

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:02] DD: Does your printing need some passion?

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

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

[0:00:10] DD: I'm David Drucker, Founder and CEO of hi-resolution printing and packaging.

[0:00:15] NT: I'm Noel Tocci, Founder of TocciMade, bespoke print consulting.

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

[0:00:33] DD: If you can dream it, you can make it.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:39] DC: Hey everybody, welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. More specifically, we are here with the Making it with Print podcast crew. Which means, I am here with David Drucker from hi-resolution printing and packaging and Noel Tocci from TocciMade. Hello, gentlemen.

[0:00:59] DD: How're you doing? It's been a long time.

[0:00:59] NT: Hello, friends. It has been too long.

[0:01:02] DC: It has been a while. We have all been really busy. David has been extra busy out there winning industry awards. That is why we decided to actually focus this podcast on the value of awards. Is there any value to them? Should you participate? Is it a business opportunity? We actually are very lucky that both of my co-hosts have walls filled with awards,

and experiences to share with all of you. David, we're going to start with you. First of all, congratulations. You just won – was it just one Gold Leaf Award or was it several?

[0:01:47] DD: It was one Gold Leaf, and then there was a Silver as well. You go into these things, and if it happens, it happens. But it's always rewarding to hear. I wish I was at the ceremony. I was last year. But all good, all good. We have to center ourselves and be humble about it.

[0:02:06] DC: Yes. Can you let everybody know what the Gold Leaf Award is?

[0:02:10] DD: The Gold Leaf Award is put together by the FSEA.

[0:02:14] DC: The Foil & Special Effects Association.

[0:02:17] DD: Correct. What they're looking at is they're looking at embellishments like hot stamping, and embossed things, and the use of digital foils, and sleeking, and everything that you might use with a foil. For me, I think about this in the back of my head when I get a production in, and sometimes, I move the production in that direction, knowing that I want to get an award. Quite frankly, I'm surprised that the awards that I've won in the topics that I've won. Now that people are out there, and they're seeing the type of work that I do, they're more inquisitive as to what else I've done. That's conversations that it's led to. For me, it's just a great opportunity to speak on it.

[0:03:08] DC: Excellent. We're actually going to dive deeper into that. Noel, we're actually going to start with you. I mean, just in our email exchange, you are definitely sitting on a bunch of awards over there for your work through TocciMade. I'm sure, other people have entered your work in awards and have won for it. Are they important for your business?

[0:03:33] NT: It's interesting, I wasn't sure. Early on, I thought it was an ego thing. I'm like, "I don't have time for awards. My work is beautiful, just look at it. What do I care?" Then, I've always done a lot of work with the mills, and I know years ago, what they all do. But Mohawk got involved years ago, and they're like, "You should enter your work. You should enter your work." I go, "Yes. Yes." I would enter it, and I would win a couple of times every year. In those days,

every year, was it good for me. I said, "Oh, it was nice. You get a plaque." I still have them. I always won – I forget what they call theirs. But every year, I would win two to three, but they would have a huge party every year in New York, and everybody was there. So, they talked about the winners. Then, I thought, "Well, this paper thing is good." You guys remember Utopia, the coated paper mill?

[0:04:17] DD: Yes.

[0:04:18] DC: I do, actually.

[0:04:19] NT: Appleton. Utopia [inaudible 0:04:21]. They had something called "You be the Judge." Once, someone I competed with won two one year, and I'm an ex-sports guy. I got my backup. I entered like 25. They had a night in New York where they gave 11, I won eight of them. Does it help? I still have the plaques now, but you know how it was good. They always had a party, and people were there that I didn't know, and it wasn't – I didn't want their business. I knew other printers who had there. I didn't take their clients or their business. But people would come up and they get to know you, and your brand and your name kind of gets ingrained.

Then, of course, the best one if you want monetary, I was lucky enough to win Sappi Printer of the Year a couple of times. That is \$20,000 for your printing budget, and 5,000 pounds of paper.

[0:05:06] DC: What?

[0:05:08] NT: Yes, it's because they want you to throw a party, and then they want you to tell everybody about that. It's smart. They don't do that, none of them really do it much anymore. So, I think they're good. I'm not saying this, because we're so great, we win awards. If you enter a lot, you will. But you just said something interesting, really quickly. I have had clients one in particular, I do these annual, wild annuals every year for this company forever, and they're always beautiful. They enter their work. I have several clients who enter it. So, they would enter there as in GRAFIS, and so that's a pretty prestigious thing. I found out that a lot of people, a lot of marketing departments, particularly want something they can enter.

I just did something for a branding company, and they wanted to – Oh, I can drop a little names. I did something, what is it? Everybody's familiar with Impossible Meats. Well, our friends at JKR, who rebranded Burger King, and on, and on, and on, and Dunkin. Well, I did a poster, and they have fake blood. I did a silkscreen poster that's supposed to be like the hammy, which is the fake blood, but we did that. They actually send the film crew in to show it because they were entering it in cons, like in there, there's big awards there. I guess, awards are part of it. I never like to talk about it, because it's like, "Oh, you're just collecting awards." But they have great value, and I would urge any printer to get involved because they give you, it's free advertising, it's exposure.

Like David says, people look and they go, "Oh, I didn't know those guys did that." From that standpoint, it's nice, and it's nostalgic when you look back. I think our work is that much better than everybody else. I see lots of good work. You don't win if you don't enter. You know what I mean? There's lots of people that don't enter that have gorgeous work, but I would encourage people to do it.

