

[INTRODUCTION]

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

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

**[0:00:07] DC:** Are you stuck in a CMYK rut?

**[0:00:11] DD:** I'm David Drucker, Founder and CEO of highresolution printing and packaging.

**[0:00:16] NT:** I'm Noel Tocci, Founder of Tocci Made Bespoke Print Consulting.

**[0:00:20] DC:** And 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 –

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

[EPISODE]

**[0:00:39] DC:** Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. I am so happy to be with my two creative friends, David Drucker, highresolution printing and packaging, Noel Tocci, Tocci Made. David, hello.

**[0:00:56] DD:** Hey, how are you doing? Great to be back here in front of you, people.

**[0:01:00] DC:** Noel, hello.

**[0:01:02] NT:** Hello. Hi, all. Great to see you, too. I'm anxious for tonight.

**[0:01:06] DC:** We're going to have a very interesting conversation. We just had a little pre-pod conversation. I think something that Noel said really resonates. Our last podcast, the topic was about winning industry awards and submitting work for awards and working with customers on awards and the benefits that that could bring a print shop. We wanted to also look at the flip side of that, or maybe something that even went along with winning the awards, which is what do you do when you have a nightmare on production, and how do you resolve it? Because of the vast and storied experience of David and Noel, we're going to share a story about something that went wrong, how it was resolved, and lessons learned along the way. Let's start with David.

**[0:02:09] DD:** Oh, boy. Yeah. this is going back. I went downstairs to my library and I thought I had one of the pieces that I'd least to be able to show to you guys first. I was doing work between a high-end designer and Jack Morton Productions. This has to be going back, maybe about 25 to 30 years. They had asked me to do a unique, loose-leaf binder, or at that point, the startup of CNBC.

I had looked at a couple of things, but the one thing I had never seen was an acrylic loose-leaf binder. I said, "Hey, I'm willing to go down this road." They were able to sell it. There are many, many prefixes of before you even begin to print. It was done on acrylic. We had to figure out what the hinges are. The hinges were made out of display hinges and they were friction hinges, meaning that the acrylic goes into the hinge on two sides and then it opens and it closes. That allows it to open and close. Right.

When you're working with acrylic, we cut acrylic down to size. When you have acrylic, there is a plastic coating on both sides. You know what happens when you peel off those coatings, it creates static. What we were producing was a frosted cover that said, CNBC knocked out into clear, but the whole background was frosted, and we screen printed. When we screen printed the first color and laid it down, it was great, beautiful, did everything that we wanted to do. But as we got into the production and continued to print, dust started attracting onto the screen and onto the piece itself. We began to see tiny little holes that were in this piece. I had to stop production. I had to figure it out, but I wanted to show the client where we were now.

Now, it was a frosted ink. It was just like a varnish with a little bit of opaque white in it. It was very, very faint. We really had to look through it and study it in order to see those tiny holes. But

it was accepted and we continued the production. By the time we got through drilling and putting in the mechanisms in it and finishing it, I think we might have done maybe 200 or 300 of them. My supplier said to me, "I am no longer doing this production. It was too much of a fight. I don't want to do it any longer." With that, the client said, "We love what you did. We understand what the issues are. We have one now that we want to do identical to it for MSNBC." I was like, "Oh, no."

I had to take what I learned from the first one and put it into the second one and begin to start with a new supplier in screen printing. I look more so for a display screen printer because they have more experience with doing heavy solids. What we wound up doing is we wound up building a room within a room. We wound up taking plastic sheets and surrounding the room and surrounding the press, putting a fan on it, and letting the fan run overnight to try to clear out any dust that was in there. We began to do the second run.

We had a very similar type of experience, but once again, it was quite forgiving to do it. We delivered that and yet, they sent in another job. This was, I think, for Janssen Pharmaceutical, but this was a dark blue color. Now we're screen printing and now you're really beginning to see dots in there. Between setting up the fan and setting up the room, the proper way and having that experience from the last time, we were able to limit it, but we also learned that we had to use a static cloth on all the pieces. Now, there's a centerpiece, which is a spine, there's a front piece and there's a rear piece. They all fit together and they're all being printed. We were able to get through that.

Truthfully, I resigned doing those jobs after that production. We wound up switching to metals and woods and things like that. It was a great experience. The whole thing lasted about the – over the course of maybe four or five months. Because we had so many production issues with each one of these as we went along that I didn't want to live that way anymore. Believe it or not, we've taken on so many more productions that were so intricate and never had been done before. I mean, that's the gig. We got to do it. We got to do it because of the desire of achieving the best.

**[0:07:28] DC:** A question about the printer who quit after 300. Was that the initial quantity that you ordered it for, or was the quantity more than that and they quit mid-job?

