

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:00] DC: This is the true story of two printers, who agreed to podcast with me and have their opinions recorded. Listen to what happens when printers stop being polite and start getting real.

[00:00:13] JM: Hi, this is Jamie McLennan.

[00:00:15] WC: And this is William Crabtree.

[00:00:16] DC: I'm your host Deborah Corn. Welcome to the PrinterChat Podcast.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:00:25] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to a special episode of Podcast From the Printerverse, more specifically, the PrinterChat Podcast. I am literally here in the same room with Will the Printer and Jamie the Printer at Will the Printer's TampaPrinter print shop. We just did a tour of your sign shop, Sign Parrot, then we had a lovely meal at a Cuban restaurant, we came here. First of all, Will, thank you so much for having us.

[0:00:53] WC: Absolutely, thank you for coming.

[0:00:55] DC: And Jamie, we're all in the same room together.

[0:00:56] WC: Jamie, welcome to Florida.

[0:01:00] JM: Whoa. It's hot down here. It was 40 degrees when I left.

[0:01:02] WC: It's a little toasty today. It's like the first time it's been warm in a while.

[0:01:06] DC: It's supposed to be 86 in Orlando, where the other news is that we are all heading to International Sign Association's Sign Expo event in Orlando. Where we will be walking the show floor. Besides the fact that you guys are actually going there for business, we

will be walking the show floor, looking for trends and cool things we see, and recording a podcast for the International Sign Association. So, everybody out there, look for that when they release it.

And because we will go into a trade show and we started talking about how we prepared, and things we were going to hook out, we thought that that would make actually an interesting episode to discuss the three ways we all handle a going to an event. So, we're going to actually take it in three different ways as well. What do you do before? What do you do during? And what do you do after the event? But first, we're going to do our catch-up. Jamie, let's start with you, since you're the guest.

[0:02:04] JM: Hello, everybody. So, catching up. What's new at DMR and Innvoke. We briefly talked about this in previous podcasts. We have signed on two interns to start with us in May. Both are juniors in graphic design. One is from a school in Connecticut, one is from Philadelphia area, and one will be starting a DMR late in May. The other intern will be starting over in Innvoke in our New Jersey plant at the very end of May. We're excited for that.

[0:02:31] DC: Wait. I just want to interrupt you for a second. First of all, that whole internship program came out of Print Across America.

[0:02:38] JM: Yes, it did.

[0:02:40] DC: And, I want everybody to know that how many people applied for internships.

[0:02:43] JM: There were more than 20, I believe.

[0:02:46] DC: More than 20 people interested in working in a print shop, but you could only have two.

[0:02:50] JM: We could only have two as our first year. We didn't want to go crazy. We wanted to make sure it worked well the first time before we before we decide to get two or three interns, more interns.

[0:02:59] DC: But as a general statement, what an amazing thing that they really – there are students up there that really want –

[0:03:04] JM: There was some amazing, qualified students. They sent videos, they sent their resume, and they also sent video resumes. A lot of them are already doing different things in the print industry, working at different sign shops or print shops, just doing small stuff on the side. Want to learn more than just doing design, want to find out what happens to the design once it's done. So yes, we're putting together a plan now where each person will get to go through the plant and spend almost a week's time in every department. You're going to be in sales, customer service, you'll be in pre-press, you'll be in the design department for a little bit, then you'll also be in Kutch Digital, you'll be in large format, you'll be in bindery, you'll be pick and pack, you'll do a little bit of everything, shipping, and you'll see how the work system kind of workflow goes. Then, at DMR, basically same thing, we got a few less departments there, so you'll get a little bit more hands-on experience. Then, my plan is to have the interns check out each other plant, so we can spend a day at the other civil, see what happens on the other side.

[0:04:00] DC: That's just incredible. I just wanted to make the point that you opened up this program, by the way, the students requested it.

[0:04:07] JM: Students requested we had a college in for Print Across America Day, and they were like, "Why didn't you have interns? And if you don't, why not?" We're like, "We've never thought of it before, or we kind of did but never really knew what to do." The professor there was very helpful. She kind of talked us through a few things. And then we put a plan together and then we actually put the word out on Indeed, I think it was, and got all our resumes out that way.

[0:04:30] WC: Did you contact back the college that had requested it specifically?

[0:04:34] DC: Yes, we contacted them. It's funny because that college is actually closing this year. This is their last year. They were bought out by a huge university, and they're basically just gobbling up that college. You got to basically reapply to get back into that school, and some bigger university. It's a little bit of a gray cloud over that situation. But all the students that came through were actually graduating this year, I think that we're in that. So, we couldn't get anybody for that, and everybody else is kind of deciding they're going somewhere.

[0:05:00] DC: Well, I'm sorry I interrupted you, you were finishing your –

[0:05:03] JM: It's fine. Then, the other new things are, we're hiring, which is great. We just hired Jamie's assistant. Got to be on –

[0:05:10] WC: An assistant.

[0:05:11] JM: An assistant.

[0:05:12] DC: Jamie's assistant

[0:05:12] WC: I am jealous. I needed assistant.

[0:05:14] DC: We're going to review everything from the beginning to the end, learn how to estimate, run jobs, deal with customers, and the plan is hopefully, that he will move into intern either in our sales or move into an outside sales position at one point down the road. But yes, he's going to learn everything from the beginning to end. Came to us from FedEx, real good go getter, like what he's doing right now. He loves what he sees, what we have, what we're doing. So, so far so good. We had a new CNC operator, and we hired another guy that's going to start at the end of the month, who is basically can run CNC, large format presses, somebody that we can move around to a couple different departments. We're lean and mean.

We found out over the last couple of weeks that we need somebody that we can jump in here, and he wants to learn how to screen print. We're short on-screen printer, so he's like, "I want to learn how to do that."

