[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:02] DC: This is the true story of two printers, who agreed to podcast with me and have their opinions recorded. Listen to what happens when printers stop being polite and start getting real.

[0:00:13] JM: Hi, this is Jamie McLennan.

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

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

[INTERVIEW]

[00:00:25] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse, this is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. More specifically, we are here with the PrinterChat Podcast, which means I am here with Jamie the Printer, Jamie McLennan from DMR Graphics, powered by Innvoke. And Will Crabtree, Will the Printer, owner proprietor of Tampa Media. Hello, gentlemen.

[0:00:49] WC: Hello, Deborah.

[0:00:51] JM: Hello, Deborah and Will.

[0:00:52] WC: What's up, Jamie? How you've been?

[0:00:54] DC: It has been a while since we recorded a podcast. We have been busy and traveling. This is what we're going to get into right now. Let's start with Jamie the Printer. What's going on with you and DMR graphics?

[0:01:10] JM: Well, since the last time we met and did our podcast in Tampa when we're all together, we have had our intern start, which is something we were excited about. We ended up

going to have one intern at both locations at are DMR, in both locations. Now, we have four interns. We have two interns here at DMR, both graphic arts students, two different universities. Innvoke has a graphic arts student from Connecticut there. Then, we have an intern that is working with our management team for going through acquisitions and stuff like that. So, he's a business intern, working with our team looking for different opportunities that we can capitalize on to grow the company. So, very exciting.

We are so happy with what we've done so far. I mean, Haley and Lily are here in DMR. They both gone through pretty much the whole shop. We kind of gave them like a – we bore them to death the first couple of days with sales and estimating, which probably wasn't the thing to start with. So, anybody doing an internship program, do not start with that. Start with the exciting stuff first. Actually, Haley did. Lily didn't do the sales yet. We're going to break that in later, but awesome. Their excitement for what we do, learning things. I mean, they're prepping files, they're doing some design work, they're running the flatbeds, the roll presses. They're screen printing, mixing inks for the screen presses, screen printing, CNC cutting. Yes, it's been an awesome since the middle of May. So yes, it's been cool.

Abby over in Innvoke has been doing the same thing. She's been going through different office. There's more departments over there. So, she's going through the same process, spending a week in every department, learning what everybody does. So far so good. One of the happiest things I think they like is helping with the barbecue, but we'll just keep that to ourselves.

[0:02:52] DC: Excellent.

[0:02:53] JM: Barbecue.

[0:02:54] WC: Your interns just so we can refresh the audience and my own memories as well. Your interns came from your – you did an open house, correct?

[0:03:03] JM: Yes, we did the open house last year, and we were asked why we don't have an internship program, and that's how this all started. So, we actually have submissions through some website or whatever for generating – Indeed, or something like that, and probably had like 30 or so replies for a couple of positions. We couldn't narrow it down to just two, so ended up

taking four. So far so good. We're loving it. We're making sure they push the open house this October when we're going to have an open house, so they can bring their classmates and hopefully professors in October to come through here.

We're actually having a tour with a couple people from Jefferson University in a couple of days, next week, to kind of show off what we've been doing. Hopefully, that'll spark some more interest. So, we're excited about it. So far, it seems like we're going to keep this going every year.

[0:03:49] DC: Excellent.

[0:03:50] WC: Your interns are paid interns.

[0:03:52] JM: Paid interns, yep.

[0:03:54] DC: They have to be paid now, from what I understand.

[0:03:57] JM: Probably, yes. It was always going to be a paid internship. We have two full-time, Abby and Lily are full-time. One's in Innvoke, one's at DMR. Abby, and Haley, and Lily like three days a week. Then, our business intern. He's mostly remote, but stops in every now and then. He's probably four or five days a week as well. He's more – I don't really deal much with the business side of it for that part for what he's doing. More hands-on with the other three interns that are learning the trade and really excited, so far. They've done a lot, they're designing things. We have them making things that they're going to print and run through the shop themselves. So, we're having fun.

[0:04:33] DC: Excellent.

[0:04:34] WC: I have one more quick question. I'm so sorry, Deborah. So, just the risk versus reward on having paid internships, and these people with no experience. Are you seeing it as like a true benefit? Like there's an ROI behind it from the cost of the payroll of having those people there? Are they a helper? Are they a burden?

[0:04:51] JM: Actually, they've been help. Yes. So, I mean, a couple days of learning things and doing stuff like that, but even like we've had a couple crazy projects come through, we're all hands-on and they're helping pack packages up and do that. "Hey, we need you to jump in this department today, because these things need to get out." So yes, they're been bending, heat bending stuff, and learning that stuff, and doing some crazy projects, and getting to help us get them done on time. So, that part has been definitely return on investment. So, I would definitely full-heartedly say that it's something you should look into.

[0:05:22] WC: So, that sounds like it's true, full success, like full send, do it again, repeat, rinse all over, right?

[0:05:28] JM: Yes. I mean, we had some naysayers and we're like, "Oh my God, what are we going to do? We get slow in July." I'm like, "So, we'll have a couple of things. There are probably going to be a couple of slow days, sure. We'll make it work." But so far, it's been mostly positive.

[0:05:40] WC: Congratulations, man. That's awesome.

[0:05:42] JM: Yes. I mean, we're winging it. We put a whole plan together, this is what we're going to do. Like I said, this is what the printing industry is like, it changes every hour. So, you're going to learn how we fly by the seat of our pants sometimes.

[0:05:53] DC: Totally.

[0:05:54] WC: Hundred percent.

[0:05:54] DC: Excellent. Anything else to catch up with over there?

[0:05:57] JM: I think that's it.

[0:05:58] DC: Cool. William, you had some excitement since we've last spoken.