**[0:07:38] DD:** No, no, no. It was for 300.

**[0:07:40] DC:** So, then they were like, “We’re out. We’re done.”

**[0:07:43] DD:** Right. You also have to understand that once you screen print, that has to go on a rack. That has to dry. Now you have other elements in the air that are attracted to wet ink and such. We began to find other issues within there in finally putting all the pieces together.

**[0:08:04] DC:** As you were doing the live job, not testing before, or anything like that.

**[0:08:06] DD:** As we were doing live. Yeah.

**[0:08:08] DC:** I mean, it was a long time ago. It's not like you have the tools that you have today, where you could just go in and play around with things and there's definitely more – there's tons of acrylic substrates that could just run through flatbed printers now and things like that.

**[0:08:24] DD:** It's a completely different environment now printing high-end productions like that. We've done and you've seen them. Acrylic invitations and guest invitations, and so on and so forth. This is so unique at the time that it was just one of those things that come home every night, and my wife Judy is like, “What are you doing? Why do you put yourself through that?”

**[0:08:48] DC:** Yeah. I didn't see it, but I heard at drupa that there's a press now that was making, putting acrylics through it and the ink was laying on it as if it was etched, which is going to change the entire award. It's going to disrupt those award people with their acrylics and things like that. Very interesting. I want to know if Noel has any questions, but first, I just want to go back.

When the printer told you, “Here, take your job. Get the hell out of my print shop. Take your fan and get out of here,” did you ever communicate that with your client? When you got the new order, did you then have to go find another printer to help you? How did you navigate that gap in between, “Here it is, delivered. I have a very happy client. I have a printer who won't work with me anymore and now I have another order.”

**[0:09:40] DD:** I was as honest as I possibly could be. I just said, “I’m glad that we’ve gotten through it. It was successful in its own way. Nobody’s ever done this before. But my supplier has just resigned from doing it.” They’re like, “Oh, we have another round for you.” Varick Street had tons of screen printers, but I actually wound up finding somebody in New Jersey, a private little guy who was – if you have the desire to succeed, and you can tell this when you’re working with somebody new and you have a conversation with them and you hear their response, it’s extremely positive, you know you’re going in with someone who’s, no matter what you expect is going to try to achieve the best that they can, and a thinker themselves. The second round became easier. The third round was the easiest because we had already taken care of all those areas of failure.

**[0:10:43] DC:** Noel, any comments, questions for David on his –

**[0:10:46] NT:** Yeah. It’s not my story, but it brought back a little bit of a nightmare for me, probably a really fast, like 17 years ago, we were doing something for a high-end cosmetic company. It was a pocket folder, but it was a mirror, basically, like Miracote. We were trying to run in a press and you can’t, because it can’t read the electronic eye. Not only that we got it to read, but then the press started to scratch it. You breathe on this stuff and it scratches. We quickly moved it and I was going to stamp it. That didn’t work. I silkscreened it and I go, “We solved our problem.” When we solved our problem, it was an August day when it was about 95 degrees.

A guy goes, “Yeah, I put it on and I sent it out of here.” I go, “Wait a minute. Just slipped sheet it?” “No.” Put it in a hot truck and the whole thing bricked. You know what that means, where it sticks together? My point is we went through myriad different kinds of processes to make it work. Because same thing, they said, “Listen, we want you to do this. It has to have these components. Shiny paper, this, that.” But in those days and doing things like that and what David described, especially, I’ve worked with acrylics, it was the Wild West. There’s a lot of great technology now.

You see how he navigated it? He got through it. But some people go, it’s just too painful. It’s the same feeling as the wife had, when she goes, “Why?” I mean, I hear that from my wife once a week. “What are you doing?” You can’t explain why it’s like, you know the guy who bangs his

head against the wall, you go, “Why are you doing that over and over?” He goes, “Because it feels so good when I stop.” Sometimes it feels like that. Once in a while, you if you'd stay at it, you'd find a solution. That was a good story, David.

**[0:12:15] DD:** Happy to share it.

**[0:12:17] DC:** I would assume that we're all pretty good at puzzles and solving riddles and things like that because that's really what it comes down to. I know I used to go into creative briefs sometimes and just walk out of there and say, I have to make seed packs with wildflower seeds and like, what? There's no one to call. There's not 1-800, let's make some seed packs. You have to figure out how to do it. That was actually in a lot of ways, the fun part of the job until it didn't work, or it worked, or you tested it and something happened that was unexpected, which is what this is all about. When we come back, we're going to hear Noel's story.

[MESSAGE]

**[0:13:04] 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 hi-resolution printing. I am an independent creative consultant with access to every printing technology out there.