[0:06:03] WC: That's a tough one to fill, screen-printer.

[0:06:06] DC: That's great, so yeah, he starts in a couple of weeks. We're excited there. So, lots of new things going on.

[0:06:10] DC: Cool. William, we've actually had a tour of some of your new things. But why don't you share with everybody.

[0:06:16] WC: There's so many things going on on a daily basis that it's hard to kind of quantify which ones to talk about. We do have a new general manager at Sign Parrot. He has been crashing it since he started, which relieved a lot of pressure on my side so that I can focus more on marketing. We've been rolling out some new digital campaigns with retargeting and demographic targeting. Where if you hit Sign Parrot or tampaprinter.com if you hit either of those sites, I assure you, you are going to start seeing my ads everywhere you go. We've kind of reinvigorated that side of the marketing. We're using some no-code software. I've developed a couple of different pieces, a couple of programs to kind of funnel through our leads that are coming through these online marketing campaigns. We're really getting a lot of leads and getting a lot of new business actually.

Sign Parrot, it's a roller coaster, really. It will do really, really well, and then, it slows down. I've always been told about the seasons in the printing industry, and I've never really experienced them with TampaPrinter. But Sign Parrot, I very much experienced the seasons. Right now, we're in season, and hopefully, we can keep the momentum going. But the things are slammed there, I spend most of my time there. We're kind of rehashing Guerrilla Consultants, I've got a new team going there as well. That kind of plays into the marketing that we're doing for the other companies, with the goal being, getting the marketing just solid for TampaPrinter and Sign Parrot. Then, we're going to start focusing some marketing on Guerrilla Consultants themselves to rebuild that client base.

[0:07:45] DC: Yes. Excellent. I mean, at this point now, that's what makes you the full 360s, having that marketing agency to handle all this other – to tack on to the work you're already doing, regardless what it is. It could just be a trackable QR code that we saw you putting up on a trailer at Sign Parrot. I mean, just so cool, right? Starting from the exit, "Hey, let me just put up a site so I could show people how to buy business cards online, to do all of these businesses." Plus, the installer that he owns that we didn't visit because – didn't you buy an installer know too?

[0:08:23] WC: No, that got absorbed. So, there is a separate facility for that. That's part of Sign Parrot or the installers.

[0:08:28] DC: In the beginning, when you bought Sign Parrot, you got so annoyed with the installer, you're like, "Screw it, I'm buying it."

[0:08:33] WC: Yes. Yes.

[0:08:34] JM: That's definitely where to go.

[0:08:35] WC: We wound up absorbing an installation company.

[0:08:36] DC: Because you couldn't get the appointments. You were waiting in the permits. You were like, "Forget it. I'm doing it myself"?

[0:08:43] WC: Right.

[0:08:43] DC: Okay. Well, amazing catch-up.

[0:08:45] WC: I've got one more.

[0:08:46] DC: Go ahead. Oh, please.

[0:08:47] WC: I've got one more. It involves you as well.

[0:08:49] DC: [Inaudible 0:08:49], but go ahead.

[0:08:51] WC: We've got drupa coming up. I will be attending drupa, I'll be speaking at drupa dna on June 6th.

[0:08:58] DC: Yes, you are. Confirmed, at some point in time.

[0:09:00] WC: At some point in time June 6th, I'll be speaking at drupa. So I'm very, very excited about that. I've got my plane tickets situated. Ashley is coming with me as well.

[0:09:08] DC: Excellent. By the way, you were already a speaker in the United States and Europe. But now, officially, you're a global speaker.

[0:09:15] WC: I guess so, yes.

[0:09:16] DC: You are, 100%. Which is great to put on your – to add to them. But, yes. That was actually going to be part of my catch up.

[0:09:24] WC: I'm sorry.

[0:09:25] DC: No, it's okay. Well, Jamie, Will's speaking at drupa.

[0:09:29] JM: That's awesome. Maybe next year I can follow.

[0:09:31] DC: Road to drupa is in full swing. After Sign Expo is pretty much a straight shot for that. So, I have been working very closely with Frank Tueckmantel. We actually have a really great time, and Hole Seven is going to be popping as the kids say. I can't believe I just said as the kids say. But it's really amazing and I'm really looking forward to it, and there's always people who just want to boo from the bleachers. I swear to God, I just do not like those people. Get in the game, or shut up. That's all I feel about it. I mean, it's like, "Is print dead, people?" Just so they can say, "No, it's not dead."

If the value of the industry meeting together every four years, especially after eight years, doesn't have value for you, then, stay home and stay out of it. But for everybody else, there's going to be stuff there that will change the trajectory of the future of your business. If you can't get there, which is an expense to get there, especially from America. It's not like Europe, we just hop on a training and go.

[0:10:43] WC: It's long, long flights.

[0:10:45] DC: It's a long flight, but what I'm saying is that you can pay attention from home.

[0:10:49] WC: You can.

[0:10:50] DC: Every trade pub is there, every analyst is there, there are live broadcasts all day. I'm going to try to jump on –

[0:10:59] JM: That's how I follow.

[0:11:00] DC: – LinkedIn Live, you just follow the #drupa2024 on whatever channels you're on, and you can still be part of everything. Most importantly, after the show, you can see how these things manifest in the world. If you want to wait till those first customers start actually producing on the equipment they bought. Again, we're talking about a trade show, so let's tie it back to our theme today, which is going to trade shows. William, you buy a lot of stuff at trade shows?

[0:11:36] WC: Well, I buy a lot of stuff adjacent to trade shows.

[0:11:39] DC: Okay. Like Jamie's a little more, like I think formal. He's got a list, he's going there to specifically be strategic. You're a little more like, "Let me just walk down this aisle and see."

