

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:00] DC: Today, on The Print Report, live from hall seven, drupa DNA, drupa Next Age.

[0:00:05] PM: This time, we're going to be talking about integration platforms with the charming Mr. Tom from Four Pees. He's going to talk to us about Atomyx

[0:00:17] DC: Welcome to The Print Report with Deborah Corn and Pat McGrew. All the print that fit for news.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:26] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. Here with The Print Report podcast, which means, I am here with my printing reporting colleague, Pat McGrew. Hello, Pat McGrew.

[0:00:40] PM: I'm the one with my feet on the ground.

[0:00:41] DC: You are. You've been running all over drupa today.

[0:00:44] PM: Yes. Yesterday was 8.43 miles. We'll see what it is today. So, I'm doing the Cindy Van Luyck marathon method of drupa.

[0:00:54] DC: Well, the good news is that our current guest is actually in this hall.

[0:01:00] PM: Sitting with us.

[0:01:00] DC: Yes. Took a space at drupa DNA, Four Pees, and Callas, and Atomyx kind of a combo –

[0:01:08] PM: Combo booths.

[0:01:09] DC: – of booths over there. Ever since I've been in here, it has been crowded. But what I've noticed from my point of view is the intensity of the conversations. These weren't just

like, hi, shake your hand, what do you do? Walk around. Even if it started that way, the team over there has been able to at least entice people enough to sit down and have conversations. I've seen people in there for quite a long time. So, I'm really excited that we're sharing more information about these companies today. Since you handle the technical aspects of our relationship, I'm going to pass over more of the hosting means to you, and I'll chime in as appropriate.

[0:01:54] PM: Oh, yes. We'll pull you in. So, Tom Peire, you are somebody who lives, eats, sleeps, and breathes the technology world. I think of Four Pees as the magic in solutions, because you're smart people. But you took a lot of your magic pixie dust, sprinkled it across your programming teams, looked at what you really know how to do, and created a whole new product out of it. In 2024, that's a little risky proposition, I think, trying to bring a whole new idea and software to the market. So, could you tell us a little bit about what Four Pees does, but also, this really cool new idea you have for how to integrate software for printers?

[0:02:41] TP: Yes, sure. As Four Pees, we've got a background as a distributor. So, as such, we're the distributor, the international distributor for the Callas products. Callas develops core PDF technologies. While PDF might have become somewhat of a commodity in the market today, it is still a necessity. I think that the evolutions that you see and how you can do more of the nitty-gritty details in automating some of the PDF processing, Callas again, is focusing on the core technology. As Four Pees, we are an integrator, or to use a more expensive term, we're a digital transformation agency.

[0:03:21] PM: Oh, I like that. Okay. That \$10 word when \$1 word will do. Okay.

[0:03:26] TP: Yes, exactly. What we really do is we help printers transform digitally. So, make sure that they get their business online, but also make sure that we get the connection going between the different online order sources that they have with their on-premise or cloud-based tools as well. So, we really define what are the needs. We look at what are the needs that a printer has to streamline the entire order and production flow together and to have all these things connected.

[0:03:59] PM: But then, out of that, you coined a term, or at least, I'm going to give you credit for coining a term that I came to embrace back in February when you launched Atomyx. Integration

platform as a service. We're so used to the AASs across the workflow universe. Every one of them sounds interesting, but this one really intrigued me because it's a deliberate desire to do digital transformation by integration of diverse partners.

[0:04:29] TP: Yes. The integration platform as a service is not a term that we've invented in one way or the other. If you look at the general IT industry, there are integration platforms as a service out there. If you look at platforms like Zapier, or Airtable, or Workato, Workato, no matter how you want to call it.

[0:04:48] PM: I guess that's true.

[0:04:49] TP: These platforms, they're out there. The challenge with those from a print industry point of view is that they integrate, and they connect generic tools and platforms. They connect the CRMs and the Google workspaces of this world. However, they do not connect to the industry-specific tools that we use. They don't necessarily connect to specific web-to-print systems, some of the online platforms, print platforms that are out there, like Cloud Printer, or like Gelato, or others. They also don't connect to DMIS systems that we know.

From an integration point of view, those generic tools and connecting to those generic tools becomes more and more important because we see an adoption of more generic tools as well. However, they don't make sense if you don't connect to the industry-specific tools as well.