[0:06:03] WC: Yes. Well, we went to Germany, we went to drupa, got to experience that, which was amazing. It's such a big show, it's just massive. As I'm walking through, I'm seeing all this

equipment that I would never need in a shop like mine. It's kind of a different gamut of the industry than what my side of it is. But it's still just, it's entertaining, and intriguing, and still motivational to walk around the floor and see things like okay, like, I don't need that. But maybe I could find a smaller version of that.

[0:06:33] DC: Well, I just have to ask, did you see the presses that you literally have to walk, like climb up ladders to get –

[0:06:39] WC: Oh, yes. There were so many.

[0:06:40] DC: They're so huge.

[0:06:41] WC: They took up like 15 booth spaces in one press. Just monsters.

[0:06:46] JM: They have their own bathroom and –

[0:06:48] WC: You're right.

[0:06:49] DC: It's crazy. The first time I went to drupa in 2016, and I saw a true packaging press. Not one that's a commercial use press. I mean, industrial packaging press. I was like, "Oh, that's why those people don't think they have anything to do with the commercial." It had to have been 400 feet long.

[0:07:10] WC: Oh, I saw this one massive thing that was like – I mean, it had to have been 20 feet tall, and it literally took up like five booth spaces. They're running a clear film on it. I'm looking at the clear film, and I'm like, "What is the purpose of this? What are you making with this clear film, with this monster machine? What's the ROI on this?" They're like, "No, no. This is the outer layer of like, Lay's potato chip bags and things like that." So, that's how they start the labels. It's like, "Okay, yes. I bet there's money in that."

[0:07:41] DC: Yes, it's crazy. Okay, sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt you.

[0:07:45] WC: No, not at all.

[0:07:45] DC: So yes, there's always things you see there that are just honestly blow my mind that they're part of the printing industry. Because you go to a regional show or even a national show, they don't have that size equipment.

[0:08:00] WC: No. You got a big Heidelberg, is like the biggest thing that you're going to see. It's like, you can go in any shop in any town, and you're going to see that. It's just monster things that you just don't see. A lot of them in one space, so it was overwhelming. But the way we do shows, and Ashley was with me as well. So, I mean, we crushed the whole show in like two days. We saw almost everything.

[0:08:21] JM: I was living like curiously over here on hashtag watching.

[0:08:24] WC: We didn't really have a lot of people to engage with, because it's not like – other than asking random questions, and not wanting to waste people's time. Also, there wasn't much there for me to really look at from the standpoint of, "Oh, this might work in my shop." There was one or two things. But the show was still very enlightening, I had such a wonderful time. I was very privileged to be able to present at the show, which went really, really well. Or at least, I felt.

[0:08:48] DC: Oh, no. Totally did.

[0:08:49] WC: I'm my worst critic, right?

[0:08:51] DC: No, it's good.

[0:08:52] WC: My speech at INKISH, I felt like I did so horribly and I refuse to even watch it for so long because I thought I did so bad. But I actually got over that, I watched it, and I wasn't so bad, which I think helped for me to give a better presentation at drupa. So, if you haven't seen it, please check it out. I hope to get more engagements like that. It's fun to go and speak at these events.

[0:09:12] DC: They haven't released the session videos yet, but as soon as they do, I will make sure that I share it with everybody, and I'll put it in the show notes of the podcasts when it's closest to all of that happening. Any catch-ups going on and Tampa Media?

[0:09:32] WC: Well, we got a new gorilla, Tampa Printer the gorilla. Well, we had gorillas at both buildings. The gorilla at Sign Parrot got caught in the wind, and shredded by a parking sign close by. So, it got completely retired. Then, the gorilla at Tampa Printer just didn't want to stand up anymore. My theory is, is that the material that it's made out of, it's like a dye sub, it's a fabric. It has constant air, so it was porous. I think, just over time, it's been outside for a year. So, it's faded, it started out as black, and now it's pink. I think the material just degraded to the point that it doesn't hold anymore. So, he's just like floppy.

So, we ordered new gorillas, we got a new gorilla up. Then, at the same time, I got a new tenant in the Tampa Printer building. We got a new tattoo shop. So, we refreshed all of the signage front to back, new monument. We took the monument sign apart, repainted it, put all new faces in it, put all new directionals, and wayfinding signage up around the building, along with the new gorilla and the new tenant. We did all their signage as well. So, Tampa Printer just got a nice facelift, and everything looks all bright, and shiny, and new.

We did a rebrand at Sign Parrot, we didn't change too much. We were running a bunch of billboards. The logo, the way parrot landed in the logo was so small, compared to sign, that at any distance, you couldn't read pair it. So, we just kept the bird the same, but we changed the font in the font layout. So, we redid that. So, we had to go back and redo the signage on the Sign Parrot building, and redo some of our wraps. So, it's been a transition of changing that logo, 813 Shirts, we're kind of doing a – we did a rebrand on that. I found something similar and that the font that we use was a cursive and you couldn't read it from any distance. It looked like 813 shits. We changed the font on that, rebranded that one, so that got redone when we redid the signage of Tampa Printer.

So, just really kind of – it's slower right now, so the summer is slow on the science side of things, which gives us an opportunity to be able to put up new signage around our buildings and take that opportunity to make things look better around our shops. Which is kind of always been the philosophy of, when there's not work to be done, there's plenty of things that we can make and plenty of things that we can do to make our business better. That's where we dedicate and invest our time.

[0:11:45] DC: Excellent.

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[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:12:49] DC: Speaking of investing time. Today, I wanted to speak to both of you about optimizing internal communication for better marketing and sales results. This topic was actually inspired by a post I saw on LinkedIn, somebody shared a list from Jeff Bezos on how to have an effective meeting. I mean, I can take a leave. Jeff Bezos, thanks for inventing Amazon and all that stuff. But, he's a pretty successful guy, and he deals with lots of employees, and lots of topics. So, I thought, let me see what he had to say about this.