[0:11:53] WC: I very much am. Coming from a background of planning events, I've never really planned going to an event, right. Like being on the other side of it – for me, going to an event is going to an event. I'm going to go on this day, and I'm going to be there. That's as far as I plan. Unless like there's a specific piece of equipment or a specific thing that I'm looking for. Now, I have a laundry list of things, but I'm still not even planning, I'm not looking at what vendors are there, I'm not trying to seek it out. I look at the show as like, it gets my creative juices going.

I speed through, I talk to very few people quickly, I move quickly, and I talk to very few people intentionally, because I'm observing, and I'm looking for the things that I find interesting. Then, I take note of that, and then I go back. I kind of soak it all in, I move really fast. Then, I get my targets. Until I'm actually in a target, and I'm something that I'm interested in, I'm ignoring the salespeople, I'm hiding my badge, and I'm being as indiscreet as possible so that I can move as quickly as possible.

[0:12:50] DC: You basically take my strategy when I go to a city, and I've never been there before, and I have my buffer day because of traveling now. I always jump on the red double-decker tour bus, see everything, and then decide what I want to go back and see later or the

next day, so you take that strategy. You don't ever – I thought you were looking for a cutting solutions or finishing solutions now. Like, I mean – I'm not saying – I don't want you to be specific, because we don't want people harassing you. But what I'm saying is, will you do any research at all on the web before you go into a company, or into anything about it? Or, you just want to see it yourself?

[0:13:27] WC: I'm very much a see it, except for software. Software is the opposite end of the spectrum on that. When it comes to equipment, and hardware, and fasteners, which are kind of where I'm looking for this the show coming up. I've done tons of research, and I've looked for things, but I haven't found a specific vendor. "Oh, they have this thing that I like and I want." Because there's a lot of things that not everyone does a really good job at SEO. When you're searching for things, you have to dig really deep to find stuff. That's the benefit of a trade show is, it's all there in one place. It's like, all the people that sell hardware all in this one area, so I can browse really quickly that, "Oh, that looks cool. What does that do?"

[0:14:03] DC: Or, a lot of times, it's because they want to sell certain things, and so they don't put the messaging, or what you're looking for front and center because you just want like an accessory or something like that, so it's hard to find. Jamie, a little bit of the opposite. Something tells me you're a little more –

[0:14:17] JM: A little bit of both, blended. I will definitely do research as to who's there because I know like when we were looking at flatbeds, we know who we were going to look for. Then, we actually knew about swissQ when we were looking, and then saw them at the show, and like, "That's it." But my list, like tomorrow, I'm looking for lasers. I'm looking for a few other things, but I'll definitely have that list. But then, when you're at the show, I will like, like Will said, I like to stand back and go, "Where's the buzz?" I don't know if I'll go down every aisle, but I'll be just kind of like, I know where they are, I know where the people I want to see are. Let's see what buzz is there, and not really talk to them right away.

But then, I want to see if there's anything new. Is there a buzz somewhere in the show floor that I wasn't looking for, something I don't know existed? But yes, that's definitely. Then, day two is spent on talking to the couple of people I need to talk to, to find out if that's the right piece of equipment or should I be looking at somebody else's.

[0:15:13] DC: Prior to the show, do any of your vendors, salespeople get in touch with you to say, "Hey, you coming to the show? Stop by the booth. Hey, we're having a dinner." I mean, are they –

[0:15:25] JM: Lots of people send emails and say, "Hey, this is our booth. Don't forget to stop by and see us."

[0:15:31] DC: But nothing personal?

[0:15:31] JM: But nothing really personal. A couple of people I reached out to and said, "Hey, we're going to be there. Will you be there? We should talk about stuff." So, I kind of started that conversation, but it wasn't the other way around.

[0:15:42] DC: That's interesting. You would think that they would at least check with their customers. I mean, not for nothing. You live in Florida, you are literally an hour and 20 minutes from this trade show. You would think that salespeople who you deal with who might be there, or distributors would get in touch with you and say, "Hey."

[0:15:58] WC: Well, most of the salespeople that I deal with are local. When you're buying equipment, almost every manufacturer, you have to buy through a distributor. Even if I wanted to buy a Mimaki, I could Mimaki, and Mimaki is going to say, "No, you have to call Mac Papers." Mac Papers is our distributor in Tampa. The salespeople that I deal with for the most part are local, and a lot of them don't even go to these shows. They're not even thinking about saying, "Hey, I'm going to see you here." But the ones that do or even the companies, it's still just a blanket email that's going to go to everybody. There's very little personal touch. It's a missed opportunity.

[0:16:34] DC: It's unfortunate.

[0:16:36] JM: Yes. I reached out to Iron Wrap who just sold us a press, and I was like, "Hey, we're going to be there." He's like, "I'll be there all three days. Stop by." I was like, "What else is going on?" Nothing, crickets.

[0:16:45] DC: Wow.

[0:16:46] WC: You don't want to take me for drinks? I just spent like half a million dollars with you.

[0:16:48] DC: Or show you the next, the upgrade, or the new substrate that's go to it.

[0:16:53] JM: They'll be ready to show the next thing, I know that. They already talked about it.

[0:16:55] DC: I don't like that. That bothers me a bit. I am obviously in a little bit of a different situation because I don't buy anything at a trade show. I do, because I usually get a press pass, even though I am working. Like for example, tomorrow with the International Sign Association, but normally, I could get a press pass. So, I am on the media list, so I'll get the announcements. Then, from there, I look to see what I think it's new. I'm not a printer, so I don't know all the time that one tiny adjustment to a paper tray would change people's lives.

I'm literally looking for something that allows a print customer or print salesperson to have a new conversation with people. That's my preliminary research. Then. I'm usually in a situation where I need to make an appointment to speak with somebody, or a company will reach out to me, and ask me if I want to come by sometimes to just make sure they know that it's not going to result in an article, in a trade pub. or something like that. But they usually don't. I mean, if they're contacting me personally, they usually just want me to come over to learn about their stuff.