[0:06:58] DC: You know who cares about awards? Advertising agencies love awards. Their business is based on that. Guess who they want to work with, award-winning printers, award-winning photographers, award-winning designers. From a perspective of a customer, I would say, if you have won awards, that should be definitely something that you read lead with when you're talking about yourself, on your website, and things like that. Yes, I have actually awarded work to printers, because we wanted to win an award. So, that's the next question.

Well, actually. David, let me just go back to you. Are awards important for your business? Then, let's tack on, have you won projects because you have won awards?

[0:07:50] DD: Well, I'm going to say that most of the awards I won were back from maybe 2010 back. What they allowed me to do is, once we won the award, it was almost pay to play. You would enter the things that were – well, for me, they had to be substantial, and you'd enter them, and then you'd pay \$145, then you have to pay for a plaque, then after. What we did with that is we had our little parties with the design firms and the agencies once we won the award. What really began to turn for me, and at that point, I had won about 50 awards, and my wall was

full. I would have to have gotten to a bigger space in order to accommodate that. It kind of like wore off on me.

But when I started getting into some of the larger, more direct companies like Turner Broadcasting, and such, they would take the projects that I produced, and they would enter them in awards. For me, it was coming from left field, and then all of a sudden, they call you up and you have this huge statue that you have. For me, that's what I was going for. I began to have conversations with my clients about them putting it in. Then, I played a little game and the little game was, work with new papers, use techniques on new papers. That way, you could win something from the paper company, but you could also become the authority on it.

There was a point like with Plike and some other papers where I had done every type of technique on there. Because of that, other printers began to call me and ask, "We're looking to do this. This is what our client wants. How do you think it's going to react?" So, it gave us a position of authority because the paper company had said, "Call this guy. Call him." I love the paper companies, and I love what they do. The swatch books, you don't know what they've done to get their swatch books to look that way.

[0:09:59] DC: I think no, mate.

[0:10:00] NT: Oh, I do.

[0:10:01] DD: It doesn't happen in nature, and I'll just leave it at that. I would call the paper companies and say, "Hey, we're looking to do this piece, I'm gearing it to an award. Please tell me how you produce this." They have technical people, but nobody really knew what went into it. So, here we are going back, and kind of experimenting on our own. Those experiments led to new direction that I use there. I was able to use it with other clients. That's all because of awards. That's because we were gearing it to award.

So, I kind of stopped for many years. I was done. I've had all the thrill. It isn't until the last three years that I've been re-approached. I haven't approached anybody, they've approached me, they want to know. It's led into all directions with business. There is a huge kickback here for me to get involved in it. Sometimes, I don't want to, or I'm too busy. But I know that now, we have

social media. Social media now let's you put it out. What we used to do is we have a little party, we print up some nice postcards, we mail them out to everybody else, saying, "Hey, we just won this with them, and so on and so forth." But now, you put it out onto social media, and it just every day tumbles into a new direction.

[0:11:26] DC: You're right. The reach and awareness of those wins is much bigger now because of social media. Noel, have you won projects? Because you have a wall full of awards?

[0:11:40] NT: Yes and no. I have because – particularly with the paper companies. So, now, I always make extra. When you win, they're like, "Oh, no. The reps all over the country. Can I get some?" I give them some. They go all over. They have to pull them out of their bag, and show them, and go over, and you get clients. So, I used to have someone in a mill, I used to go, and I didn't care. She referred me all the time, she goes, "But I always give three names, but I wink when I do you." I was like, "Just give my name." People would call all the time because they would go, "Well, you can do uncoated paper on an off white." Or, "Look at this piece, it won an award." Who did that? My name is on it. And they go, "Yes." They don't push you, but they say, "Yes, give Noel a call." It's like a silent salesman in that way.

The plaques don't do much for my ego. I mean, they're great. Like David said, at some point you go, you got to dust them, or, then, what do you do with it. They have lasting value. There's still out there, there's still projects out there with those little stickers on the back with my name all over it, and people still call. "I remember you from – " And you never know. Most of our business comes from referral, but I consider that almost a referral.

Winning the award itself is nice and it's sexy. David's right, sometimes we had parties, or you get together, but they kind of have longevity, and you never know where they're going to end up. David, you said something really important, I want to touch on that. The paper companies, "Yes, that's what they do." But I always argue and go, "Listen, you can do this, but not everybody can do it." People take it and they go, "This is beautiful. I'm going to put it on my shelf." They're not necessarily going to use your paper. But when you win an award, you actually – somebody, that's a real job, someone actually specified that paper use, that paper in process, and somebody paid for it. That's a much more powerful message than something that was created in a vacuum you think you could never replicate.

But when David shows you a job that a client paid for, and it's something you've never seen, that's I think more valuable. That got more visibility because of the award. I mean, how many you have to drop them from a plane to get the same kind of coverage, for what he did that was special. He just said the other thing, and this has happened to me. He's got people that do what he does calling him to ask. That's cool.

[0:13:56] DC: Yes, it's amazing.

[BREAK]

[0:14:01] DD: Are you a frustrated creative and want a print partner that takes an artisan approach? Do you want to be inspired with techniques that will enhance your next printed or packaging production? Or are you a printer that has unique abilities and need a liaison to enhance your exposure? I'm David Drucker, owner of Highresolution Printing. I am an independent creative consultant with access to every printing technology out there.

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

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:14:44] DC: Let's get into a little more specifics about the award. David, you have a 14-year gap. Well, if you started three years ago, like a 12-year gap in your awards. But, what are some of the awards that you have won besides the FSEA Gold Leaf Award?