They were pretty practical pieces of advice, which I will share at the end of this podcast. But because I want to focus on the reality of meeting life in a DMR graphics and Tampa Media, with Jamie being the general manager and Will being the owner of the company. I thought you guys were – since you are leaders, it would be a good conversation to have, and hopefully share some advice, or give some people ideas on how they can run an effective meeting. Conversely, if you have advice for us, when we share these podcasts, let us know or tell us what you agree with, or don't, or something that works for you. We're always happy to hear that.

So, okay, let's start off with something very simple. What mandates a companywide meeting at DMR, and Tampa Media, and are they held regularly? So, Jamie, let's start with you, only because we've talked about your meetings prior on these podcasts.

[0:14:34] JM: Yes. I'll get to the what mandates a meeting in a few seconds. But daily, we have what we call a 10 at 10. At 10 o'clock in the morning, everybody stops what they're doing. It's basically supposed to be 10 minutes at 10 o'clock. We video, zoom in our New Jersey location so we can see everybody, everybody comes to the front monitor. At the 10 o'clock meeting, Monday is the big one, we kind of review the week before, what happened, what sales are like, what's going on, what's in the pipeline, how much work is in getting approved, what jobs can be done in this week, and everything. So, everybody has a sense of what's happening that week before the week starts.

Then, we kind of know, hey, it does blow up things. We have room to add things in this week or this week is really tight, we're booked. So. let's make sure we're agreeing to things, let's make sure we get approvals from everybody, and everybody knows that we need to squeeze in another job. Let's make sure we can get it done right. But I kind of like the 10 at 10. So, we have everybody there, 10 o'clock, we kind of go over what's going on that day, how many quotes were done yesterday, how quotes were converted to orders. Then, we have the whole company there. So, if there's something going on in the CNC department, "Hey, can we grab a couple people? This job's coming through. We want to have everybody get their eyes on it right now. What are your thoughts? What do we need to look at?" Any departments there, everybody's there, and you can kind of just quickly go over any jobs that you know we're going to be, everybody needs to keep their eyes on, or jobs that might become a problem. Or, jobs that we're quoting on saying, "Hey, we got a couple people here. Let's sit down and review the best way to do this job, so we can win this."

So, we kind of do that every day at 10 o'clock. That's one of our big deals, and we like that. As leaders, we have a couple of leaders here at DMR. Then, we have a team of leaders over Innvoke. Once a week, we get together, usually on a Wednesday, and then we kind of go through the department scaling. "Hey, what's working out well? What's not. What do you need help with?" So, just the leaders, the company get together, and just do a weekly chat, what's

going on, do we need to hire more people, what's going on with this department, what's going on in that department or stuff like that.

So, that's something that we've started to do more of. We used to do it every couple of weeks, but now we're doing it every week. We find a better communication that way. We used to kind of do both sides separately, but now, we brought everybody together. That's another meeting that really goes well. Everybody kind of goes over what they're doing. Our owners talk about what's going on, what they're working on in the background. If there's any new acquisitions in the pipeline, what would you be thinking about?

Another week that we do a monthly meeting for, just like you're talking about, marketing and sales. So, we kind of go through what our marketing plan is, what kind of postcard mailers we're doing, how our websites coming along. I's been in the works for a long time. It's been changed, and rewritten, and done again, and stuff like that. So, we do that monthly. So yes, we tend to have – I don't say an excessive amount of meetings, but during the week, we have one every day, and then probably two other ones that are important.

But anything else that is a mandatory meeting or something comes up, it's usually either something happened with a project. Like, "Hey, let's get a couple of people together, let's make sure this doesn't happen again." Or, "Hey, let's get the estimating team together and production. And go, let's a couple together, half hour, let's work on this giant project. Let's find the best way to get it done, and let's, well, win this job." So, those are kind of like the mandatory meetings that kind of pop up. We try and schedule those right around that 10 o'clock meeting so we're all together, and it doesn't really take up any more time during the day. So, that's a little bit how we handle it.

[0:17:51] DC: Excellent. Will?

[0:17:52] WC: Whoa, meetings.

[0:17:53] DC: I know, that's hard to compete with Jamie's meeting regimen over there.

[0:17:59] WC: I've tried to do the morning stand of 10 at 10, whatever you want to call it. I've found that if I'm not the one that's doing it, no one else is going to do it. We've never done it at our company. We've done it at Sign Parrot. We used to do a weekly company meeting at Tampa Printer, but that was so long ago, that I don't even remember when I actually ran Tampa Printer, which I don't anymore. But the morning stand-up at Sign Parrot, it was five to ten-minute meeting, and then I would get up, and I would talk. Does anybody have any feedback? Nobody ever had anything to say.

If I left it up to the other managers, they had even less to say, or it wouldn't happen. So, we just kind of gave up on the daily meeting. What we do is we have a weekly manager's meeting. So, it's a manager's meeting from all departments of both companies meet together once a week, and we go over the issues, and problems, and what can we do, what's going on, what equipment is down, we need more people. Kind of the same thing that you guys are doing there. Then, we do micro meetings based on projects.

So, when we have like a wrap, for every wrap, we have a powwow, where we call it the paneling meetings. So, we have the production proof, we've printed out the panels for the wrap. The installer, the designer, and the manager are all there going over all the specifications of making sure we could put a seam there, and we don't want to put a seam there. That should be a spot graphic versus being printed in the wrap, and so forth. We do something similar for sign installs. You need this hardware, this needs to be staged, we're missing this piece, get this put together. We staged all of our installs to where they could get loaded up in the van the night before. So, when the guys come in, they bolt, and they take off, and they go straight for the install. Because they're always trying to beat the sun. They want to come in at 7am and be out the door, and get started as early as possible. So, the more planning that we can do for them, the better.