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

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

**[0:13:48] DC:** Hey, everybody. Welcome back to the podcast. Noel, I'm sure you have some amazing stories of nightmares, only because you push the envelope so much.

**[0:14:01] NT:** Yeah, I do. I think maybe that's the problem. It's a double-edged sword, right? It's what brings people to us, because we just never stop, right? It's also, and I was going to say it a

minute ago, someone told me a long time ago, every job is a custom manufacturer. It's never been done before. We've put press in a paper and a press and printed things, but that exact job, the way that it was dreamed up on that substrate and with those – what you're trying to achieve, it's really the first time. Then people are snowflakes, right? As our designers. They all have something else in mind. It's not like, "Oh, they designed something and that's what they want."

My story is this and it's a brand-new one. I love that it goes from long ago and I have lots of bruises from over the years, but I have one recently and it really took me by surprise. I don't know if it's older. I'm going to start with the lesson learned, is to – you know, when I tried to get good at this business, in the beginning, I wanted to drive a nice car and dress nice and speak well because I just didn't want to get – I didn't know what I was doing. I kept my head down and I tried to learn and I watched and all night in shops and why and how.

Now, I'm supposed to know so much, but we get a little lax sometimes and our process in this case maybe is not all it should be. Have a client, a wonderful client. Last time I did a job for her was probably 10 years ago. She was on 25<sup>th</sup> Street, New York. It was easy. Very discerning. High-end manufacturer of furniture, designer, and manufacturer of high-end furniture. You're talking \$35,000, \$40,000 couches for a five-star hotel, or, you know what I mean? Their stuff is beautiful and it's all custom. Everything from the ground up, it's couture.

We've done things over the years and all of a sudden, out of the blue, she's in California. "Oh, Donna. How are you?" Actually, her assistant called and goes, "I don't know who you are, but I'm talking to printers." The owner goes, "Just find Noel." She found me and she said, "We're going to do a catalog. You did the last one you did." I said, "Oh, I have it here." But I did it nine years ago. It was 24 pages. "Well, now we're talking 88 pages. We want the same paper. We want the same treatment."

I didn't put it on autopilot, but I thought I understood. The thing I overlooked, and I'm going to say it again, I in the old days always had my clients available when they needed to be there on site. I do a lot of work for photographers. I did not take the picture. I can make it technically perfect, but I didn't look through the lens, right? I don't know. It's very, very important to me. "Well, what do you mean?" I'm like, well, let's shadow all over her face. "Oh, no. That's good." Well, I don't know it's good. Having that interaction.

Now, my friend Donna, and she's a friend still, so there's a happy ending. She's in California now and her assistants in California learning the process, doesn't know anything about printing. They started with, I couldn't find the paper. They don't make it anymore for the cover. I bought something else. I ended up buying the cover twice. That's the first problem. It was a sheet that Neenah, one of these European sheets, but Neenah had it and someone else had it. The mill's spinning off. Then the images were photography over a series over maybe the last 15 years, all different lighting and so forth. What do these couches all have in common? Well, they're all this slightly white, beige color. They're not very good photographs but think about how much money they are and they want the ambiance and everything.

I said, what I learned, and I gave them a price and I'm sure it was more. They talked to a couple of the usual suspects in LA. She goes, "No, no. Noel understands." I built in, I did the press proof. I was doing it all the right way, right? Let's take, let's say, a cross-section of 90 images, these and I had to break it down by what's in the shadow area, what's in the – ee get a cross-section of all kinds of images, right? All the right things, the actual paper in, premium paper. Do the press proof. It goes there. Then, the assistant confused it. I mean, she was lovely. But the lingo they were using was very different from what I was used to.

"Oh, they don't have any crunch or something." I said, "Well, they're very open. We open them up, or we sharpen them, because your images weren't good, like unsharp masking." Somehow the lingo got mixed up to the point where we went from the press proof, they told us what they liked and didn't like. We prepped the job, I want to say seven, four, the 88 pages of printing, an oblong book. We went to press. Everybody was feeling good. They kept using these adjectives. Now, they did not come on press. Normally with a customer like this I go, "Like I said, I didn't look through the lens. You got to stand there. Come stand next to me." And they go, "No." Then if they call out something, "What are you talking about? It's too white. It's too black. What's the problem?"

There was this trust, which the good thing was that she trusted me implicitly. The bad thing was she trusted me implicitly. I printed it and I thought it looked amazing. The thing I'm big on, these assets came from a number of years over a long period of time. I made them all feel like they belong together. We did hours and hours of retouching and it's pretty funny that it's sad actually. One of the guys in pre-press, I've worked with him probably over 20 years through two different

shops and I go, "Wait a minute. Where's the black, and this and that?" He goes, "I use the Tocci button." I go, "What?" He goes, "In Photoshop, I actually have a button called Tocci. You always like things the same way." That's the big joke in the press room, right? One day on this press, okay, I go, "You got to take the black down." They go, "I've never heard you say that in 20 years. It's always more black, more black."