[0:15:03] DD: Okay. A lot of mine are from the launches of new ideas, and new companies, Departures Magazine. When Departures first started, light came out when that announcement happened. The direction of the announcement, it's the top 0.8% of the nation has all the money and such. What we did is a beautiful oblong booklet that was on black plike, with black hot stamping. Every page was just all the type, all the copy, just black hot stamping, beautiful taped spine, and french folded. That was the key. We showed that, and you know what happens, is it

almost starts a craving to develop more design in that direction. Things that stand out that why wouldn't you produce that way. Red Cross had their huge gala.

Once again, Plike had just recently come out. I said, "Well, why don't we do an invitation that's a Red Cross, just the Red Cross. We don't have to say much about it, we'll put a pocket on the inside, and then we use like cranes, 440 weight on the inside stamp." But the inside of the Red Cross was just the Red Cross, there was no copy on the inside. Everything came on a vellum. It was really nicely put together. The idea kind of seemed like it was, why didn't anybody else have this idea?

Leading hotels of the world had a book, a directory of all the hotels to get advertising in that. We created a kit for it. The kit had a pocket that last year's book went into. We used Curious. I think they call it the Soft Touch, that enamel feeling. Either people love that, or they threw it on the ground, they couldn't handle the feel of it. But we stamped, we had a lot of trials. We learned a lot going in there. There were die-cut pieces, and there were accordion fold pieces, and there was so much going on that we put it in for an award.

In a lot of these awards were through the Association of Graphic Communication, the plaques. My wall is just absolutely covered in these things. I thought that that's what an award was, until somebody sent an award where they placed the award. Then, it started coming in as trophies, acrylics, and all that. But I could literally go down the list and tell you what the first 50 awards were. After a while, it just didn't become a game anymore. I didn't get what I wanted out of doing that. Then, I began to find out that a lot of clients did not want me to place the awards for the things I really wanted to.

[0:18:03] DC: Yes. There's always that, a little of that. But there is also that advertising agencies and I can speak from my personal experience. Create projects just to win awards. That's the only reason they do it. I mean, I've placed ads in a community newspaper in somewhere where we knew the client was never going to see it. Just so we could say it ran, because we want to submit it for a copywriting award or something like that. Noel, what are some of the awards that you have won that have some meaning for you?

[0:18:40] NT: I think I mentioned them. The Sappi Printer of the Year were big. I won twice, I think one time I was silver, but I was the gold, the top one a couple of times. It was important to me, and I don't know, it was up against really beautiful work. I thought any of us could have won. But it was meaningful for me because the recognition, but again, they give money, and they would have these parties, and you'd get to meet people you didn't know. It also was a sense of accomplishment.

What I heard in David, and he's probably too modest to say that, but he's trying, and I do this too. He's pushing the envelope, and he's trying things other people won't do. I think those awards, for me they were an acknowledgment that, wow. It was something that was different. I didn't do it any better. I think, sometimes we thought outside the box. We did something different like David said. We did something different with the cover, or we made it. It wasn't just a regular book. It was a book and the cover had something really special. So, we push the envelope.

I think, they were very meaningful for me, those were. And the paper company ones were very useful. But again, I've won them as an extension, and I don't do much work in the advertising business, but I understand what you're saying. Some people just want to do it to win the award. That's not what we're about. We want to do fantastic work. By the way, if it gets recognized, that's amazing. I think it's really – and I've won a lot of those. I'm trying to think of all the other awards we've won. When you're involved with one specific print shop really way back early in my career, if it's in Pennsylvania, then you have that local – I forget what they're even called. But the one he held up, there you go to one night, and they give out 100 plaques. And you want to see how many you'd get, and you'd compete. Yes, I don't know if they're all worthy, but again, for me, it was always getting recognition, not only with clients, but within my industry. Someone who could be trusted and continuously did good work all the time.

[0:20:35] DC: Yes, continuously.

[0:20:37] NT: Yes, that. It was important for me, because you're coming up in your career, and you're trying to – you kind of set yourself apart. I was never a salesman. I mean, I guess that was my job. I ran sales forces for big companies in New York, but that's not what I wanted to do. I want to do what I'm doing now. That really set me and my brand, and by extension, my last company in this company apart, not better, not worse. But there are people that are looking for

what we do. I think, the awards, bring them this way. It's a conversation for another day. But there's a couple of associations, and I'm really buried in the design community that have done the same thing. It's a good place to get recognized by the people that you want to be around. The only guy that can make things in a room full of 175 designers and your work is there. That's fantastic. Well, the same thing is true of any awards, I think. I don't know if that answered your question.

[0:21:29] DC: I'm going to take a leap here and say that both of you actually had brick-and-mortar offices. Every single one of your awards would be hanging on the wall, would be showcased. Just like when you walk into an advertising agency, the awards are on one of two places only. They are either right at the front where everybody walking in can go, "Oh my God, look at this. Look at this." Or they're right outside the president's office.

[0:21:56] NT: I've had that, and David has too. I think we both had brick-and-mortar. And you're right, it's right where everybody can see when you walk in.

[0:22:03] DC: Yes. You want people to see it, which leads me to my next question, which is, how do you promote your wins with current and potential customers? To your point, David, everybody might not be connected with you on social media, so that is certainly one channel, but not the only one. So, let's start with you, David.