There's something that's always eluded us, which we've recently reimplemented as a production meeting. Production meeting is now happening daily, and then it's happening with the production managers and the manager managers. So, my hierarchy and company structure is kind of weird. I have my Director of Operations, who also is the wrap manager, who also kind of helps run both companies. I have a manager who also acts as a sales rep, that also helps work as a project manager on sign projects.

Then, I'm like an everyman, where I can manage, and do everything, and plan everything, and can go do sign installs, which I actually have done a few in the last few weeks, and can fit into any department. But I'm also usually not trying to be there, and not trying to be involved, and micromanage things as much as possible. So, meetings are a challenge always. So, I've always had this thing in the back of my mind about well, the meeting could have been an email, or the meeting could have been a Slack message. We have constant communication in our shop. We use Slack as our kind of chat. So, everybody from both companies in every department is on Slack. So, it's like," Oh. Hey, I need this. I need this. Here's this with this job."

So, we're always in constant communication with each other. So sometimes, the meetings feel like they're not important, or that they're a waste of time. But on the other hand, like the production meeting, we're fine. I'm finding this very, very important. Because what I've been telling my team is that you need to be looking three days ahead. You always need to be looking forward, not just what's due today, but what's due in two days, what's due in three days. You need to be planning, and making sure that you have the materials that you need to produce those jobs. You need to make sure that you're scheduling and that you have the right people on staff, that you're delegating those tasks appropriately, which takes planning, which takes a meeting.

So, it's taking that extra beat to take the meeting, and have the meeting as long as the meeting is structured, and plan will save you time in the long run, because you're going to have less mistakes, less margin for error, people will move more efficiently. So, this is a lesson that we're always learning, that I'm always learning myself because we move so quickly. Everything at my shops is moving, moving, moving, moving, moving, and it turns into chaos quite often. So, kind of trying to find that happy medium of like, "We're going to have 50 meetings this month," and having no meetings at all, and planning some but also working towards. And your point, Deborah, is you're talking about sales meetings, and marketing meetings where that's all-production meetings for us. We have no meetings about sales other than like, "Hey, we've got this lead, and there's this thing, and we need to do this, like let's go."

[0:22:30] JM: May I jump in real quick, Will. That 10 at 10 meeting, yes. I find if I'm not doing it if I'm off, it's like the 10 seconds at 10. It's like, "Here you go, here you go. We're done." That's what the old owner said to me. He's like, "I do a 10 at 10, you got 40 people staring at you like,

'Hey, what are you going to give me today?'" So, once a week, I try and at least highlight something we've done. Here are the other place to show. Hey, everybody, these are some of the cool things we do here in Jersey. Are these some of the cool things we do in Pennsylvania, and try and get the other sales reps like interested in like, "Hey, I can do that. I don't just have to do this part of the job. I can do a bunch of different things." I try and highlight.

[0:23:03] WC: Ten, is that whole company or is that just sales reps?

[0:23:06] JM: Whole company.

[0:23:06] WC: Whole company, okay.

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[0:23:10] 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]

[0:24:02] DC: Okay, guys. So, it seems clear that your meetings are focused on pretty much a singular topic, even if it's the meeting at 10, Everybody knows it's a catch-up meeting or status meeting, and they know what to bring there to contribute. But how do you ensure that everyone at the meeting is clear on their next steps, a call to action, a task that you've given them? Will, let's start with you.

[0:24:34] WC: It's impossible. What you're what you're asking is impossible. I say this as, I can have an employee come up and ask me a question about a project and say, "Hey, can I do it this way or should I do it this way? Give me two options." I will tell them to do it one way and they will do it the other way. Having or the expectation of that everyone in that meeting has a clear understanding of what their expectation is, it's impossible, it doesn't exist. I'm sorry, I don't care.

[0:25:03] DC: Well, it's not their expectation.

[0:25:05] WC: If you have a whole team of Einsteins working for you, it doesn't happen.

[0:25:08] DC: Yes. I want to push back on that a little, it's not an expectation. It's like, okay, I need you three to do something. How do you know that they're clear on exactly what they need to do, so you're not having this meeting again to discuss why that thing isn't done? And you're going to say it's impossible.

[0:25:25] WC: That's exactly what I'm saying, is that I don't know. I will never know. I can give someone something in writing, I can tell it to them verbally, I can say it to them five times, I can tattoo it on their back, and they may still not have an understanding of it. So, I'm never going to know if they have an understanding of what's expected of them.

[0:25:42] DC: Okay. Look, it's your print shop, it's your employees, and you know what's going on there.

[0:25:48] WC: I have a great team. I have awesome employees.

[0:25:51] DC: You do.

[0:25:52] WC: I can't be the only one here. Jamie, you're over here laughing. I can see you. I know that you feel my pain here, brother.

[0:26:00] JM: We have the same thing. When I was a pressman, the plant manager would come over and say – I feel his pain, but I just remember when I was a freshman, and someone

come and go, "These are the next five things you have to do." I'll be like, I got two of them. After the second one, I'm coming back to ask what the third one was because that's all I could retain at that time. These are the next two jobs, I don't have to remember the third job, I just need to know what the next two things are.

I kind of look at that too, the same thing. Like when we do a 10 at 10, that's more general, everybody knows the direction of the company, what's going on, go back, and keep doing it. It's more of like a, "Rah, rah, let's keep things going." Everybody's doing good. But when we have a leadership meeting, everybody kind of has things they take away. Like, "I got to go back and fill out this paperwork" or "I got some forms I got to take care of," or something like that. There's certain things you need to do. Yes, I forget to do them sometimes, I'll get three out of the four things done in the next week later, like, "Did you get the fourth one done?" I'm like, "No, I was waiting for someone, but nobody got back to me, so I forgot about it."