I usually have a pretty good, a little ramp-up on those some things. But as we learn, the first time we were all in Dallas together, and discovered Dimense ourselves, which is now a thing. Actually, can't wait to see it tomorrow. It's part of Roland DGA now. Discovery is super important, but you have to be there for that. Now, you guys mentioned that a lot of your art show experience is, let me walk around, let me see where the crowd is, let me see. Maybe you see a printer you know, or that you're like, "What are you looking at?" Do you have those kinds of relationships, Will, with other printers? You talk to him?

[0:18:50] WC: Yes. I mean, I used to talk to a lot more people locally, then I actually used to have quite a few relationships with people on a national level. Just other printers that I'd worked

with, or that I had sold software to, or what have you. But honestly, most of those relationships have lost touch just because –

[0:19:05] DC: You have to get him back in a funnel. What's important to find out from other people. I mean, even if it's just what they paid for something, I mean, it becomes very handy.

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[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:20:12] DC: You're walking down a trade show, you see a crowd, and then how do you handle it, Will?

[0:20:17] WC: I mean, a crowd, I'm usually walking the opposite direction. I'm not seeking out the crowd. But I mentioned earlier, I'm moving quickly and I'm looking for things that catch my eye, whether it's something that I'm looking for or I'm not looking for. Then, I do get roped in as well. There'll be something that I see that I'm just like, "Oh." I geek out on it.

[0:20:34] DC: It catches your eye as far as it takes new substrate, it lets you print in different dimension.

[0:20:40] WC: all of the above. At ISA, which is the show that we're going to, I mentioned fasteners and hardware. I'm looking for that. I'm looking for new tools and new ways to cut

substrates quickly. I'm always looking for substrates, always looking for new materials to make things out of. We're getting really heavy in the FCO, so flat cut-out letters, or flat cut-out elements. Acrylic, PVC, ACM, aluminum. these are materials that we use to make letters, and numbers, and things out of. So, different things that I can use to make that more efficient.

Or, if it's, again, at a sign show, it could just be a really cool sign. There's been LED things that I've just like geeked out on like, "Oh, I want that." But if it's something that there's a crowd around the booth, and I'm intrigued by it, I'm going to avoid the booth. Then, I'm going to wait for that crowd to dissipate, and then, I'll go back. I don't like to be around a whole lot of people. And I also am not a patient person. If I'm standing there waiting, because I want to ask a question, I'm going to move on.

[0:21:43] DC: Yes. That makes total sense. Jamie?

[0:21:46] JM: No, I will not run the other way, but I will make sure that whatever the buzz is, is that something that we're interested in? If it's not okay, we'll move on. But if it's something that's cool, like the best time is to go back the next morning at 9am when the doors open up and go, "I'm the first one in this booth." I kind of do that.

[0:22:04] DC: I guess. if you just want to have a conversation. If you want to buy something, you want to be the last person in the booth.

[0:22:10] JM: That's different. But if you're interested in what the buzz is once everybody, "What is this new thing? Why is everybody looking at this? What's going on?" You'll get some quiet time maybe to talk to somebody about it, and then decide later if it's something you're going to buy.

[0:22:22] WC: Now, is the buy everything on the last day, is that even really a thing anymore? Do the manufacturers even sell anything? I know they'll sell some stuff off of the floor, and then there's like –

[0:22:32] JM: Usually, they're sold already.

[0:22:34] DC: Usually, they know.

[0:22:34] WC: Right, the dealers, and different things. But there's always the show special, right? So the Show special, you don't have to go to the show to get the show special.

[0:22:39] DC: You told me about the show special. I didn't even know that that exists. Share, just in case some people don't know about it.

[0:22:47] WC: Every manufacturer, when there's a show, in which there's always a show. There was just another sign show in Amsterdam, like three weeks ago, there's always a show.

[0:22:54] DC: FESPA.

[0:22:55] WC: Yes, FESPA. There's always a show special. Show special means, they basically come down off NSRP, they reduce the price, they have different deals. This is to entice people to buy at the show. But you don't actually have to sign the dotted line at the show to get the show deal. They'll usually honor it for about 30 days after.

[0:23:11] DC: Do you have to be there in person.

[0:23:13] WC: You don't even have to go to the show to get the show deal.

[0:23:15] JM: So yes. When we got our flatbed at swissQ, we met them at the show, we went back three times, and sat there, and talked to the pressman running it, and picked his brain. "Is it really what you say it is?" And this and that. Then, basically, they're offering you better financing rates from whatever, for X amount of time after. You've already talked to the top people that like, they should call you when you leave. But if not, you're pounding them going, "Look, I still want that rate." It's August 1st, and then the show was in April, but I want that rate still.

[0:23:47] WC: You can negotiate down too at the show, but it still doesn't have to be the last day. You can do that at any point in time because they do want to sell at the show. It makes their numbers look good. It justifies why they go to the show. It's the salespeople that are there, the

people that are there are salespeople that – that's not the owner of 99% of the time, so they want to sell to you, and they'll cut you deals. You can get the show deal, and that'll carry over. But do know that you can negotiate things down if you do buy things on the floor.

[0:24:13] DC: That's cool to know. I will walk by the big booths because I just want to see what they're doing. I'm not obviously there to analyze the press, but I like to see the samples that they're showing. I like to see how they have marketed their booth, and what their messaging is, so I can understand what their vision is, of the future, or at least the next three years, or two years. Then, that helps me help people navigate to what they're looking for when they ask me questions. I always answer that, "I'm not a printer, I don't know how this machine runs, but this is what I saw and this is what I was told so you should go investigate it and make your own decisions."

But besides that, and going back to what we mentioned in the beginning. The nooks and crannies of those back walls, just find fascinating things at the trade shows. Because these are usually companies that maybe have just started up and attend –

[0:25:14] WC: There, you will have the owner.