[0:22:23] DD: Yes. Well, recently, we won the Gold Award for this beautiful piece. The conversation is great, just to give you a little history of sitting with a designer and having an idea of what she wants to do. Then, seeing if we can create something that's impossible. That piece that we worked on was a gold foil, a digital foil. What I was looking at is more less of a reflection of light, but more of a refraction of light, because it has a slight emotion to it. Light is going to hit it in a different way as you move it around.

[0:23:01] DC: Didn't we discuss that project on the podcast where you were trying to create motion, like a motion effect would be?

[0:23:08] DD: Yes.

[0:23:09] DC: So yes, we actually discussed that. So, just bring it back full circle.

[0:23:13] DD: Yes. Once I got that award, I'm lucky for the people that happen to be in the room as well. I wasn't there. I immediately got a text message saying, you won the Gold Award in this category. And I say, "Hey, that's great." I took the piece, and I made a little video of it, but it wasn't great. But then, other people began to talk about it. On social media, I mean, for me and LinkedIn, that's how you begin to reach other people, is by having your friends and your colleagues beginning to talk about it, and tag one another. That one piece, I have to say out of every and all awards I've won has gotten the most attention in the shortest amount of time, and it still does. The last piece that I got, that was like that was *Breaking Bad* box that I had done, and that still gets attention now because of social media.

[0:24:17] DC: Okay. When you are having meetings with new customers or potential customers, or your current customers, I mean, isn't it a way to say, "Look, we should add some shiny stuff to this. I just won an award" or "Hey, we should kind of create this out of this box piece that I happen to have won that award doing something like that at some point in time"?

[0:24:41] DD: Yes. Matter of fact, yesterday, I met with two people I haven't worked with in a really long time. We met at a hamburger place in Soho. I maybe brought maybe seven or eight pieces with me, that I thought was substantial. That was the first piece that I brought out because that piece will start the conversation as to what are our new techniques. As far as I'm concerned, this equipment is all over the world, but so few people really know about it. So, you're giving them the opportunity, especially people since the pandemic, that are not in an office and not getting visited. And they moved outside of New York State, and now they live in Oregon, or what have you, and they don't have that kind of exposure.

For me, it's a means of planting a seed for the future of what we're doing. It does come back. Truthfully, I feel very conscious of saying, "I won this award, it won Gold." Because everybody says, "Congratulations, congratulations." I'm not that, I just want to share it with you. I don't need to be congratulated on it. I kind of shy away from that. I'm happy to hear what people have to say.

[0:25:53] DC: Well, Noel and I will have a separate conversation with you about that after.

[0:25:59] NT: But you said something important really quick, and you did too, Deb. Winning the awards, and then people seeing – any pressure if you win more than one, people get to know who you are. But he described something before, and I mentioned it and you did too. Instead of coming into the room or getting invited like he did the other day, they're open, and they want to hear what he has to say. When you win awards, and you've had success with your work, and they like your work, you're able then to make that suggestion. You said, "Well, hey, maybe we'll do something shiny." When you don't have that, people are like, "No, no, no. You're just the printer, we'll tell you what to do." They come to us with an open mind, and they want our input, which is huge.

Winning the awards for me over the years, and doing work that people have seen, and recognize over and over. They come with a different attitude. They are open-minded, and then, we can do – I can do what I do. If they come and they tell me, "This is exactly what I want you to do. Yes, that's great. That won't work, do this." Well, I'm not the guy for that. That's great. You got it all figured out.

By doing good work, and winning awards, I guess is what I'm saying, and it's what he described. People want to hear his take on it. They may sit down for a half hour and go, "This is what we're thinking." But then, they wonder, "What do you think, David?" To get that, "What do you think, Noel?" or "What do you think, David?" Those awards were part of what got us to the point where we get trusted? Would you agree, David?

[0:27:20] DD: Yes. I'm going to say that there's nothing, nothing better, easier in a sales presentation than being pre-qualified before you walk in.

[0:27:30] NT: That's what I'm describing.

[0:27:31] DC: That's what I was going to say too.

[0:27:34] NT: They have an expectation, and they want to hear more, as compared to knocking on their door and saying, "Hey, I want to show you samples." It's completely different.

[BREAK]

[0:27:47] DC: Printspiration is streaming across the Printerverse on the Project Peacock Network, and our mission to provide education and resources for print customers, students, and printers around the world has never been more accessible. Watch what you want, when you want, where you want. It's free. Visit ProjectPeacock.TV to access original programming, and replays from our online events. Learn about the Peacock partners and companies featured in our shows. Join our mailing list to learn about new episode premieres, and series launches, and create a free account to make watchlists. Ready for your close-up? Get your Peacock show on air by visiting ProjectPeacock.TV and request your partnership proposal today. Peacock long and prosper.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:28:40] DC: I want to just put a little spin on that, and then go back to the question for Noel. Winning an award is actually being validated by other people. You're not saying, "I'm so great." You're saying, "These are the people said I'm so great." So, you're just passing along information at this point, which really takes it out of being about you, and being humble about it. And should allow you to lead with being proud that you were recognized by this organization, this paper company, this whatever it happens to be. I'm just saying, you could be a little louder about it without it coming back, and you taking it on that you're being egotistical about it. You're not being humble about it.

Agencies, I'm saying, I don't want a humble printer. I want someone who wants to win awards. It's like, "Let's win awards, and look at all the awards I wanted. Let's do something out of the box, and different, new, and push the limits. I want that and I want someone to be passionate about that." Noel, how do you promote your wins with your current customers, maybe let them know what's going on, and potential ones?