[0:05:38] PM: So, as you were working towards Atomyx, you were working with printers that are part of your family, the people that you help regularly. They came to the launch event in February in Gent. I had a chance to talk with some of them, and some of them kind of knew they were going to be in for a wild ride, trying to figure out how to productize some things that they understood. But you broke it into three components that made a lot of sense, in terms of the layers of things that you could integrate. Could you explain a little bit about that Atomyx framework?

[0:06:19] TP: Yes, sure. Atomyx Manage really is the core of the platform where we really talk about that integration platform as a service, where based on the experience that we have as an integrator, we've built a couple of core functionalities in Atomyx. The first one is connectivity, it is really connecting to all these different platforms and tools that a printer is using to facilitate data

exchange. Data exchange then becomes important because, when we talk in the print industry about data, we very often talk about artwork data. Whereas, the administrative and the production-related information and the exchange on where is my job, what is the status, how do I use some of that information downstream further in production to automate certain processes, or to provide even operators with the information that they need to correctly treat with a certain order or job? That is a very important aspect.

Atomyx Manage kind of productizes that by creating a plug-in infrastructure that makes it easy to connect to those different platforms, so that people don't have to worry about what is – do I use JDF? Do I use an API? What is the connection and the exchange that I have between these different platforms?

[0:07:40] PM: There are layers. So, there's Atomyx Manage, and then there's Atomyx Prepare?

[0:07:45] TP: Yes. Again, when people talk about data, artwork data is an essential part of data in the print industry. Atomyx Prepare then handles that artwork processing. Artwork reprocessing today, very often happens on premise. You have locally installed legacy software tools like pdfToolbox that will actually do the processing of that artwork. However, today, more and more of the collection of the artwork data happens online. It happens in an e-commerce store, it happens in a job submission portal.

What we see today is that there's a lot of back and forth between cloud online and on-premise. People take in files from an online platform, they take it down on-premise to process it, and then send it back to the cloud. That would not be an example of efficiency. What we've built with Atomyx Prepare is, we've used that Callas core technology, and we've put that on fully scalable cloud infrastructure. So, if you want to process files in the cloud, A, you don't have to worry about licensing, you don't have to worry about infrastructure, and will my infrastructure be able to handle certain peak volumes. and things like that. And from an e-commerce or a cloud platform point of view, I can have developers directly talk to an API, something that they know, rather than having to talk to a clunky other means of integrating that technology.

[0:09:18] PM: Before drag deeper back into this conversation. There's a third layer. What's the third Atomyx layer?

[0:09:24] TP: Yes. Atomyx Layout is the third layer, that is very much in an R&D phase at this moment. What we've seen is that, if I go back to what we really want to achieve with atomics is, we want to enable printers to make a transition from mass production to mass customization. In order to do that, you need to be in the cloud, you need to have that connectivity, you need to facilitate the data exchange without human intervention. You need to have that scalability from an artwork processing point of view.

However, you also need to be able to efficiently produce a quantity of one. That's where Atomyx Layout really comes in, is how can I combine different orders together, how can I do ganging and nesting? But in the longer term, the vision that we have for Atomyx Layout is that, it becomes also much more of an estimation tool. You can look at that as, should I process this order internally? Do I have the equipment to process that internally? What are my costs to produce that internally? Maybe for certain commodity products, business cards, roll-up banners, I actually might find a supplier online that is able to produce that order more efficiently. So, it really is a cost calculation tool that is going to enable me to dynamically manage pricing and get a better insight in that and route jobs intelligently, rather than just having to produce them myself because I took the order.

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[0:11:50] PM: Deborah, he said the keywords that I associate with you. Mass customization.

[0:11:56] DC: Yes, I made notes.

[0:11:57] PM: Just made your little ears perk up there.

[0:11:59] DC: Yes, customization, versioning.

[0:12:01] PM: Anything that makes a printer more efficient.

[0:12:04] DC: Yes. Well, it also opens up more opportunities for the customers too. I mean, all of that you were all talking about is actually manifesting in a print sample here at the show, called the REACT Magazine that you have going. I mean, it's in every hall. I've seen it everywhere, and you're showing off the software by producing this really cool piece of content that is showing the different versions. That's also one of the weird things. I'm really happy that you did that. Because most of the time, they're like, "Look, this is a personalized piece." I'm like, "Well, unless I see another one, I know what's personalized." I'm like, "Thank you for putting my name on it, but you're telling me that there's different colors out in the market or something." I mean, you have a lot of little elements on there that are really interesting.