[0:25:16] DC: Well, I'm just saying, they'll take any space they can get. There'll be fine to be in a back corner, or whatever it is. There are just really interesting people, who are trying to make a difference. They might not have a big technology, but they might have something that makes everything easier for you, like a hub or something. I just bought one from my computer. So, they're very handy. You could plug everything in, and you only need one thing. I love the discovery aspect of a trade show. I have to say, also, that when I run into people I know, who I trust, I ask them, "What have you seen here that has just blown you away?" They usually – it's something out there on a trade show floor that has just never been seen before, like when we found Dimense in 2019.

Or, the other thing I love at the sign show, it's the last thing I'm going to say about it, there is actually like a little flea market area where they sell all these little one-off things, little gadgets, little hanging tools. The show tomorrow actually has cherry pickers, and lights, which reminds me – I meant to ask you before, no electronic signage, Will? You're not going into that?

[0:26:32] WC: Not saying that I'm not going into it.

[0:26:34] DC: Just saying, it seems like it would be up your alley.

[0:26:37] WC: Very much so. But you have to be licensed a certain way. In the state of Florida, there's two licenses. There's a license to be able to manufacture electrical signage, which is, I can't believe –

[0:26:50] JM: UL listed.

[0:26:50] WC: Yeah, UL listed, and there's another one. So you have to get UL certified. It costs like \$25,000.

[0:26:55] DC: Would you count as a manufacturer of electronic signage?

[0:26:57] WC: I would, yes. If we were fabricating electronic signs, we would become a fabricator or a manufacturer.

[0:27:01] DC: Oh, you make them yourselves? You can't just buy it?

[0:27:04] WC: You can. Then, there's the other license. UL allows you to make, and we have all the components to make them. We have all the tools, my guys could do it, we just have to get – some of – the guy that does it would have to pass the test, and I would have to pay like \$25,000.

[0:27:17] JM: Then, you have to get that sticker. You can get it from them.

[0:27:19] WC: Then you have to get that sticker.

[0:27:20] DC: Then, I guess, I can't get the one just, print long and prosper.

[0:27:24] WC: No, unfortunately.

[0:27:24] DC: I'll put those behind my head on my Zoom meetings. I guess that's not happening.

[0:27:27] WC: Well, we can make that. We can get that made for you. I just can't make it in my shop, but we can get it made.

[0:27:32] DC: I can go on that interweb and buy it, but thank you.

[0:27:35] WC: I can do better than that. Give me a break here.

[0:27:36] DC: Okay. Alright. Thank you.

[0:27:36] WC: But the second is an ESE license, or at least in the State of Florida, which is an electrical specialty contractor license. You have to meet certain criteria in order to be able to do this. One of which is to have been a foreman for two years, which I actually do qualify for, because I've owned a sign shop for two years. I do meet one of the criteria to be able to take the test, but there's a lot of information that I don't know. I've actually been studying, I have practice tests. When I say I've been studying, I haven't allocated a lot of time towards this, because I don't have a lot of time. But it's on my list of things to do, and one of our goals, because once I get that licensed, then, we truly can pull our own permits, and we can do a lot of things that opens up a lot of doors for us that are currently closed.

[0:28:22] DC: I am just saying that you guys know me, I'm a pattern person. Just like I'm seeing more pouches in the grocery store. [Inaudible 0:28:31] my fruit is in a pouch now. On the highway, I'm starting to see more electronic signs. In the airport, I'm seeing more electronic signs. There are so many reasons why in the scheme of user experience and customer experience, it's a more direct way of getting people information in a timely manner. I'll leave it at that. I'm not saying electronic signs are better than printed signs. If you want to have a stagnant printed sign up for a long period of time, that's the way you want to go. You don't want the light showing electronic signs showing one thing. But I think, the pandemic, certainly, I mean, all those restaurants just started putting electronic signs outside of there –

[0:29:19] WC: When you say electric sign, you're referring to an EMS, right? Electronic message system.

[0:29:24] DC: Whether it's a message, or a video, or whatever on the highway –

[0:29:28] WC: A screen, basically.

[0:29:29] DC: A screen-based sign, yes. I mean, it's funny, by the way – I mean, not so funny/ When you're driving down the highway, and you see like a billboard, and it's like the error code is up there, and you take a picture of it and like, "The reason number 99 to use print, 100%." But not so if there's timely information, "accident up ahead." I mean, you can't get that from a stagnant sign. Okay. Anything else on walking the trade show you want to cover?

[0:29:58] WC: One more quick thing, and I think we all kind of touched on this. In the world of print, and sign, or even garment, what catches my eyes is not so much the piece of equipment, but what was made by it. So you talked about earlier about the samples and the stuff, right? That's what I'm looking for. I'm looking for the output of the machine. Then when I see stuff like, "Oh, I want to be able to make that." That's when I see –

[0:30:17] JM: And I scrutinize those samples. It's just like, "Yes, okay." I walk around with it, I'm like, "Give me a couple of those." I'll walk around a couple floors, rows, and be like, "Yes, no." If this one is worth going back, take a look at it. But definitely.

[0:30:28] DC: I mean, you guys my business cards, they're pretty intricate. I've given them out to printers. Next thing I know, there's a circle, and they're like taking them apart, looking at them in the light, and they're peeling off the – I mean, it's crazy when printers really get attached to things. But I think that's so important to point out because samples matter people.

[0:30:48] WC: Samples matter.

[0:30:48] DC: They freaking matter. I don't want to see a color test, and I don't want to see something that I don't know what the color is supposed to be. What I mean by that is, okay, you want to put a Jackson Pollock thing up there with all these different colors, or some abstract art,

fantastic. But I don't know that that's the green that the artist intended, as opposed to putting a human face, a face, or an animal that you know what color a tiger is supposed to be. Then, your brain can process what you're looking at.