[0:29:56] NT: I think I like to keep it low-key, even though there's a lot there. Particularly, when people don't know, they know what you've done. I kind of love that when they're like, "Yeah" they're explaining, and I'm like, they don't know what I know, or what I've wanted, or what I've done. And they're describing what went wrong and everything else. I think that's a far better way to go about it, to have that in the bag, and then slowly pull it out and go, "Oh, yeah, I know that piece." And you go, "Wait a minute, you did that?"

I'm telling you, it's a nice to have, it's an ace up your sleeve. If you don't know people, and they start to talk about it. When you've done a great breadth of different kinds of work to be able to show things you actually did. I'm going to come back to something I said before. People can see the most crazy things in the world that were done in a vacuum for no reason, and they're spectacular. No one could pay for them, they're not real jobs. But when you can show somebody something that's special, and someone actually asked you to do that, and push your limits, people want to know, "Well, what was the journey? How did you get to that? How did you decide on that?" But it's real, and – so, I think that's – I'm kind of talking in circles. But that's the way I use it, is to be able to. I'm very fond of showing our work. Like David said, he brought eight pieces.

If I know what I'm walking into, or I love to get them into when they're around, or I had one, a resource center and all of our samples around. I mean, I did this about two years ago in New York. I did a series of talks, people would come in and it was work everywhere. And they were just milling around, looking at it. Finally, someone goes, "Is this all your work?" It was like years, and years of just books. It looks like someone's library. It's not saying, "Go look at my work. Look at this. Look at this. I did that. Look at my award."

They find out, it's like, I'm going to say a funny thing. I was never the best-looking guy in the room, and the prettiest girls got six guys lined up. "Hey, can I meet you? Can I talk to you?" I had to be funny. It has to be their idea that they want to talk to you. "Hey, you're kind of funny." You know what I mean? It's the same in printing. No one's breaking my door down to give me business. But if they see three or four, not only awards, but if say, three or four jobs, and they go, "Your name keeps coming up here."

I had someone do that to me in New York once at an AIGA event. My name – at my old company, she turned around, I was giving my name. She was signing it in front of me. The woman behind her started to sign me in and I gave my name. She goes, "Wait a minute. Tocci – who are you? Why do I see your name everywhere?" I was like, I started laughing, and I go, "We've done something right." I think that, for me, I think that's what it's all about, just to be that, why is it the most fantastic thing in the world when someone – you can feel them trust you, get excited about it, and you collaborate with them to make something, not sell them.

[0:32:45] DC: To be fair, neither of you are hurting for business, right? I think if you were maybe really looking for customers that you would lead with awards a little more. I haven't been to your sites that recently. But I hope that at least in your about us, you do have a little section about awards. Even if you say something along the lines of like, "I'm not being braggy about this, these are actually the spoils of fantastic customer relationships." Which is whether it's a relationship with your actual print customer, or the designer, or the printers that you work with. That is what I want to focus on now. I want to really address the printers out there. Because obviously, a lot of printers listen to our podcast. Why should they partner with their customers for awards? Noel, let's start with you.

[0:33:47] NT: In other words, should they – with their customers, should they encourage their customers to enter?

[0:33:52] DC: Yes. I mean, I don't want to lead you to an answer here. But what I'm trying to say is, how does that further a relationship potentially?

[0:34:03] NT: Well, I think because it's good for the clients. No client comes into a job doing the job. They want to get it done correctly. They want to get it done right. They wanted to achieve the expectations that were set up in design, and marketing, or whoever. If it wins an award, and they get recognized by their peers or the printers get recognized, it cements – when I work for big printing companies, the clients love it. It's a bonus. They don't give you a job going, "And when you're done, I want you to answer this because I want to win an award."

If you call them five months later, and go, "By the way, this was recognized. Your job's all over the place. Hey, would you like to come? Would you like to –" That's a big deal, because then, they feel good about the level of work they're doing. Like you said, the partnership, that really pulls you together. Because these people, this print shop understands me. They translated what I asked them to do into something that got recognized more widely and I won – who doesn't like to win awards unless it's proprietary or something. But other than that –

[0:35:05] DC: Well, apparently you, because you don't talk about it with anybody?

[0:35:09] NT: No, but I would encourage printers, well, to do it and to feel good about letting their clients know. I mean, after the fact. But, I mean, sometimes you're getting excited, you're in the middle of a job. You don't mean it. But I've said, I got, "Man, this is an award winner. This thing, this is something. Wait until I show – " Getting your clients excited about what they're doing, because sometimes they think they're just hiring you when you hire a printer. That's the problem sometimes, they get upset with printers like, "Well, it's just my job. I take in files and I do it. I do it beautifully. It's correct. It's technically perfect."

It's okay to get excited about it. It's okay to get your client excited about their job and you doing it. I think that's something that people don't do enough of, and awards fall in that category. It's not, well, I'm exchanging a product or service for a monetary remuneration. Yes, we know all that. But who doesn't love their printer who gets excited about it? "Look at this, we're going to launch. Look what I brought. Look at this. I told you that was the right paper." And that says, "Well, I designed it." That's good stuff. That, I can't quantify it. You can't quantify the value in that, but it's there.

[0:36:20] DC: I think you can because you keep getting new business. David?

[0:36:23] DD: Well, think of the printer going to the client, and saying, "Let's produce a piece, and let's gear it to an award." Well, there's a different mindset there. The mindset is collective now. For a printer to say that to a client, or to lead them in that direction means that they have more attention for what's going on with that production than a commodity job that comes in and goes out. The mindset here is, we're going to work closer together, we're probably going to learn more about each other, we're going to investigate technique, we're going to investigate papers, and we're going to – in most cases, both of them are learning more about each other and whatever they're going to produce.