I'm telling this, because I was not lost, but I just had this feeling in my gut. I finished the book and it was all – and then I sewed the book. Not only did I sew the book, it was a soft cover, but I added a leaf in the front and a leaf in the back. I full pasted the soft cover front and back, so it opens all the way up. It's like a hardcover. Because that's the problem with perfect bound books and they snap shut. Even with some books, the inlay pulls up and they had crossovers of these couches everywhere. We did all of that, books were bound.

My friend Donna calls me and goes, "I love you, Noel." She goes, "I hate the book." "Okay. I knew I had a feeling." "Yeah. Just, that's not what I meant when I said that. What do we do?" We're old friends, right? This is all talking about, I don't know, a \$60,000 job or something. She goes, "Well, I could –" she didn't mean it disrespectfully, "I could walk away." I go, "What do you mean? You walk away and not pay me?" She goes, "Yeah, but I'm not going to do that." I go, "Well, you can't do that." I said, "Well, okay. You could walk away. I could go all printer on you because you saw two press proofs, you saw three rounds of Epsons, and you signed off on everything, right?" I could look on the back of any printing estimate. I mean, the reality is, you own it. It's yours. Pay me. Have a nice life."

We weren't upset with each other and we go, "Yeah. So, what do you want to do?" I go, "I'm heartbroken." I said, "I want to make it right." She goes, "Well, how do we fix it?" I go, "Well, the book's finished sewing and they're bound. I can't even reprint some of it. I got to throw the book blocks out and start over." I said, "I thought about it. I hump the phone." But I said, "I want to make this right." Because for me, it's a reputation, right? I'm like, "You got to help me with this." At this point, I didn't know if she's going to pay for the extra and not pay for the – I just said, "I got to make it right. It's been a lot of years, but I got to understand what's going on."

I said, "Because between you and me, I just threw this money away. I could have put you both on a plane and you could have stayed in the plaza and put you on a plane and we wouldn't be

standing here, because we never had this problem before, because we weren't dealing with time change in California and holding it up to the phone and this virtual." I'm going, "This is not meant for this kind of work."

I kicked myself in the head because I should have. I'm so busy. I was managing 40 projects. I should have just went, "Time out. I know where this is going. This one really wouldn't fit in my garage." Long story short, I redid it and I had to buy new paper. Not only that, the cover. "I want the same cover as eight years ago." Well, I don't know the files anymore. We reset it and the woman made a mistake on the file, so that – I mean, it was insult after injury. I just did everything perfect. They absolutely loved it.

They mailed it to 3,000 people, some of the top designers and home builders and I got killed. My phone rang three times last week. "I don't know who you are. I was told, you made this book. I want something similar. All of the things, like the way it opens, the attention to detail. It just feels better than – we only need a couple hundred." The other way, I said, "Well, it's going to be more expensive." The other way to do that would be what everybody does. You go on an indigo, you get a perfect bound book and it's great. That's what you do, right? But when you're sewing 22 inches, you're ain't really going on indigo, you're going to run four pagers, right?

Then I'm looking at one, 140-page book is 40 forms of printing and it doesn't make sense. The long story short, I did it. They absolutely loved it. I'm still trying to figure out what happened with the money. I mean, I probably, hopefully, maybe broke even, maybe lost some money. But it was so important. More than that, and it kills me, it hasn't happened to me in forever since I didn't know what I was doing. Apparently, I still don't. I did a real, gave myself a good talking to and I broke my own rules and it always is okay in the end, because of what David described, because we just give it everything we have. Sometimes that's not enough.

You got to listen to yourself and you got to listen to reason. Some things have changed. "Oh, well, no. We lived through COVID, we can do anything." No, some things you can't do. You know what I mean? It's a stupid analogy, but you're not going to do a Rembrandt, unless you dig up Rembrandt, you know what I mean? What are you trying to do? I learned a lesson, but I was very proud of it, the new book. The best part was, as I was nervous, I go, "You could hate this

again.” She goes, “I don't. There's teeny things.” She goes, “I really –” I made a buddy for life. I already had one, I thought. We had a lot of other work out of it.

At the end of the day, it was correct. But I just didn't understand, and we were speaking different languages and I let it go. Do you know what I mean? It's like, we don't have time. We don't have time. Well, we had an extra month, didn't we? That's the lesson learned. I'm sorry to ramble on so much, but it was really that communication and calling the shots. People come to us to call us shots. I was shy if I'm going, “Wait a minute.” Whereas, I normally would, right? It'll work out. It always works out.