Now, the person could be on something really cool, that gives you an idea for an application for it. But sometimes I get weary if I can't see what the intention was, then I'm not sure I can really trust those print samples if that makes sense.

[0:31:40] JM: Yes, totally makes sense. But I'll also check out their booth and stuff like that, what it's printed out of in. Did you make this? Do you not make it? Or, is this just a booth, or is this being made off your equipment? It makes it that much more believable.

[0:31:54] DC: Yes, 100%.

[0:31:55] JM: Those printed off the press that they're showing.

[0:31:59] DC: No, you're absolutely right.

[0:31:59] JM: All the material that we're looking at.

[0:32:01] DC: Yes. No, definitely. That's a really great point too. Don't put samples of things on the wall that you're not talking about in the booth, or not trying to highlight in some manner.

[0:32:14] JM: There's a couple of companies that are very good at it. Like, this can be done on this press. This can be done, this press, this press, and this is the material, and this is what it was.

[0:32:21] DC: Well, actually, this is printed on a model two years ago. It's like, "Well, why is it up on the wall then? Can I buy that model from two years ago? Oh, I can't. Well, why is it up there?" It's excellent points.

[BREAK]

[0:32:34] DC: It's back. Citizens of the Printerverse, it is time to make your plans to attend drupa 2020, 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. Stopped by Hall Seven, I'm cohosting 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 CONTINUES]

[0:33:39] DC: Okay. In a previous podcast, we had a discussion about the serious lack of follow-up. I'm saying that as politely as I can possibly muster of all of those exhibitors who scanned your badges. So, maybe touch upon that first, and then tell everybody what you do to follow up when you're not followed up with. Jamie start with you.

[0:34:13] JM: Yes, this was a big topic in our one podcast. But yes, I was amazed at a couple of shows that I went through that got a template email, thanks for stopping by the booth. That's about it. Not everybody, only a handful, maybe a dozen at the most if you stopped by 50 booths. It was only a few, but most of them was a template. Rarely did I ever get a call. I mean, if it's something – if we've had a good conversation, somebody should get back to us, at least follow up on that conversation.

[0:34:43] DC: Not even the salespeople?

[0:34:44] JM: No, no.

[0:34:46] DC: Wow.

[0:34:46] JM: Yes. Very rare. I mean, if it's something that I'm looking for now, now, I'm going to be like, "All right, who should I talk to now at that booth? Should I talk to the people there? They're not interested in contacting me?" Or, "Should I just go over their heads and talk to

somebody else, and say, "Hey, I was at the show at ISA. I love this piece of equipment, or I like this, who do I talk to?" Because those people, they don't get back to me.

[0:35:05] DC: We've gone over people's hands a few times in booths, because I'm like, "No one is talking to Jamie the printer." I'm like, "Yes, they will be. Come with me, and we'll get them to talk to you right now."

[0:35:13] JM: "You're a little printer." I'm like, "Yes, we're a little printer. Sure."

[0:35:16] DC: No, that's crazy. What do you do to follow up with everybody then?

[0:35:20] JM: I won't follow up with everybody. No, but I'll follow up with the ones that I was interested in and said, "Hey, you remember me? We looked at this piece of equipment. We are serious in this timeframe. What else do we need to know? I'd like to get samples sent to here. If it's a press we're looking at, can I send you my files to have it printed on this material, to see if it's what we think it's going to do."

[0:35:40] DC: Are they responsive at that point?

[0:35:42] JM: Usually, they're responsive at that point. Though, I guess, we have somebody that's interested. I mean, that could take – if I'm honest with them like it could take six months, it's not going to happen tomorrow. It's not going to happen next week unless something really – we're going to make sure this equipment fits our needs. We're not just going to go, "yes." We're going to test it."

[0:35:59] DC: When there's – we're not a manufacturer. Obviously, we can speak to them. But based on your experience, they scan your badge, and then you're just going into some massive follow-up thank you for seeing. Nobody is saying, "What does DMR Graphics do? What size are they? Which of our presses would be best?"

[0:36:17] WC: All that's in the questionnaire that you filled out to register for your ticket for ISA.

[0:36:21] DC: Oh, really.

[0:36:21] WC: Yes.

[0:36:21] JM: Yes.

[0:36:23] DC: Okay, I get a press pass so I don't do that.

[0:36:25] WC: You don't do that, yes.

[0:36:26] DC: Okay. They're pre-vetting you at that point.

[0:36:30] WC: All that data that you fill out when you sign up to go to be an attendee at ISA, right? Even if you're paying for it, you have to fill this out. Every vendor sends out free passes. I had like 20 offers for free passes, right?

[0:36:43] DC: But they still have to register for the show.

[0:36:44] WC: You still have to register for the show, and they take you through this 18-page questionnaire about your business. All the details about your business are there, as long as you're honest. It's on our system. But they have all of your data for the most part, and then if you are – I'm giving more credit, like if you've checked, I'm looking for this thing, and then it's there, then there's going to be more chase versus like, I just scanned your badge. Because a lot of it is like, some of your salespeople, and your people there are truly incentivized only to scan as many badges as they possibly can.

[0:37:16] DC: Hundred percent.

[0:37:17] WC: That's where I'm like. I hide my badge. I don't want anybody scanning me unless I truly want to talk to somebody after the fact. I'll take your collateral, and I'll contact you. All I need to know is, is this the thing that you make, and this is your website. I'll find.

[0:37:31] DC: A 100%,

[0:37:32] JM: The owner of our company used to put me upfront. He's like, "Here, you're the VP." He's like, "But I'll sit in the back." His badge doesn't say he's the owner. He's like, "They won't talk to me. You'll talk and I'll find out if that's really what we want or not." I'll be like – then, we'll go from there. What about you?