Without that and without a printer taking the initiative to do that, you're not going to be able to get to the next one. You have to start somewhere. That leads to more desire to produce better type of work. To get the name and the reputation of saying that that's the direction we're going in, that attracts more people, more clients to that.

Noel said it, it's the journey of what goes on. To get an award, or to get a plaque, and to get that acrylic thing is all good. But, what you build in getting to that point, I've gone, and I'm going to

give a case in point right now. The one production where I said to the client, "I want to make this an award-winning piece" was back in God's Love, We Deliver in New York City. Delivering food, and one of my clients was on the board. I kept asking him, "I want to do something with you." "Do something with me. What is it? Is it a fundraiser? What is it?" He had these wonderful black and white photographs of his family back in Italy, sitting around, eating food on an old wooden table. We use those, and we did duotones, and tritones, and use golds, and we use different metallic colors. It was an opportunity for us to really, really focus together.

On top of that, it was a tremendous, tremendous magnet for donations. Lastly, in the community of graphic design, it got me recognized, it got my business recognized, because we were giving, and pushing, and people began to really see. I mean it was, I think it was six or seven colors, no process, but it utilized. It had an art quality to it. They were huge, they were big. So, it was great to say, "Yes, I made this calendar."

[0:39:16] DC: Yes, it's really cool.

[BREAK]

[0:39:20] NT: Hi, I'm Noel Tocci, Founder of TocciMade. The printing industry has changed quite a bit, and I've learned a lot since I joined my brother's small, but mighty printing company in Newark, New Jersey, back in 1980. Over the years, while focusing primarily in the design and creative communities, I've come to understand and believe wholeheartedly that powerful, effective, and impactful print communication always lives at the intersection of great design, appropriate materials, and thoughtfully curated execution. Making beautiful work is a journey from concept, or idea, to desired result, TocciMade is here to help you find your way and create work that is not only effective but something you can be proud of. Head to toccimade.com and find out how we can help.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:40:08] DC: The question is, why should printers the customers partner for awards, and talking to printers? To the printers out there, I would say, new business development awards are a great way to knock those doors wide open. Especially if you've bought a new piece of printing

or finishing equipment. Most of the time, those manufacturers do have their own awards, or they have user groups that have awards, and contacting some of your customers, and saying, "We've got this piece of equipment. We want to work with you on a project that best highlights the capabilities and submit for awards. It's good for you, it's good for us."

Also, going out to people who you've had a hard time getting in touch with, or a level up in the creativity that – if you've bought a new press with amazing capabilities, and you're printing, let's say transactional statements, you might want to say, "Hey, let's go find someone else out there that can help us push the limits with these new digital and inkjet presses, and things of that nature. Reaching out to design firms and marketing firms. and letting them know that we, the printer have identified you as someone who's the top of your field, and we have this technology that is the latest and greatest in the printing industry. We've also identified these five awards, and we want to work with you to create projects for them.

Which leads me to my next question, is, how do you identify the best award programs and the partners to participate? Before we get into that, I do want to go back to something that David said, way in the beginning. For the most part, I'm not sure how it works with the manufacturers. I don't believe there's any fees to submit awards to the manufacturers. But for other formal awards programs, it is a business. There is a fee to submit for awards. In some cases, I would suggest that printers say, "Hey, we will enter this piece for you," and not ask customers for money. But if there's a bunch of them, go up to your customer in the beginning of the year, and say, "We've identified these four awards programs. We think we could work together to create award-winning pieces for any of them. We want to have skin in the game, so we can both chip in for it."

Usually, it's the printers that are submitting them. Unless, it's like a Clio Award or a Cannes Award, the agencies, and things like that. But, I still think that there's a really big opportunity there to really map out the whole year, just do the research on the programs that are out there, and start pitching early to at least get people thinking about it. We've discussed this before that. When I worked in advertising, I had my dream drawer. The stuff I couldn't afford to do, or I didn't have the right clients at the right time. But there were things in there that we always wanted to try. And hearing that, potentially, we could do something in that dream drawer. Under the banner of winning an award for it, you get much more support from everybody to invest in that project.

So, Noel, how do you identify the awards programs to enter and the partners that you work with to participate?

[0:43:52] NT: Well, for me, I think it's easy. I think it depends on what, and I love the word David uses, production, what it encompasses. If it is substrate, or paper-intensive, that's maybe the way you want to go with the mills. I show the mills almost everything I do in their paper and go. "Anything? Anything?" It's not even for an award, it's for a buy, and that's a whole another subject, but that gets you a lot of work. They show you work. In David's case, it does a lot more in the embellishment side, I do a fair amount. That makes sense to go toward that crowd and where he won that Gold Leaf Award, it was, right? Or if it's about execution. I think, the piece itself will tell you what kind of a word it should be. You know what I mean? This is all about the paper, it's a paper award. If it's all about everything, maybe it's the Graphic Arts Association.

That's what I think. I look at it and go, "What's special about this?" I think, one particular group might think that, particularly, like embellishments. Like, "Wow." We all know there's MGI, and Scodix, and all of this, and with old fashioned, letterpress, and everything. But when you take it, and you mix all those worlds, and you do something, the embellishment people go, "And that's where that belongs." I think I'm answering your question.

[0:45:08] DC: Yes, you are.