So yes, there's certain things – some people are great with it. We have a girl, Melissa. You give her a list of things and she'll take care of everything. Like, "You took care of my things." She's like, "I know you wouldn't, it's done. Don't worry about it."

[0:27:02] WC: Can Melissa can work for me, please.

[0:27:06] JM: She knows where everything is. I'm like, "If you need anything, call Melissa. She knows where everything is, she knows how to take care of it, and it's done."

[0:27:13] DC: I just want to remind you guys that the topic of this meeting is optimizing internal communication for better results. We're not we're not optimized here, because –

[0:27:24] JM: Well, we're learning how to optimize here.

[0:27:26] DC: Well, let me just say this. Let me just plant this seed and why I'm asking you these questions. What you're both saying to me, I'm not saying it's not the reality of the situation. But what I'm saying to you is that, that leads to that situation just being repeated or discussed over and over again, and not accomplished. If there's no, let's say, system, or follow-up process, or some sort of way to know that, to Melissa's point, "This is all taken care of. Thank you,

everybody. It's done. This is what the client said about it. This is the new due date for whatever it might be." So, that's where I'm getting out here. So, maybe instead of asking, how do you, let's change his head to, how could you because it seems like you're not doing it.

[0:28:15] JM: We kind of break down the meeting into things that can get done. We do our leadership meeting once a week. So, things that are going to get done in a week, we got the small things we call rocks, we'll get these rocks done. Then, we have boulders that we have to get done in a month or whatever. So, how are you making out on this big long-term project? So, we kind of support each other that way, like, "Hey, what's going on with us? How's the new press install coming? We know it's going to take five weeks, where are we at now?"

So, we kind of feed off each other and kind of keep stepping, pushing each other in the right direction. So, you got done the things you needed to get done, there's bigger things that we all need to work on together. So, they don't always happen in a day or two days. There are things that happen in a month. So, we kind of, every week, we kind of tackle a little bit more of that. So, the bigger goal.

[0:28:56] DC: So, Will, whether or not you have to tattoo it on somebody's back, what's another way that you could ensure that everybody was clear on their next steps from meetings?

[0:29:08] WC: When you're talking about optimization, right, so it's repetition, and it's consistency. Those are your two ways to optimize, repetition and consistency. Being as clear as possible, and giving as many concise details as possible. If you overload someone with too much information, then they're going to forget all of the information. To your point, Jamie, when you were a pressman, someone can come and say, "These are the next five things," you only retained two. So, the more information that you overload into somebody at one time without repetition, the more likely they are to forget things or not understand.

I make jokes, and there's a whole thing about this, where when you're interacting with a bunch of employees, and you're talking about a bunch of projects and a bunch of jobs, and you have disruption. So, one of the things that I get pushback from some of my managers on – or I've got one manager that pushes back on this, is we offer a turnaround service. So, if you need it today, you can pay an upcharge to get it done today, which disrupts the production workflow. By its

nature, it disrupts the production workflow, because production should be first in, first out. But now, you have someone skipping the line, which creates chaos. That's why you charge them extra for that, which the customer doesn't really understand. But the point being is that, when you have a workflow, and you have a process, and you create a chink in that chain, then things have an opportunity to go sideways. So, you have to kind of plan things as much as you can, but also plan for the unexpected, which is difficult.

When we talk about selling turnaround on time, this can be something as simple as a press goes down. You're on a deadline, but the equipment that you need to produce that job is no longer functioning, how are you going to navigate that? How are you going to deal with that? These are the things that we have meetings about in addition to these specific projects.

[0:31:03] DC: Okay. How do you ensure that all those people are clear on what they have to do to get while that press is down?

[0:31:10] WC: Again, it doesn't exist. I don't know what Bezos said that how to optimize his shit. His is optimized by software. His is optimized by flow and process.

[0:31:21] DC: No, no, no, it's practical advice, which I'll just share.

[0:31:25] WC: Which is fair, that's fine. I'm happy to listen to it, I'm happy to hear it, but humans are humans, and they're only going to contain so much information. You put 40 people in a room, you put 20 people in a room, and you have someone that talks for 10 minutes, 30 of those people are going to retain one minute of that information. I don't care who they are, I don't care what group of people it is, I don't care where they are on the planet, they are not going to consume that information. The attention span of people is finite.

Now, if you put it in a concert form, and you're singing a song, and you have a beat, or you do something, I don't know what you do to get people to retain information. But you put 20 people in a room, and you talk to them for 10 minutes, they're not going to retain all that information unless you reinforce it in another way. You talk to them, you give it to them in writing, you follow it up with a newsletter, you send out a blast on your messaging system, you send them all a text message. You have to be repetitive in the information and hit people in multiple ways. Because

not everyone learns the same. Some people can listen, some people can watch, some people can read. So, if you expect everyone to understand what you had to say, and take in all the information that you said in your meeting, you're going to fail.

[0:32:33] DC: Okay. I think you're still missing my point. Okay. So, there you are, to use your example, "Uh-oh, we have an emergency, the press just went down. Joe, I need you to call these five clients with this message and let them know that their work is going to be delayed."

[0:32:52] WC: That's not a meeting, that's delegating tasks.

[0:32:53] DC: Okay. Well, that's what I'm saying. You're at a meeting, and you want to make sure that everyone is clear.

[0:32:59] WC: I wouldn't do that in a meeting, because then you're wasting everyone else's time. If I've got 15 people here, and I'm delegating tasks to 15 people in front of 15 people, why would I do that? If I've got 15 people that I need to break out tasks to, I'm going to do that in a direct way, and I'm going to communicate with that person directly, and not expose everyone else to that, or waste everyone else's time.