[0:12:50] PM: With the REACT Magazine came out of the launch event really. The idea was that, they created a launch event for Atomyx that was sort of like – it was a big workflow love fest. The people who, your clients who came, your partners who came, some of us workflow hangers-on who came, we had a chance to share education and knowledge with the folks who came. Then, everyone was asked to write an article that was consistent with what we were talking about at the event. Out of that was content created for a magazine.

But I talked to Cindy into doing something, Cindy Van Luyck is the marketing manager, and I talked her into doing something she hadn't originally thought of, which was create a version of the magazine where all the content was identical in all three versions. But we sorted different ways and different magazine covers.

[0:13:44] DC: Like AB testing. I mean, it makes total sense.

[0:13:45] PM: In our case, ABC testing. What we've had here in hall seven, it's been funny to watch people pick it up. Because they'll look and they'll go, "Well, wait. That one's got a different

cover, it must be different." I'm not going to tell them otherwise. It's the discovery when they go, "Wait a minute, I saw that article in the other one." And they just are sorted different ways depending on how a customer might use them. From a mass customization story, that's actually kind of what we did. We took all this common content and we mass customized it.

[0:14:20] DC: I think it's super important to show examples like that because print customers don't realize all of the opportunities that they have with what is customization, what is personalization. In this particular case, it could just be that the first article I see is about buying print or designing for print. The first article a printer might see is, how to talk about this with your customers. Whether or not you include that piece of content in my personal magazine or not, it's still the call out on the cover that might be what makes me pick it up, and you win at that point.

I'm just really happy that this drupa might be – maybe we should dub it the smart drupa, because everybody is really carefully considering the samples that they're putting out in the world. And we have Tom, I have to say, your REACT Magazine has a little life of its own. I think we've mentioned it on almost every podcast.

[0:15:23] PM: I think every single podcast.

[0:15:25] DC: Because it's a perfect example of the marriage of creativity, technology, and great printing and finishing partners.

[0:15:33] PM: Could you talk about your partners? Because it takes a village, and you've created a pretty cool village.

[0:15:40] TP: Well, it's a small village to start with, and we really want to build it into a million-people city. But what we're showing is. we're showing at drupa with Atomyx kind of proof of concept of where we want to go, where we are, through Atomyx Manage, connecting to different order sources together. Deb was just talking about opportunities that are out there. Online has often been regarded by printers as a threat. We believe, and certainly today, more than ever, that there are many opportunities. If people talk about online, they think, "Oh, I should open my own web store and have my own e-commerce out there." Yes, that certainly is one of the opportunities. But today, you have the opportunity to also connect to the growing number of

online platforms that are out there. So, any mid-sized printer could connect to these online platforms, and serve as a print service provider to these people. That is certainly an opportunity.

We're connecting to Infigo as a dedicated e-commerce front that people could have. But we're also showing a connection to Cloud Printer as a cloud printing network that a printer could connect to. At the same time, we're collecting, and funneling, and unifying the information that comes out of those different platforms. We're pulling that into Atomyx manage, we're providing a unified dashboard on top of that. So, I don't have to go from application to application to see which jobs are coming from there. Then, we're feeding that information into an MIS, an ERP system called Omikai. Omikai is also a cloud-based MIS system. So, if you're multi-site, that makes it very easy to use that same ERP system throughout the different sites that you may have.

But also, there, it's just about data exchange. So, having that data exchange and making the integrations significantly easier than with some of the on-premise technologies that you may have. We do make a connection to on-premise as well, because we're a manufacturing industry, and you will always have on-premise tools that you will need as well. So, we're connecting to Switch as an onsite automation and file-moving tool. But then, we're also making a connection, as an example to Slack, to enable team communication and conversation. You'll see actually orders from these different sources coming in, getting real-time status updates throughout the system, but also communication to the different team members with Slack, and with the dashboard that we provide.

[0:18:21] PM: Then, I also saw that, it was I think in the drupa daily that you're connected and also with DesignNBuy.