[0:45:09] NT: Sometimes I do a lot of photography work for fashion photographers and stuff. Now, we're pushing the limit going on papers that you would like. These two things don't belong together, and I cannot help myself. So, when you make it happen – I mean, I got upset with Tiffany's and Harry Winston, "No, you can't put diamonds on." "Yes? Watch this" That becomes about process, but it's also about the substrate. I think it has to be apropos. Where does it make the most sense? Who would be the most awed by it? What award group would go, "Whoa. Now, you're talking our language"? I think that that's – and I don't think about entering them unless it gets – and that's how I think about it. I go, "Wow, I didn't know that that embellishment was going to look that good." So it just draws you to that end of the production or the project.

[0:46:00] DC: You think about it during and after, not before?

[0:46:04] NT: Yes. I look at where the star is. There's always a star in a job, right? Was it the paper? Is it the process? Wow, how the heck did we get ink printing that sharp on that substrate that way? How did we get that feel and look? Then, that kind of drives me towards, "Well, who would be interested in this?" Because something is the star, everything has to look good, and be commensurate, and work together. But let's be honest, right?

When you see some of those things that David's done, and you hold them in the light, and they're shimmering, it's all about what's making that happen. Though, the paper is amazing, but that's not what you're thinking about. I don't know, that's just the way I think about it. Sometimes you don't know, you get deep into it, and you're like, when it's just, you're hitting on all cylinders. Let's be honest, it's manufacturing. There's a lot of different steps. Sometimes everything doesn't go as perfect, there's hiccups. But every now and then, it's like when Tiger Woods or somebody is on, and the ball just keeps going in the hall, you get to this other thing. It's the object it's supposed to be. You think about what's available. But I never think as much about like, you're right, there's a whole another world. The clients have a whole set of awards they'd like to win. I think it's incumbent upon them too to say something early on, there's nothing wrong with it, and go, "Hey, this thing is half what I think it's going to be. I want to enter it, because my art – we're a big law firm, but we do better than that." They have competitors and stuff, and we went out to them. They won that award last year, and we should have. Sometimes they go into it that way. What are going to do to blow them away?

[0:47:36] DC: But that's kind of what I'm saying. If you do research, and say, "Okay. Next year, as you guys, it's my goal for my company to win four awards working with my clients." Then, you identify, I want to do one for embellishments, I want to do one for digital printing, I want to do one for some sort of digital bridge to some paper to a digital experience, whatever it might be. These things have deadlines for submissions. So, there has to be planning.

Now, certainly, I've had the honor of judging a lot of printing contests. Sometimes, the criteria is actually from the year – it spans a little from the year before, into the year you're in, because people can't necessarily plan it that way. But if you can, you have an advantage in timing, in testing, in trying different techniques. David, how do you identify the best award programs, and or partners to participate since you've taken it back up the last three years?

[0:48:43] DD: Well, you have a direction that you want to go in. You're hopefully going to be able to talk to the client into swaying in that direction, maybe use that technique. But my feeling is that, as you get into it, and you're doing the production, you learn new things about it, that might give you a new direction. It might be even changing the paper, or changing substrate that you're using, or changing an ink that you're using. That to me is the "aha" moment. To go in with a preconceived, "I'm going to go for this award." I'd much rather see how it develops together. I've never gone into it saying, "I'm going to go for this award." It's always manifested itself through the production, and the things that we learned about it during. Then you have a great story to tell as well. This is how we got to it.

[0:49:36] DC: You do, but I just want to say that, say you're going along, you're talking to your customer, and you just know that this thing is going to be spectacular, right? But there's no foil on it, or it's on coated paper or uncoated paper. If you can just add a little foil to it, or you can make it on coated paper or uncoated paper, knowing that that will allow you to submit it for an award. I'm sorry, but speaking from where I sat in an advertising agency. Unless that there was a brand standard that I was going to go to advertising production jail for because I didn't adhere to it. Hell, yeah, change the paper, put the foil. I can get that approved as long as we're going to submit it for awards.

[0:50:27] DD: Yes. In that school of thought, if you go in and you have a client that uses standard paper, or likes a standard paper, and you can introduce them to a new paper. Like the other day, I saw Gmund has all these offset papers, and they have great formation on it. It's an expensive paper. But now, I'm dying. Now that I heard that, I got to put something down on that paper. Well, if you find the right client to do that with, to collaborate with, and then boom, you're doing it.

[0:50:58] DC: Yes. But what I'm saying is, if you find the right client, even if it's a prospect, and say, "Hi, I want to work with you to win an award using this paper. Can we talk about this?"

[0:51:09] DD: That's a big draw.

[0:51:11] DC: It is, it really is, David. You guys, I love you both so much, because you're both award-winning printers. I mean, tons of awards, and you're being so humble about it. But I think

that's because you're not hungry. You're not scraping for that next job to go on the press. You know what I'm saying?

[0:51:32] DD: You better work that way. When you are pushing and you're desperate, permeate, you can feel it. When you're just doing – when I'm the busiest and I'm not trying to find new work is when I get buried in it. When you're looking for it it's because you're doing – people recognize it. You know what I mean? You can kind of go looking for it. It kind of finds you. The more good work you do, and of course, get recognized for it. People will find you and they'll want what you're already doing, not trying to make something you don't want to do.

[0:52:04] DC: But most printers will speak to you about, "Hi, I've got the best quality, the best price, and the best service." Instead of saying, "Hi, I want to win an award with you." I'm like, "What? An award. Tell me more." If you're telling me about price, quality, and service, I'm like, "Whatever, dude. Goodbye."