Then I remember standing on press and going, “I have no idea. I love this. I have no idea. Now I'm scared.” It's like walking on a cliff and suddenly, oh, now's not a good time to get dizzy. That's my story. I'm done, but my head is down now with all the details the way it used to. I play it, and I think it out. Because it's painful. I won't walk away and I don't want to get in a litigious situation and neither did it. Nobody benefits from that. You know what I mean?

You know what really stuck with me is I just – it's so important to me. This was her world, too. These have to look, it's not even about the money at that point. I don't want my name on it and that sticks with – I feel that way. That's my story.

[MESSAGE]

**[0:25:37] NT:** Hi, I'm Noel Tocci, founder of Tocci Made. The printing industry has changed quite a bit, and I've learned a lot since I joined my brother's small, but mighty printing company in Newark, New Jersey, back in 1980. Over the years, while focusing primarily in the design and creative communities, I've come to understand and believe wholeheartedly that powerful, effective, and impactful print communication always lives at the intersection of great design, appropriate materials, and thoughtfully curated execution. Making beautiful work is a journey from concept, or idea, to desired result, Tocci Made is here to help you find your way and create work that is not only effective but something you can be proud of. Head to [Tocci Made.com](https://www.tocci-made.com) and find out how we can help.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

**[0:26:25] DC:** I'm literally having palpitations over this story. I mean, as you were telling it, I was gasping. I had to put my microphone on mute. What resonated to me the most of all of it was the moment where you had to go printer on her, right? Because I respect that.

**[0:26:47] NT:** Well, when she said, "I can walk away," I said, well –

**[0:26:49] DC:** I know.

**[0:26:50] NT:** That's why you hire me, because I'm not that guy.

**[0:26:53] DC:** I understand that, but I'm just saying, as somebody who worked at advertising agencies with big, giant, multi, multi-million dollar contracts, every once in a while, you think you can get away with say, things like that, until the printer is like –

**[0:27:07] NT:** Yeah. She's like, "It's okay. What do we do?"

**[0:27:10] DC:** Right. Then the print just like, well, just FYI, you signed off on all the match prints. You were on the press check. Let's not go that route. Let's go the solution route.

**[0:27:25] NT:** My printer partners thought I was crazy. They're like, "What are you doing?" Noel, but they were crazy. Forget it. Forget how they are."

**[0:27:32] DC:** It doesn't matter at that point. You just have to get it –

**[0:27:36] NT:** You've got to trust. How are you doing? I said, "How am I not doing it? Just work." They did. "But how do you sleep?" You're talking about buying \$9,000, \$10,000 worth of paper again and stuff. Then I thought in the middle of it, I go, "Oh, wait a minute. Have you turned into a coated?" It was on coated paper. Have you turned into a coated customer? It's like, they start pulling stuff that they've done that's awful. It's funny to go print around. I go, "You know that's not what we're doing." It is what it is, but yeah.

**[0:28:06] DD:** I know, we stand by a certain protocol and when we're producing these because they're not normal productions. There's a lot of detail in every aspect of it. You had your aspect

of your printing, your proofing, your covers, your bindery, and each one of these things. You have your protocol. You're going through it and you're lost in it. I don't have the right direction. Well, I think most of the time to stop and begin to ask questions of what they really want. I know people come to you and people come to me and we're on a real high and they're using us, because it's us and we have a certain flair and art to what we do, and we want people to, "Hey, this is what we produce," like a fine artist. "This is what we produce." It's your own interpretation of it. "Hopefully, you do like it."

But you're also working with a younger crowd now as well. I hear you. This is the assistant and she's being dictated to as to what to do. She's trying to explain it to you. You're saying in the background, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. I know. We've done this. We've put this together. I'm putting it together." personally, I think that people that are younger don't know and need the right guidance first. That opens up a lot of questions that she has to go back with and ask.

**[0:29:39] NT:** Well, let me tell you how obscure it got. The sheet of cover, we started on a, I don't know, a Neenah eggshell, really gorgeous, 130 pounds, wasn't rough enough. The one I used the last time years ago was called wild. It was an important sheet sold by Neenah. Now I go find wild, Neenah doesn't have it anymore. But I found it somewhere else. It's Saturday night. I'm on Route 95 in Baltimore. I don't know what I was doing there. The phone rings, the woman just say, "Saturday night driving." She goes, "I have. I found the new wild." I said, "I already have the paper. I'm going to replace it with this. This is wild now." She goes, and no pun intended, she goes, "Well, I'm feeling it. It feels a little drier and a little more," like using words like this.