[0:18:26] TP: Yes. That is more on the artwork processing part of things. So, Atomyx Prepare, as I mentioned earlier, is that cloud-based, fully scalable artwork processing API. What we see, again, as I mentioned earlier, is for certain types of processes, a lot of back and forth between online and on-premise. I actually met Nidhi, last drupa, eight years ago, and she came to me, and she said, we're really looking for some kind of a tool to process the artwork that is coming out of our online personalization tool. So, they have been looking at different technologies.

While the technologies of Callas, but also some of the other vendors would do what she was looking for, from a deployment point of view, that was an issue. She's a cloud platform, she does not want to integrate legacy software into that platform and worry about, is that going to scale, what does that do with licensing, and all these kinds of things. The fact that now she has an API to talk to and that all she has to worry about, how do I talk to that API? The rest is not my problem was a big advantage.

While I talked about the integration on Atomyx Manage with Omikai to exchange order information, we actually have integrated Atomyx Prepare directly into Omikai as well. So, if a CSR today is using the Omikai MIS system, and he has his order information, he gets the artwork through whatever channel, an email or whatever, he can directly link that PDF file into the MIS system, and get instant feedback on the quality, to printability. But also, the consistency with the order information on the artwork that they've received.

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[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:20:48] PM: Deborah, if you think about what we talked about with printers, they're looking for efficiency, they want to expand their opportunities. So, partnerships with other trade printers is a really great opportunity. But the idea of being able to link your core print production information into your MIS, and have it connect to your business systems is what's going to help printers have every single size run their businesses more efficiently and give them more options.

[0:21:18] DC: I mean, I hear with different ears. I don't hear with the technical ears, I hear with print customer ears. What I'm hearing is that, I can do my work faster, because it can go through. I think this is such an important point of time that printers embrace this. If you just look

at what social media has done to the news, if you're reading a newspaper, although it's long-form journalism, and in most cases, has to be accurate or there could be lawsuits. It is still yesterday's news, in most instances, because the news is happening right now.

Printers have to start thinking more like digital marketers and embracing technology in the way that they can integrate with other platforms and seamlessly allow more opportunities, more things to be added on, more things that they could offer their customers without necessarily having to develop those things, without necessarily having to service those apps or anything like that. So, that's what I'm hearing from you, you're opening up this whole new world of opportunity that could give advantages to marketing agencies and advertising agencies who can jump on a trend. There could be something kind of comical that happens in the world, and they want to use it in some comical tongue-in-cheek advertisement. They want to replace it in People Magazine tomorrow.

Just having the ability to think of your printers more like, "Well, it's going to take me three days to get an estimate for that, and it's going to take me two days to get approved." Just to have them that mindset, I think is really important for the printing industry.

[0:23:13] TP: You talk about marketing, communication, and news when it comes to personalization. You made a link to social media. I think that if you look at megatrends, and this is something that has been going on for a while, people use different ways to try and stand out in one way or another. They want to get an individual way of expressing themselves, people and companies, I would say. So, some of these communication materials, as in, how can I address a specific audience in a specific way? Or, how could I even narrow that down to an individual person? That is what mass customization is about.

But mass customization is also about, how do I turn a commodity product into something that is me, something that I can identify myself with? Print has been very closely linked to the communication industry and the media industry. But I see it more happening towards the manufacturing industry as well. If I want to have a mug with my picture on that, or with my lovers' pictures on that, that would be a little bit less egocentric, probably. I can have that produced in a quantity of one. I don't need to produce 100 of them because that's the minimal quantity that people want. You can diversify that into virtually any imaginable product today.

Today, print is a technology that allows for any commodity product to turn into a unique object. That's where I think a lot of the opportunity lies in the communication aspects, in the packaging aspects of that, but also, in that manufacturing industry into turning these commodity objects, into really personalized objects as well.

[0:25:10] DC: I agree. But what I'm going to do is look and see how long it's going to take. There's going to be some that it's going to take two days before I get it, and there's going to be some that take two weeks before I get it. You're going to know there who's using optimization in their print shops. That becomes a consumer preference, that becomes something that we're used to in the world with digital marketing.

I go to a website in a very timely manner, there are ads following me around. They're still talking to me, they're not waiting two weeks to talk to me. The printing industry has the ability to react that way with customers who want to react that way, for whatever reason. That's what I'm hearing that your tools can help.

[0:25:53] TP: Exactly.

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[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:26:30] PM: Come back to the people you've been talking to. Are they on board with the vision? Had they thought about the vision before you spoke with them?