[0:52:23] DD: But you're right, way back, printers use their new press, and all the pictures of their presses. We got the wama-jama 5000. Nobody cares. You come and you go, "What do you do?" We help you do what you're trying to do, and we can win you an award."

[0:52:37] DC: We win awards.

[0:52:38] DD: The work we do is recognized by our peers, our clients, and people everywhere. When we do it, it gets recognized.

[0:52:46] DC: To your most excellent point, that press that's up on that website, I would put all the awards. I've never won off that press on that site, and take a picture of that, and say this is what we can do for you, or maybe not such a declarative statement, but the possibility is here for you. David, final words. Awards, yay or nay?

[0:53:10] DD: Yay. As I said that for years, I kind of like backed out from them, didn't pay any attention. But, I can see just over the last two years, what it's brought in for me, I am certainly overwhelmed by the response that I get. Not necessarily by the people who give the award, but

the people who then see it then after. I'm into that glitz and glitter right now. They're going to start focusing on what else I can do.

[0:53:35] DC: I think I knew that you had won that award shortly after you had won it. Because I was on LinkedIn at that moment. I also saw a press release. I'm sure there was an article written about it in PostPress Magazine. So, I mean, it's going to be the gift that keeps on giving for sure.

[0:53:50] DD: This morning, I saw Scodix congratulated me on that.

[0:53:55] DC: There you go.

[0:53:56] DD: They must like it too.

[0:53:58] NT: Did you use Scodix?

[0:53:59] DD: I use Scodix, yes. I use Scodix, yes.

[0:54:02] DC: That's okay. That's fair. Noel, awards, yay or nay? Are you going to start telling people that you win them all the time?

[0:54:12] NT: Yes, double yay. Yes, for sure. I'm really proud of them. I just never know how to – you know what I mean? It sounds like, "Oh, look at me. Look at all my medals."

[0:54:23] DC: That's what you're allowed to do with the awards.

[0:54:24] NT: I don't know, but it's so nice when other people do it. No, I know.

[0:54:27] DC: Okay. But other people could do it to you.

[0:54:30] NT: David does it in a great way. I just don't, I don't know. But yes, yay, double yay. mean, they're a big part of the reputation I built.

[0:54:39] DC: Okay. I've been working on you about digital printing, and now I'm going to work on you about –

[0:54:43] DD: Oh, I got stuff to show you.

[0:54:45] DC: Your awards. Okay. I'm very proud. So, I'm going to check your websites in a couple of weeks and see if you guys have added anything about your awards up there. I'm going to keep harassing you until I see it because I want everybody to know how awesome you are. That is a very simple way. Noel, without having to speak about it at all. Just take a photo of your award case, put it in the background of a picture, like anybody else might do.

[0:55:17] NT: You're right because everybody wants to be paid, obviously. But people like us, we want to be recognized for our ability and our –

[0:55:24] DC: Do you want to work with a producer or Grammy Award-winning producer?

[0:55:29] NT: Yes, you're right.

[0:55:30] DC: Do you want to go to a restaurant or a Michelin-star restaurant? I'm going to slap the humble out of both of you.

[0:55:38] NT: I need you to be. You should be our agent.

[0:55:41] DD: You're hired.

[0:55:42] DC: Honestly, I should. Okay.

[0:55:43] NT: You're hired, yes.

[0:55:44] DC: Hopefully this podcast helps a bit with that, because everybody can hear that both of you were not braggadocious about this at all. You're being humble about it. But you have the goods and you should promote it. Noel, final words.

[0:56:00] NT: But a lot of printers listen and they should know it. It's not something to be, "We don't need any more plaques on our wall." Yes, in your paneled conference room. No, maybe you don't. But you need to talk. If you won those plaques, you should be talking about what you won them for, and what the differentiation is between you and the people that didn't do the job. You know what I mean. That to me is the most important part. You know you're talking to an award winner. My job is getting done by an award winner. It's not about the picture with the plaque, but to win that, you must have done something that was better than the other guy. Or not even better, that maybe you listened longer, maybe you thought about it.

[0:56:42] DC: Better is why you win an award, Noel, that's why you do it.

[0:56:45] NT: I agree.

[0:56:46] DC: For the final thing. I just want to say that, when I film my episodes for Project Peacock TV, which is Printspriration for the people, so that print customers and printers know all the possibilities that are available now in printing. We film in print shops. I make sure I had a B roll of all of their awards because I think it's super important that people know that you can be part of this system too by collaborating with customers, and your partners, and your paper suppliers. And when everything comes together, you get an award.

Thank you guys so much. I hope that everybody has gotten something out of this. If you've won an award lately, next time you see this posted out on social media, let us know so we can celebrate with you. Until next time, everybody. Everything you need to know about Noel and David is in the show notes. Connect with them, hold their feet to the fire, and ask them about awards if you don't see it on their website in a couple of months. Until next time, everybody. Print long, win awards long, and prosper.

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:57:59] 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:

Sappie I Printer of the Year: <https://www.sappi.com/printer-of-the-year>

Print & Graphic Communications Association: <https://printcommunications.org/>

Foil & Specialty Effects Association (FSEA): <https://fsea.com/>

Golden Leaf Awards: <https://fsea.com/gold-leaf-awards/>

David Drucker on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/david-drucker-b1b5946/>

hi-resolution printing and packaging: <https://high-res.com>

Noel Tocci on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/noeltocci/>

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drupa Next Age (drupa DNA): https://www.drupa.com/en/Program/Forums/drupa_next_age