I'm like, "You have to understand something. This paper does not manufacture paper like that twice that's exactly the same, but another mill is making it now. That's all we got. Do you like it? Can we go?" I mean, that conversation happened about the entire job. I never have felt so, I need a dictionary. I need a translator. I thought I knew papers and something. I go, their nitpick, she's rubbing her hand on it on Saturday night and getting the wrong feel. I'm supposed to understand that. I can't. You know what I mean? There were those signs along the way.

**[0:31:04] DC:** I mean, I think you really made a point that deserves to be brought up one more time, which is that there are just certain projects that everybody has to be in the same room together. Whether it is at the final stage of retouching and you're going to see the actual proofs

of what it looks like, not on a screen, before the next step is put it in the file and put it on the press, you can do that all together. Or if you're FedExing, whatever you have to do to get to –

**[0:31:30] NT:** I did two press proofs, three press proofs.

**[0:31:33] DC:** I'm not saying that you that you didn't. I'm just saying, at the end of the day, I think what you said about, the minute they saw the first – well, actually, if it was the finishing, that would have been more difficult to navigate on a press check. I mean, it's a complicated process.

**[0:31:52] NT:** They also redesigned it, which you know how many people would say, "Wait a minute. Now you're printing a different job." You know why? Because picture of these beautiful couches across those 22-inch to 20-inches. The couch is maybe 17 inches wide across, even though we're sewing it. We got a lot of –

**[0:32:08] DC:** I know, but I'm just saying, once you –

**[0:32:10] NT:** - my covers look stupid. So, they took them out. Some printers would say, that's a different job.

**[0:32:15] DC:** Technically, yes. But the door's also open to make improvements once a new file is coming out.

**[0:32:21] NT:** Well, and that's what everybody did. It was all things that should have been done initially, that we were all – You're right. It's not the time. In the old days, we called those – they were match prints instead of absence. We used to call them making metal match prints again, because we were making plenty of printing and then taking it off press. That's why you make proof, so you don't make plays.

**[0:32:41] DC:** There were just certain jobs like this that you just have to be there if it's going to get into a situation where you're not sure what's going to happen.

**[0:32:52] NT:** The best lesson learned –

**[0:32:53] DC:** That's a crazy story.

**[0:32:54] NT:** I'll stop, but the best lesson learned was that after all this pain, several people called, and in that world, her world recognized, "How did you do this? They all do look books and they don't look as good. We'd like to work with you." I go, "You know what? There's a silver lining."

**[0:33:10] DC:** Which also goes back to the first post I ever wrote as a blogger, was titled 'All Guts and No Glory.' It was about how people in production really do things for themselves. You have to live with it. I have to live with this job. I have to live with how it looks. I have to live with what it looks like on a billboard, or a side of a bus, or in a mailbox. I'm doing the best job, not only for the client, not only to keep my job, but also, for myself, because I want to be proud of what I made. That's what I'm getting from you about this job. David, do you have any final comments about Noel's catastrophe before we move on?

**[0:33:59] DD:** I said before about following protocol. I think Noel had that "aha" moment of like, "What is going on here? Do I put the brakes on?" You have to go with what you know and you move forward with that. You hope you're doing the right thing. I mean, the idea of having somebody on the west coast and you're on the east coast and you're producing this and this, nobody standing next to you, needs far more dialogue and a moment of, "Let's stop."

**[0:34:32] NT:** We did the job eight years ago and we did the previous jobs. I'd go to 25<sup>th</sup> Street. But proofs, press proofs. We pan on the couch. We'd argue over. She go, "No, that's what I'm talking about."

**[0:34:42] DC:** Hey, we're doing finishing today. Come on over.

**[0:34:46] NT:** With that out of the process, we didn't get the feedback we needed.

**[0:34:50] DC:** Yeah. 100%. Okay. When we come back, I'm going to tell you a couple of quick stories about some lessons learned along the way.

[MESSAGE]

**[0:35:00] DC:** Are you looking to elevate your game, take your bottom-line customer relationships and events to the next level? Then I want to work with you. I'm Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. I engage with a vast global audience of print and marketing professionals across all stages of their careers. They are seeking topical information and resources, new ways to serve their customers and connect with them, optimize processes for their communications and operations and they need the products and services and partnership you offer to get to their next level. Print Media Centr offers an array of unique opportunities that amplify your message and support your mission across the Printerverse. Let's work together, bring the right people together, and move the industry forward together. Link in the show notes. Engage long and prosper.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

**[0:36:01] DC:** Hey, everybody. Welcome back to Podcasts From the Printerverse. Okay, gentlemen. I was taking notes when you were speaking, and I could tell a million stories from the print customer end. But I'm going to use my little time here just to point out some areas where you can preempt disasters, especially if you're a print customer trying to navigate projects with multiple people.