[0:26:39] TP: Everybody wants to kind of put a theme around every drupa. If you've been doing this for a number of editions, there's also, "Oh, this was that drupa, and that drupa, and that

drupa." What I hear, but also what I see on some of the vendors that are here today is, I would corner this as the platform and connectivity drupa. If you look at some of the players, if you look at the Gelatos, the Cloud Printers of this world, they were not here eight years ago. They did not exist. Look at the size of booth that they have and the interest that they can generate.

[0:27:12] DC: And success.

[0:27:12] TP: Yes. I think that that's where we have a role to play. I think that each of these platforms, they capture demand, and that is interesting. Their task is to connect that demand to actually manufacturing capabilities. However, as a printer, as a print service provider, I would not want to tie myself in into one of these platforms.

You want to have your own e-commerce platform, you want to connect to some of these other platforms as well. But you want to have multiple order streams, you want to diversify your sales channels that you have. And, you will have to be able to produce efficiently, you will have to provide customer feedback, and therefore, connecting all these different platforms together, funneling in these orders. But also, being able to provide feedback on where is that order in the production process to those platforms. But ultimately, to the one ordering that print product is essential. That is the role that we're playing.

[0:28:17] PM: I love that. Now, as we wrap ourselves up here. I want to ask you to come up with a pithy phrase. Who are the printers who should be talking to you?

[0:28:33] TP: Oh, I'm afraid I'm going to come up with a boring answer when it comes to that.

[0:28:36] PM: We'll take boring too, but we'd like to know.

[0:28:39] TP: Yes. I think it's any mid-sized printer that has a mentality for innovation. I think that that mentality for innovation needs to be embedded in the company. I think that that is important in the sense that any of the projects that we're dealing with, and the way that we look at the business side of things, needs a team that is able to support that transition. I think that that is very important. I think we're looking at mid-sized printers, because typically, you need to have some level of equipment, some kind of team to deal with that, to deal with the project management around how do I integrate, and how do I change, or adapt some of the processes

that I've got internally. So, I believe that that's why we'd say, any mid-sized printer that is looking for new opportunities to grow their business.

[0:29:36] PM: Do I have to be a tech-savvy IT genius to work with you?

[0:29:39] TP: No, that's actually the thing is, as Four Pees, as that digital transformation agency, we try to offload a lot of the technicalities around that. I think that with Atomyx, our goal is to even further lower the barrier of getting into that connectivity by providing that, embedded into the platform.

[0:30:01] PM: For as long as I've known you, I've had one question I have desperately wanted to ask, but I have never asked.

[0:30:05] TP: Well, I'm afraid now.

[0:30:07] DC: I'm afraid too.

[0:30:09] PM: Why Four Pees?

[0:30:12] TP: Yes. That was a very silly idea. We started off actually in the very beginning as a sales and marketing agency for software vendors in the print industry. So, it's the four Ps of marketing that how that came about. But more importantly, it was also an available domain name.

[0:30:33] PM: Ah, yes. We always have that fight.

[0:30:36] DC: I actually heard that yesterday as well. I've had someone had a company name. I'm like, I don't understand what you do. They're like, that's the only one we could get, so we took it. That's so funny. Everything you need to connect with Tom, Atomyx, and Four Pees will be in the show notes. I just want to thank you so much for your time and for your partnership. I look forward to working more with you. I definitely looking forward to going to your event that I didn't go to this year. Until next time, everybody, Four Pees long, Atomyx long and prosper.

[0:31:07] TP: Thank you, Deb. Thank you, Pat.

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:31:10] 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 broadcast. Until next time, thanks for joining us. Print long and prosper.

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Mentioned in This Episode:

drupa: <https://www.drupa.com/>

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

Tom Peire on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/tompeire/>

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

Callas: <https://www.callassoftware.com/>

Atomyx.io: <https://www.atomyx.io/>

Atomyx Manage: <https://www.atomyx.io/en/atomyx-manage>

Atomyx Prepare: <https://www.atomyx.io/en/atomyx-prepare>

Atomyx Layout: <https://www.atomyx.io/en/atomyx-layout>

REACT Magazine: <https://www.fourpees.com/en/news/four-pees-and-hp-join-forces-at-drupa-2024-to-produce-and-print-react-magazine>

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