[0:33:17] DC: Okay. Well, that's certainly one way of handling it. Jamie?

[0:33:21] JM: As Will said, everybody does things their own way. A lot of times, our owner would do – we'd have a meeting, go over it. Then, he'd send you an email saying, "Hey, this the follow-up in case you want to read it." On some things, he would send a video, "This is how you do it. Here in the CRM you're in, our workflow system, click here, click here, do this. In case you didn't understand what I was saying, here's three ways for you to look at it." So sometimes, yes, sometimes you need that. Everybody learns their own way.

But I also find like, we always had conversations about this. Like, "I'm one of them." I'm like, "Be good, be brief, and be gone. Like, tell me what you need, be direct to the point so I can take care of it, we'll get it done." Then, you have other people that are detectives. We used to call them, what a fine tooth they're going to go through every little detail and make sure it's perfect. So, you make sure you have a couple of those people in that meeting. So, the good debrief and

be gone. It will take care of the immediate needs, the other people that want to dig and find out what's going on, they'll take care of that. And make sure everybody's got delegated to their own way of doing things. So, we kind of look at things that way.

[0:34:19] DC: Jamie, in the example that Will brought up. So, let's just say you're waiting on a certain substrate, and you just can't get it. So, you have to let somebody know that they're going to – the delivery is going to be late, or they need to change it, or something like that. But you're not going to do it, the salesperson is going to do it. I'm just saying.

[0:34:38] JM: That's [inaudible 0:34:38]. Yep, the salesperson needs to know the press [inaudible 0:34:41].

[0:34:41] DC: I'm just saying, you have a conversation with your salesperson, your salesperson allegedly understands everything that you've just had a conversation about and goes to the best of your knowledge, and does what they're supposed to do, right?

[0:35:00] JM: Yes.

[0:35:00] DC: Is there an understood expectation that they'll circle back with you and say, "Hey, Jamie, all taken care of, everything's cool. Here's the solution." Or, do you have to specifically say, "Let me know what they say after you spoke to them?" Or, do you not hear anything until that client is calling you screaming about the fact that they didn't get their materials on time?

[0:35:26] JM: It depends on the sales rep. Most of them will circle back with you and go, "Yes, it's all taken care of, they're good. We got an extra day or two." There are the other people that you have to go back and go, "What was the conversation? We know it's an important job. Are they fine with a couple days? Are we going to work this out and put it on different press or do something else to make it work?" So yes, you know who you're dealing with in your company, and you know the ones that are going to take care of it like that, and you know the two that are going to be like, "Yes, I talked to my customers, they know." I'm like, "They really know? Did you really talk to him? Do I have to call them?" Because there's always that one or two that are just kind of like, "I didn't want to call them just yet, I'm going to wait a little." Like, "No, let them know now."

[0:36:05] WC: I want to clarify something here. So, when we're talking about the word meeting, is meeting one-to-one? Can a meeting be one-to-one in the topic that we're talking about here?

[0:36:14] JM: I have one-on-one meetings?

[0:36:15] DC: It could be. I mean, it's just how to optimize internal communication. I was just setting it through a meeting because that's usually when – like Jamie's telling everybody about our promotion this month is pie in July, which we still haven't gotten. It's July, Will. Do you have a pie? I don't have a pie.

[0:36:35] WC: Where's my pie, bro. I don't have a pie. I didn't get a pie.

[0:36:38] JM: We didn't do pie. We didn't do pie this year.

[0:36:40] WC: I didn't get a pie.

[0:36:41] DC: I still don't have a pie.

[0:36:42] WC: What you're actually talking about is effectively delegating tasks. So, effectively delegating tasks, which is –

[0:36:49] DC: Well, I'm talking about having meetings with people. But if you want to have a meeting about delegating a task versus talking about promotions, that might be great for the spring. I mean, that's fine.

[0:37:00] WC: Okay. So, you have sales, you have production, you have marketing, you have all of these different things. At the end of the day, when you're having a meeting with somebody, I'm having a meeting with you because I need you to do something, or you did something wrong. If I'm having a one-to-one meeting with you, I need you to do something, or you did something wrong, or I'm just saying hi, and shooting the shit, and what you do over the weekend, which isn't really a meeting, that's just a conversation.

But the point being is that, in a group setting, what I've been talking about is a group setting, and trying to delegate tasks within a group setting, which I don't do. Delegating tasks is exactly to your point, and making sure that they understand what the task is, and ensuring that there is a follow-up. So, you cannot delegate someone a task without having a follow-through. So, your reps that are like, sometimes they follow up, sometimes they don't. They need to have a clear directive of what their responsibility is associated with that task, which is ensuring that they come back to you and say, "This is the result, this is what happened, and this is what I'm going to do next."

This is something that I've had to learn and I'm still learning. This is an easy thing to say, but when you're juggling a bunch of things, and you're managing a bunch of people, it's very easy for that follow through, and even delegating that follow through to happen and have that dialogue. So, at the end of the day, whatever Jeff has to say, I'm sure, I mean, he's a multibillionaire, he's built Amazon, I'd love to hear what he had to say. But I think from a communication standpoint, there's always going to be a difficulty of ensuring that the person that you're communicating with understands what you've communicated to them, and you're never really going to know until the result has happened. Because the result happens, and you're like, "Yes, you knew exactly what I wanted. I'm so excited." Versus like that, "Nah, fuck, you didn't do it."