[0:37:47] DC: Do they ask you like what your annual revenue is the print shop and stuff like that?

[0:37:51] JM: Yes. Number of employees, annual revenue, what's your time-framed purchase.

[0:37:58] DC: That is what qualifies you whether or not they're really going to focus on, like this company can – just say, it was some giant press, they would be like, as probably not this type of business.

[0:38:09] JM: You've got four people working for you, we got 30 people working for you, we got 120. They're going to play their odds and go, "Mm, yes."

[0:38:15] DC: Okay. All right. Then, it's a little more organized, and I realized, I don't fill out those forms, so I've actually never seen them, so that's very interesting. Okay. You must be a pleasure to follow.

[0:38:27] WC: We, oh, have a peach.

[0:38:30] DC: Can you imagine getting a follow-up call from this guy.

[0:38:34] WC: You're never going to have my cell phone in any of these things ever. I have like if you talk to any of my staff –

[0:38:38] DC: It's got a geo fence in his cell phone.

[0:38:41] WC: My staff are like bouncers like you cannot get me on the phone.

[0:38:44] DC: Okay. What do you say about the woman who's working downstairs? I'm like, "She needs to work for me like she would not pass that phone."

[0:38:50] JM: Melissa at our office is like that. You can be standing right there, and be like, "Who are you here to see?" "Jamie." She's like, "No, he's not here. Who are you? No, he's not here." I'm like looking at like, I want to talk to that person. All right. We'll get back to you. I'm like, "Seeing like a little schedule."

[0:39:04] DC: She's amazing downstairs. But go ahead, what do you do?

[0:39:07] WC: What do I do as far as follow-up is concerned?

[0:39:09] DC: Yes. When you really want to talk to somebody, you'll get more information.

[0:39:12] WC: I have people that I've worked with that I like, and that has served me well, and it has served me poorly. Like Mimaki, for example, the Mimaki, you can't buy from Mimaki direct. So, when I was looking at the Mimaki, I was at a Mimaki booth.

[0:39:27] DC: I took you to that.

[0:39:28] WC: You took me to that booth. I had relationships with people that could sell the Mimaki, and I went to those people. I didn't have to follow up with anybody at the show.

[0:39:39] DC: Good. That's the point of going to the booth with me, right?

[0:39:43] WC: I think that's one of the last things that I bought equipment-wise from a show. But even like all my finishing equipment, you have to buy it through a dealer, so we just had to deal with the local dealer. So I go and I look for, okay, these are the things that I want, and very rarely am I interacting with the salesperson that I met at the show,

[0:40:01] DC: Do they pass you over to the dealers, or not even that?

[0:40:03] WC: I don't even, because I already know how it works, so I don't even wait for them to pass me along. I take my own way. That's why I moved away. I moved through shows as I'm kind of incognito, where I like, I'm not trying to talk to people. I know what I want. I look for what I look for. I see things that I like, I'll ask questions if I have questions. And outside of that, I'm self-contained. I can walk an entire show in like four hours.

[0:40:25] DC: I think I witnessed that because you didn't make it back to another show the last time we went, do you remember? At three o'clock in the afternoon, someone was still in their hotel room sleeping if I recall.

[0:40:34] WC: Well, that was Vegas.

[0:40:37] JM: I would [inaudible 0:40:36] for that one.

[0:40:36] DC: But I'm going to say, but you had done everything you needed.

[0:40:39] WC: I'd seen everything that I needed to see.

[0:40:40] DC: And got pretty down the road with one of those manufacturers and one of those inkjet presses that you were looking at for a while.

[0:40:47] WC: Yes, we looked at that. I take that back. We did buy a bunch of garment stuff last year, I think at United is where we bought –

[0:40:52] DC: Yes, you bought something. You told us, "I'll be there in a minute. I just bought something. You cannot leave this guy in an aisle by himself."

[0:40:57] WC: Yes, that was at United. No, but we bought embroidery machines, and we bought DTG, and then we had this other thing that we almost bought, and then we wound up not buying that thing. I don't even remember what I buy. That's how bad I am about these things.

[0:41:11] DC: All right. I want to end this podcast with you offering your best advice to the manufacturers out there on how they could communicate with you before show and after the

show. Let's assume during the show, to your most excellent points that people you probably need to talk to are probably not there. Whatever their booth is, is not up to those people. So, Will, starting with you. How to best communicate with someone like you before show and how to follow up in someone?

[0:41:41] WC: Well, there's two different facets to this. You have the manufacturers, your equipment manufacturers, which none of them really deal with the public or with the consumer, you have to go through a dealer. What the easiest thing would be is to have, you get all the data of where people are from, and where they're at, as if someone did get their badge scanned, or you did communicate with them. Do a follow-up and say, "Hey, these are the points of contact of who can help you buy your equipment."

[0:42:06] DC: Here's all the dealers, pick your –

[0:42:07] WC: Here's all the dealers in your area, so I don't have to find them.

[0:42:09] DC: By the way, they have this thing called digital printing. They probably know where you live, and can tell you. But if it's an email, okay. Excellent suggestion.

[0:42:18] WC: Then, your substrates, your materials, and all of those things, samples, samples, samples. So, have plenty of samples on the show floor, work with your – and this already happens, right? But work with the manufacturers to make cool stuff out of the things that you have to make cool things with. Then, send samples out right. So, not only having samples there, but if you did get someone that has a high level of interest and checks all of your boxes, don't wait, don't call, just send something in the mail that has something that's going to blow their hair back, and people will call you back.

[0:42:48] DC: I love that. Jamie the Printer?

[0:42:49] JM: I totally agree with that. Yes. As for the manufacturers, I mean, swissQ, we bought right from swissQ. But like I said, if it's something else, yes, that's a great idea. Send out who we can buy it from in our area, and who should we talk to. Don't just send what place. Gives us names, give us contacts. We're serious. Then, with the materials, I love that idea.

