agree with what you're saying. Finishing has always been – now remember, I'm a print buyer, so I have a different perspective of this than a print shop owner, a print business owner might have. But it's always a separate thing. You have certainly have to consider it in the process. For me, it's a line item on an estimate. I don't know whether printer is doing it in-house, or out-of-house. But I know from speaking with you that it's been the stepchild of the presses for a long time.

When new presses are introduced to the market and they haven't considered the fact that the printers don't have finishing equipment that's fast enough to catch things online – you couldn't make the presses as fast as you want. But if you're not considering what happens to happen

after if it's going to be in-line, then you're slowing down those presses and there's no point, right?

[0:42:00] PM: I think there's going to be a lot of people with checkbooks and shopping lists coming, because they've invested in faster presses over the last five or six years, and now they're finding that their bottleneck is their finishing.

[0:42:11] DC: Yeah, and that is exactly the point I wanted to make. There was also, to your excellent point about Four Pees, a whole separate workflow and a separate management of inventory over there, and it wasn't over there, and workers. I mean, everything. You're right. It is about time that has all become one, big happy process and family. I love it. Yeah. I do agree with you. I think it's probably higher on the odd list, though. I'm saying, like mine's like, that one is going to pay off –

[0:42:42] PM: You'll make money this year on the bet.

[0:42:44] - like 70 to 1. Exactly. Exactly. But we'll see at the end when everybody shares what they share about new business and leads and all that other stuff. Links to everything you need about drupa, about Four Pees, about DirectMail2.0, the speakers, my apologies, but that I saw my apologies, but your information's in the show notes now. Let's try to get Four Pees on as well as a guest to have them share a lot more.

[0:43:11] PM: Oh, that would be good. That would be great. I think, I really do love the team there.

[0:43:18] DC: Yeah, they're very cool.

[0:43:19] PM: Sometimes when you are talking, or you're listening to vendors, you're listening to engineers who can only speak engineering, or you're listening to the person who was hired to do the spin. The thing that I love about the Four Pees team is that they know their stuff, inside-out, upside-down and backward. But my God, you want to have a cup of coffee with these people.

[0:43:40] DC: Yeah, they're cool.

[0:43:41] PM: They are just, they're personable, they understand the pain points and they can make it understandable to anybody, which I love.

[0:43:51] DC: I mean, I speak to a lot of people and I can smell salesperson a mile away, and they're not salespeople. I've always thought of them as consultants. They just want to –

[0:44:04] PM: Which they really are.

[0:44:05] DC: Yeah. They want to make sure that whatever technology they're recommending at that point, that's what they were doing more so than this, is completely right for your print shop. It's not just about them making a quota on a certain platform. It has to work for everybody. Thank you for a great program. Thank you, everybody, for listening. Hope to see you at the next industry event, certainly at drupa. Until next time, everybody, print report long and prosper.

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:44:34] 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]

Mentioned in This Episode:

DirectMail2.0: https://directmail2.com/

MarketEdge: https://marketedgeshow.com/

Bizzuka: https://www.bizzuka.com/

The Wallet Group: https://thewalletgroup.com/

Lucy Swanston: https://www.linkedin.com/in/lucyswanston/

Nutshell Creative: https://nutshellcreative.co.uk/

Four Pees: https://www.fourpees.com/

Pat McGrew: https://www.linkedin.com/in/patmcgrew/

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