[0:38:50] DC: I mean, you could always do something like, "So Jane or Joe, was that clear?" If they say, yes, you say, "Great. Tell me what you're going to do," and then have them repeat it to you. As long as it's what you wanted them to do, then it's clear. If they repeat it back, and it's not what you wanted them to do that it's not clear, and all it's going to do is set a chain of dominoes from that effect that will lead to not optimizing your time management. It could mess up a client relationship. You could miss a job over it. You could have fonts that are no longer allowed to be used in files. I mean, there's a lot of crazy stuff that can go on when people are not clear on whatever it is that their next steps are. I will not, and I refuse to believe that there's just no way to ensure that.

[0:39:45] JM: [Inaudible 0:39:45]

[0:39:46] WC: So Deborah, we have software, we have meetings, we have processes, we have workflows, we have all of the things that you could possibly have in place to prevent these things. We do meetings, right? Mistakes will happen, it's going to happen.

[0:40:00] DC: Of course, and I'm not judging any anything you're saying. I'm just trying to –

[0:40:03] WC: No, no, no, it's not a judgment. It's optimizing.

[0:40:04] DC: I'm just trying to poke you a little.

[0:40:06] WC: Optimize, reduce margin of error, reduce it, bring it down.

[0:40:10] DC: I'm trying to poke you a little because – and with all due respect, I say this, what I'm hearing a little bit is that's not the way that things work around here, instead of making them work the way that you need them to work so that – just hear me out for a second. So that you can focus your time on something else. So, your people who are repeating that thing 20 times, or that have pushed the domino chain so someone else is now not rock wrapping a vehicle. They're doing something else because there was a miscommunication. Of course, things happen. But there should be, when possible, systems in place, or at least start – this is why we're having this podcast to think about these things.

I'm not saying there's a right way or wrong way, but there certainly has to be a better way than, well, we hope that that is the case. I don't want to linger on this too much. Jamie, do you have any follow-up? Then, we'll move on.

[0:41:11] JM: No. I just find it amusing. I'm like, but you can have that person reply to you and say, "I understand word for word," tell you exactly what you want them to do. And a day later, they do it totally different their way. "I thought this way would be better. I thought about it for a little while. Like, what happened?" "Well, no, it didn't work." "We went over it. Here's what we want you to do. We want you to follow this process and see how it went." They're like, "Nah." All right, so those people usually –

[0:41:34] DC: Well, that's fine. They're usually not here long. They don't make it long-term.

[0:41:38] WC: Is it fine? No, it's not fine. It's not fine.

[0:41:40] DC: Listen, what I'm saying is now, there's a process. So, then you say, "Well, we had this discussion, so next time, my expectation of you, my employee is that you will follow the direction that we have agreed upon. And, if you have another idea, before you implement it on your own, have a conversation with me about it, and we will adjust from there." There's a process to optimize the process.

[0:42:10] WC: I'm sorry to interrupt you, Deborah. I can't tell you how many times I've had that same conversation exactly verbatim what you just said –

[0:42:16] DC: That's fine.

[0:42:17] WC: – in some capacity. The same person will still come back and be like, "Oh. Well, I thought it should have been done this way."

[0:42:23] DC: And you know what, that person might be really great at something else that they do for you, that that's not the thing you're going to –

[0:42:29] WC: Or you just like them.

[0:42:31] DC: Whatever it might be, everybody has the –

[0:42:33] JM: And then find their hidden talent.

[0:42:35] DC: But there will be a point where some of these bogs down everything that's going on the print shop.

[0:42:41] WC: I know you want to move on, I know you want to move on. I got one final thought. I know that we have listeners that have two three employees, and we have listeners that have big factories that have hundreds and thousands of employees, and everything in between.

[0:42:53] DC: Worldwide.

[0:42:53] WC: Worldwide. So, at the end of the day, no matter what, you have to have process, you have to have some sort of communication, you need to optimize your communication as best as you can, find tools, find software. Software, it really is one of the best ways to do that, and having a clear and concise message, and directive with your people and hoping that they understand as much as possible.

[0:43:18] DC: I would agree with that. I would just say that in the advertising agencies, for example, we would always have an online system where you have production schedules. The expectation, and I'm going to laugh about it as I'm trying to say it, is that the creatives are going to go in there and figure out what their jobs – the jobs they had to work on that week was. Now, you could sit in your office and say, "Well, it's not my responsibility. They're supposed to look in that in the system and figure it out." Or you can say, "Huh, if I want to get out of here before midnight every day, I'm going to have to make sure that these people know what they're doing because certain people don't function that way to your most excellent point before." How is the best way to communicate with people to optimize the interactions and the results to make them better for everybody?

Okay. When we come back, we're going to hear from Jeff.

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[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:44:51] DC: Okay. Welcome back, everybody. So now we're going to hear what Jeff Bezos has to say about this. Now, obviously, he has a different type of organization, they're having different types of meetings there, but I thought some of these were really interesting. The first

one is, keep it small. He calls it the two-pizza rule. Limit attendees to six to eight essential people for maximum efficiency. If the amount of people in the room can't be fed by two pizzas, there's too many people in that meeting. What that does is help those six to eight people, six to ten people have a clearer understanding of their tasks and a smaller group to make decisions. Then, those people who are, I would assume, more top-level management, then go back to their teams and implement the plan.

The second one was, that no slides or any sort of documents brought to the meeting. If there is a meeting, let's just say that you're having a – you want to onboard a brand-new client, that's going to take a lot of interaction with different departments, or just with your team to understand what that is. Just to write a detailed memo explaining what the topic is, and then literally use that meeting to review that memo. Now, nobody's guessing on what you're talking about, it's right in front of them in their hand.