First of all, estimates. I can't tell you how many times a little mistake on an estimate can cause a nightmare all the way down, especially if you don't catch it. I will tell this one little story to illustrate. You know how you indicate feet by one apostrophe and inches by two? Have you ever seen a 12-inch 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary ice sculpture? I made one, like little Stonehenge, instead of 12 feet. Now, I could say all day long, why did the freaking ice vendor make me a 12-inch sculpture? Or, why didn't I notice it was so inexpensive? But I had never done one before. I learned my lesson to be very careful.

As they say in the types of any days, mind your P's and Q's, mind your inches and foot. Measure twice, cut once. That stays with me all the time, because of that damn ice sculpture. I once worked on a project and my PMS color, ink changed colors. I don't know if that's ever happened to you guys, but apparently, the printer didn't actually use a Pantone color. I used some, I guess, other ink that made a comparable color and whatever chemicals were in the coding weren't made to work together. My specific brand color brochures, there was supposed

to be teal, all turned green, just about the time they arrived at the client's locations. Thank you, everybody.

How do you preempt it? You make sure your printers aren't using some ink that they're buying in the back of an alley. I was once forced to use a printer in China by a yachting, company that made yachts. I had to go on a press check. Yes, granted, they put me in the Ritz Carlton in Shanghai, but I was not allowed to leave the Ritz Carlton in Shanghai, because women aren't allowed in the "factory" in China, or at least they weren't at that point.

The translator did not know anything about printing terms. I was trying to make sure that the glue – and I was trying to have conversations about the binding, and it was coming apart. I was not happy with the glue that I was being shown. I was trying to come up with a charades way of notch binding. There's no translation for that in Chinese that I could figure out. Needless to say, they did it the way that they did it. By the time it got to America, you opened up the book, all the pages fell out and we lost that client. Wasn't my fault. But I knew there was a problem and I could not get anybody to listen to me.

The lesson there is make sure you cover your ass, things like that, because the only thing that saved my job when we lost that client was all my emails, or my phone calls to everybody saying, "I am not responsible for this. Somebody get us a translator that can help us with this." A lot of times, print customers turned into proofreaders and we're not proofreaders, like professional proofreaders. The biggest nightmare I had was we were doing a sunglass catalog. Each of the frames had a specific name and a specific SKU number. Then, you could have 10 different options for the lenses you had in those frames.

I can't even tell you that we spent months proofreading SKU numbers, to the point where I had PTSD over it. If anyone shows me a catalog or says we're working on a catalog, the first thing I think is SKU numbers. Know your limitations, hire freaking proofreaders and people who, that's what they do. It's worth the expense. It was not worth the time and energy and aggravation and angst that everybody had, because the wrong SKU number means somebody's getting the wrong glasses from the company. There's no going back on, sorry, that's everyone who's thinking they're going to get aquamarine in black frames and they're getting brown glasses in black frames, that's going to keep happening until there's another new catalog.

Speaking about retouching, celebrities have kill rights. Some celebrities have kill rights to their images. Meaning that, if they're depicted in any way, they get to sign off on the photo that's chosen and what they look like. Sometimes you come across celebrities who maybe want to shave, I don't know, 20 years off of their – what they actually look like, which look, hey, that's their brand. They're allowed to do that. But the problem is when that celebrity is vacationing in Bora Bora, and you need their image for a billboard and there is no direct way of getting things to Bora Bora. You have to fly them to Fiji and then boats taken to Bora Bora.

When possible, if you are doing any retouching like that, ask up front if there are famous people in the artwork, what their rights are and make sure that you account for that timing. I will tell you that in this case, we could not get it back and forth quick enough and eventually, ended up taking this person off of the billboard, because they were not approving things, and it was costing a ridiculous amount of money to send things to Bora Bora rush.

Those are just some general things. Of course, the one that I always mention is suede tech paper. Touche. Suede tech paper. The printer that allowed me to print images of the Caribbean on it and didn't say, "You know, that paper might suck in all that color. Are you really sure you want to use this paper for this job?" It was the only time in my career that I actually yelled, stop the presses and woke people up. I printed in Texas. I woke people up in New York at 3am in the morning and I'm like, "Ah, we've got a serious problem here."

What they ended up doing, of course, was just convincing the client that this is what we wanted the whole time. We wanted to have this antique bleached look to it, and the client's like, "Yes, we love it. We love it." Always have a good creative director, or account person who can convince the clients of anything at the end of the day. I was so mad at that printer for not – then when they went back, "Well, what did you expect?" I'm like, "Well, if you knew, why didn't you just at least have a conversation about it?"

We paid for everything, Noel. Don't worry. But I was charged for stopping the presses because I had to stop them. Then we had to wait for the next shift the next morning. It was not such a great situation.