Send us more samples, make sure the distributor in our area knows that we're looking at this material, so they can stop them with samples.

[0:43:17] DC: I mean, especially, like substrates are so topical. If you're a press manufacturer, and you have qualified a new media – I just saw a really cool thing a Dscoop, magnetic substrate that you can run through the press and it doesn't demagnetize the press.

[0:43:34] WC: Really?

[0:43:34] DC: Exactly. That's what I said. Everyone thought I was crazy, and I was standing at the booth, and I was like, "No, I think this is a miracle."

[0:43:42] WC: Does it require a special machine or it'll go through anything?

[0:43:44] JM: We deal with magnets every day. On flatbeds, I don't color, though.

[0:43:49] DC: Okay. I'll tell you the name of the company, because I just don't remember it right now, or what it was called. But there was the first time they were exhibiting, but that is the thing –

[0:43:58] JM: Like a digital Kutch press. Somebody –

[0:44:01] WC: You need to roll the roll?

[0:44:03] DC: If it goes on an Indigo.

[0:44:04] JM: Indigo, yes. We can run a magnet on an Indigo, yes.

[0:44:06] DC: I'm just saying because it was –

[0:44:08] JM: There's a certain kind of magnet, and it doesn't –

[0:44:10] DC: No. If it runs on any other presses. But I can tell you for sure being at Dscoop, it 100% had to run on Indigo. There would be no reason for them to exhibit that show, it would make no sense. But that doesn't mean it can't run on other machines. But the printers had to stand there for a little while and get their mind around that it wouldn't be magnetized. There's a special whole thing on it. It's not, someone just didn't decide, hey, let's try to run a magnet through a breast, or anything like that. It was years in the making. But what I'm saying is that that would be an amazing thing. Imagine cutting that substrate to an admission ticket to a trade show, and saying, "Come see us" or the logo of the company. By the way, it's a magnet. So it could stick on your refrigerator, or your office wall view if you're in an office, or whatever, if you have something like that.

I actually think that that's a great idea that there are ways to entice people to come visit you too. After I love – it was great. I wish it was a little more personal, but I hear what you're saying. They have to kind of weed it through the funnel after that. But once they know you're in Tampa, you're close to Philly, then those people should be like, "Hey, you stop by the booth. Here's a list of other substrates that are coming through here. In case you didn't know, here's the updates to our operating systems, or here's more no code, low code API things, all that stuff that you can call into. Give us a call, let us come over," something like that. Love these suggestions. I hope that people take everybody up on it.

[BREAK]

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[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:46:21] DC: We are actually going to head off to Orlando now, and we will see you and your lovely wife, who is now the head of HR here at TampaPrinter at the show. Is this her first show?

[0:46:34] WC: This will be her first show, yes. She's actually head of HR and assistant bookkeeper for tampa.media. So, she handles all the companies.

[0:46:42] DC: Oh, all the companies. My apologies, Ashley. But I'm really interested to hear her experience tomorrow when we will see – Wednesday, when we will see.

[0:46:52] WC: Yes. I think my experience is going to be very different by having her, because she's not going to want to move the way that I moved through the show. I think I'm going to have to take a longer approach to the way that I normally do this.

[0:47:03] JM: You're going to have to shop.

[0:47:05] WC: Yes, I'm going to have to slow things down. She's going to ask a lot of questions, which is fine, right? This is her first show, so I will spend more time explaining things because there's going to be a lot of things that she's never seen before, which is why I'm excited for her to go.

[0:47:17] DC: I think it's great that you guys are working together now. And that, she's technically – she doesn't have to go to a trade show. Maybe she's making sure the college money isn't going to things we'll see on aisle four. You have control of buying everything down the aisles. But that's really lovely. I loved our live podcast, I thought it went very well. I like being with you guys in person.

[0:47:42] WC: Yes, it worked out.

[0:47:44] DC: It's the first time we've all been in person together. Oh, no. We were at the last show.

[0:47:49] WC: No, we missed you. It's all been near misses. The last time that we were even in the same city together all three of us.

[0:47:53] DC: I saw both of you separately.

[0:47:55] JM: It was in Dallas.

[0:47:55] WC: Well, no. Dallas is when we came up with this.

[0:47:57] DC: It was Las Vegas.

[0:47:58] WC: But with Vegas, but I missed you in Vegas because it was Vegas.

[0:48:02] DC: Yes, because somebody was sleeping. Well, somebody was walking outside of the building.

[0:48:04] JM: Well, I wasn't in Vegas that year. I was in Vegas last year for ISA. Not for the last time you were there, I don't think.

[0:48:11] DC: Okay. I don't remember. All I know is that Will was walking on the outside of a building the last time I – didn't you do the walk outside of that –

[0:48:17] JM: Oh, Atlanta last year.

[0:48:18] WC: Oh, no. I jumped off of a building in Vegas. Yes, that's the stratosphere. It's not like I'm like, doing the hangover here, and like randomly on some building like it's an attraction.

[0:48:29] DC: "What are you doing later? What are you doing? Do you want to jump off a building?" I was like, "Yes. No, thank you." Okay. Thank you very much for everybody. Until next time, print long and prosper.

[OUTRO]

[0:48:41] 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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Sign Expo: <https://signexpo.org/>

International Sign Association (ISA): <https://signs.org/>

Print Across America: <https://printacrossamerica.com/>

Mimaki Global: <https://mimaki.com/>

Jamie McLennan: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jamieprints>

DMR Graphics: www.dmr-graphics.com/

Innvoke: <https://innvoke.com/>

Will Crabtree: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/will-crabtree-b130a346>

TampaPrinter: <https://tampaprinter.com/>

Sign Parrot: <https://signparrot.com/>

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