He also said that, his thing is literally to start that meeting by giving 20 minutes for everybody in that meeting to read that memo. So, it's 100% that everybody's read that memo before you're about to have a conversation, not bringing it to the meeting with you, not having read it prior to the meeting, and then trying to skim through it then. He wants to have deep – which is the next thing, you want to have a deep discussion based upon that information that now you know everybody has read and retained because you've made them do it in front of you. Then, now, let's start debating about it. Now, let's discuss if this direction is right. Does it work for everybody? He says, "Encourage deep and messy discussion. Dive into debate and questions, let the ideas flow, even if that brings the meeting over the time that you have scheduled it for. If it's productive, let it keep going."

Then, the last thing he said was, "End with action items and shared notes." Assign the next steps with the owners of whatever the designer, the person who runs the press, the sales team, the marketing team, whoever the owner of the subject is of the task at hand is what I mean. Assign next steps with due dates, share notes with everybody, so everybody is accountable. The last thing that's sort of a bonus thing here, which I just thought was really, really interesting. He has a rule called the empty chair rule. What he said was, put an empty chair in all of your meetings, that represents the customer, reminding everybody there to prioritize the customer's

needs in all discussions and decisions. Those were the five things and a bonus empty chair rule. You both look very pensive. Will, comments?

[0:48:47] WC: The empty chair thing is my favorite thing.

[0:48:50] JM: Same here.

[0:48:51] WC: I love the empty chair rule. I think that's great, that the customer should always be at the forefront of those conversations.

[0:48:57] JM: Agreed. Yes, definitely. I love that. That's my best part of that.

[0:49:00] DC: Okay. Nothing about any of the rest of it resonated. Jamie, you would take your notes.

[0:49:06] JM: I like to keep it small, six to eight people. I wrote them all down. So, I have them. I like to keep it small.

[0:49:12] WC: Six to eight people, I'm all in, yes, and we do that. The weekly meeting that we've done, and we've done this one for years with the department managers, and that's sort of been how we delegate things through is everybody from every department. So, the production managers from both companies, the general managers from both companies, director of operations, HR, accounting, everybody's there. And we all discuss the problems with the company and that becomes a think tank, and that actually does turn into actionable things. Okay, you have this, you have this. It's really a thing.

Maybe we're I get so push backy, is on these big meetings with all of these people, because I just feel like it's such a waste of time. Because I don't feel like it goes anywhere. I don't feel like it does anything, unless it's like a rah rah. Like the morning stand up, if not nothing else, was really just to be like, "Hey, everybody. Let's go." Or, "Hey, everybody. You suck." When it turned into, "Hey, everybody. You suck." Then, we stopped doing them, because then, it just killed morale. But no, I totally agree with that one, that one's a bit – I mean, actually, I agree with all of them. They're all great. Jeff is great.

[0:50:19] JM: I like the no slides one because most of our meeting has no slides. But our quarterly sales meeting is next week, and there'll be a lot of slides, but no slides.

[0:50:26] WC: No slides.

[0:50:28] DC: I love the agenda. I think that that is something that could really help, especially if there's an agenda, and there's a bullet point like, "Now, we're going to talk about the substrate that we can't get next week. Here are the three people and here are the five clients you will have to call, and here's when you have to call them by, and here's when you have to let me know that this is all completed." There is no ambiguity at that point about what has to happen next, when it has to happen by. Then, you guys, the owners, the managers are not responsible for, "Oh, whatever happened with that?" I mean, that's the question. It's like, now a warning. Now a warning? I always love that, after something happens, now a warning.

So, I thought that it was a really interesting perspective, and I really did, as somebody who was completely guilty of showing up at the meeting, just knowing the broad topic and not really maybe looking at that, here's what you need to know before you get there. Then, printing it out and maybe reading it on my way to the conference room or sitting there. Then I'm like, "What is everyone talking about?" Now, I have to figure it out. You know what I'm saying? That is complete – that is not how to optimize the results in meetings.

I think that there are a lot of meetings that are useless too, and this is why I really love this six to ten people rule, or six to eight people, depending on how many slices of pizza people eat. But it keeps you to the people who will follow the instructions and who are responsible for making sure that their team provides the results that had been agreed to at this meeting, and it's their responsibility to do that. Then, you can kind of go on with your life. But having everybody perfectly on the same page with that information before that meeting and making them read it in front of you, I think is genius.

[0:52:28] JM: Let me try that some time. I don't know if we ever have a super detail memo to review or something like that.

[0:52:35] DC: Even if you just had a new client, Jamie. Here's the name of the new client, here are all the top-level contacts in case you need anything on that end of the company, here is the cell phone number of everybody on this team in case you need to reach an estimator at 10 o'clock at night for this giant client.

[0:52:52] JM: Well, I think it'd be great. Like, you have a big client in, here's the list of their pain points, here's what we found out, here's all this. Yep.

[0:52:59] DC: Here's their brand standards, here's their – I mean, there's a zillion things that could be on these memos that people can be clear, crystal clear about what they're discussing. Then, you can look at line-item B and say, "You know what? That substrate's going to be a problem next month, let's preempt this." This is where you start having those conversations that optimize results in a perfect world. Obviously, things happen. But if you plan for things like this, then you have space to deal with emergencies and things like that.

Guys, thank you so much for a really interesting conversation. Everybody who's listening, what are your thoughts on meetings and optimizing meetings? What did you think about what Jeff said now that he's part of the PrinterChat Podcast? We'd love to hear your thoughts, check out the social media shares. And obviously, you can comment on the podcast from any app that you're listening to. Or if you're listening from the website, you could just share it and leave us a comment, but really appreciate you all for hanging in for this conversation. Until next time, have productive meetings long and prosper.

[END OF EPISODE]

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[END]

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Will's drupa presentation:

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

DMR Graphics: www.dmr-graphics.com/

Innvoke: https://innvoke.com/

Will Crabtree: https://www.linkedin.com/in/willtheprinter/

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