Okay, with all of that being said, David, what is your best advice for being preemptive of a potential nightmare beyond your checklist, although I think it's super important, even if you want to talk about that again?

**[0:44:30] DD:** Conversation, communication, understanding interpretation, being able to give the right information to them, having the opportunity for them to say, “No, that isn't what we're looking for,” and being able to work from that point. I mean, it's very, very difficult to be able to say, I mean, in Noel's point, something that was done many years ago, and are you going to be able to mimic that, or recreate that now? That's a very hard thing to do.

I mean, even with that wild paper, that wild paper that he has, being manufactured by a different manufacturer certainly has its own standards now that Noel isn't necessarily going to know about, but that's what the client is pushing towards, and that's a whole new discovery, more or less. I think of having all the information, as much information as you can, that dialogue, that understanding, that center of where are we going to go? Once that understanding is there, then can we follow through? Will we follow through? Will it be what you want it to be? What are the roadblocks that we're going to face in doing it?

Being upfront in that, I think that's what people are looking for. They're looking for, not “the printer's bullshit,” excuse me for that. But that's what it is. Printer's bullshit. “Oh, yeah, yeah. No, no. We couldn't do this, because of da, da, da, da. The humidity and the blue, and then this and that.” Is to just, full up front, honesty, and to both have an understanding of where you're going on it. I think that dialogue really creates great dialogue and understanding between all parties.

**[0:46:21] DC:** I agree with you. I think the most important thing you said there is it has to be honest. I've spoken to a million printers like, “Oh, of course, we can do that.” I'm like, “Well, can you send me a sample of this thing that you've done before?” “Oh. Well, we haven't done it, but I'm sure we can do it.” I'm like, “Okay. That's not the same thing as we can do it. You're assuming you can. I don't have time to be on a learning curve with you. I need to find someone who knows exactly how to do this.” Noel, best advice for preempting nightmares.

**[0:46:55] NT:** Conversation, conversation, and more conversation. I always share this process chart I do and it just memorializes. It starts with an idea, or a concept and ends at the desired

result, which might be I have \$25,000, I got to reach 10,000 people by May 5<sup>th</sup> or whatever. Then, what you talk about in the beginning is what inspired the idea, or what is – that's where the partnering takes place. I always say, somebody might have stayed up late, or argued, that's where you have to have that conversation. Once you get to press, I've started two companies now because I've seen people go, “Oh,” a designer walks in, “Oh, that's what you're looking for. Next time –” There should be no next time.

It's so imperative that you as the customer really make it important what's critical about this job, all of the things that are really important to you about it and let it sink in. As a printer, or a maker, you have to listen. Even if you go, “Well, wait a minute. Now I'm hearing something I don't think I can do.” Instead of, “Yeah, but they don't really want that.” You know what I mean? That's where you got into trouble, right? Because someone didn't stand up and go, “Wait a minute.” If they listen to you, right, there's nothing wrong with that. It's not arguing, but there's nothing wrong with not understanding each other and stopping and getting in the same room, perhaps, and it's all communication, like David said. But I'm telling you, it is, and it's a gut, too. You can feel it. Usually, you can.

But the customers have to be – they're not going to get everything and they don't know how to manufacture it, but they do know what they want and what can happen and what can't happen. Then it's incumbent upon you to tell them, “Okay, based on what you said, you really want and are inspired by – based on what I'm looking at, this is what I'm concerned about.” You can work that out. Because once you start production, you know the deal, right? “Oh, what do you want me to do now? Oh, let's throw the paper out.” You've got to pull it out of each other.

**[0:48:55] DC:** Yeah. My advice is going to be that these are great stories to share on your website, through your blog, and social media, not that necessarily there was a nightmare, but I do believe that if you mention some problems, you don't have to get into specifics, you don't have to let people know how the sausage is made, but you could say, “We ran into some problems during this project and this is what we learned and look how amazing it is.” Who wouldn't want to work with a company like that? Plus, you're showing people the amazing out-of-the-box work you can do, whether you're a printer or a designer.

If you're a designer, or marketing company, what an amazing thing to share with potential clients about how you work with your partners and how you're able, through collaboration, to produce really complicated, original, unique pieces of print, even though there might be some obstacles along the way, everybody learned something from it and look how beautiful it is, and to really come full circle, maybe even submit it for an award after that.

Gentlemen, thank you guys so much once again for a riveting and informative conversation that I know that people are getting a lot out of. Until next time, everybody out there. First of all, connect with David and Noel on LinkedIn, check out their websites, and see some of these crazy projects that they work on. Maybe you could work with them and make it with print long and prosper.

[END OF EPISODE]

**[0:50:32] 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](http://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:**

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