

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:05.0] 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.

[0:00:13.4] JM: Hi, this is Jamie McLennan.

[0:00:14.5] WC: And this is William Crabtree.

[0:00:16.2] DC: And I'm your host, Deborah Corn. Welcome to the PrinterChat Podcast.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:25.5] DC: Hey everybody, we are going to record a live episode of Podcast From the Printerverse, more specifically, the PrinterChat Podcast. We are in the Learning Lounge if you're interested in joining us, now would be the time but my name is Deborah Corn. I am the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. I run a company called Print Media Centr. I provide printspiration and resources to print marketing professionals around the world.

I also host a podcast called Podcast From the Printerverse, it is currently listened to in 146 countries. It has more than 250,000 downloads. I like to say for Beyoncé, that's a Tuesday but it makes me the Beyonce of Print. One of my favorite podcast series that I do on Podcast From the Printerverse is called PrinterChat, and I invited two of my favorite printers to join me as cohosts. We have William Crabtree, he is the owner of Tampa Media, which comprises TampaPrinter, ah –

[0:01:35.4] WC: Sign Parrot.

[0:01:36.5] DC: I know Sign Parrot, shirts 818.

[0:01:39.2] WC: 813Shirts.

[0:01:39.9] DC: 813, that's the one I always forget.

[0:01:41.4] WC: Area code 813, 813Shirts and Gorilla Consultants.

[0:01:44.3] DC: And he also has a digital marketing firm, which you have some interesting announcements hopefully at the end of the year about how Will might be able to help some of the printers out there in the world, and Jamie McLennan, who is the GM of DMR Graphics powered by Innvoke, out of the Philadelphia area and Will is actually in Tampa, TampaPrinter, Tampa Media.

Let's start off by letting everybody know a little bit about your work out of Orlando. Will, let's start with you.

[0:02:16.3] WC: Well, I have been in the printing industry for going on 20 years now. I was a DJ and a rave promoter in the late '90s and the early thousands. I passed out a lot of flyers and then that turned into, I became a broker. I was working for a software company, I sold websites to printers and part of my job was to learn how to market those websites so that I could teach the people that I was selling the websites to and it wasn't long that I made more money.

I was selling business cards off of my marketing website and my brokerage website than I was working for the software company. So, I left the software company and I opened a small retail shop, 1,200 square feet, me, one guy, one printer. Now, I co-own two buildings, multiple businesses, 40 employees with my wife, Ashley, who is going to join us a little later, and always learning and always trying to expand and do more stuff, which is why I'm really excited to be at the show and we've already seen a lot of inspiring things and very excited to implement those when I get home.

[0:03:14.0] DC: And you know, when you bought the sign shop, I have – I was already, you know, friends with you and everything. So, I have learned so much about the sign business from your trials and tribulations and your victories and your losses and your frustrations and I mean, it's really been enlightening. I'm coming from the commercial print side. I mean, technically, I would use to work in an advertising as a print production person, I would just supply files and be like, "Where is my sign, you know?"

I think it's really important too, that everybody understands, especially the end users what is – goes into it. You know, when Jamie tells us the stories of he goes to install a sign in the electric from 14 years ago was still in there. You know, very frustrating for everybody. So, I'm glad we're having more dialogs about signage. Jamie, why don't you tell everybody about your work at DMR Graphics powered by Innvoke?

[0:04:08.2] JM: I am Jamie McLennan, Jamie the printer. I have been in the printing industry since 1985, started running Heidelberg Presses and small presses, built that into turning into sales, and now, running our DMR division in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania. DMR is Powered by Innvoke, we have two plants, Cranberry New Jersey is Innvoke, Hachi Digital Offset Printing, direct mail, DMR is POP, signage, large format.

So, we do a lot of different things in that location. So, the signage world, like Will when he bought a sign company, I thought it was amazing. We had bought a sign company in 2020 and slowly had been growing that part of the division. Mostly ADA, hospital signage, outdoor signage for buildings, and stuff like that. Not too many monument signs and big stuff that I'm seeing here in the show but we do a little bit of that.

So, it's fun coming here seeing that, seeing how – what other things we can grow into, and yeah, it's been a great show so far.

[0:05:02.3] DC: Yeah.

[0:05:02.4] JM: Lots of new things.

[0:05:03.9] DC: Usually, as a media person, I'm running around the show by myself, you know, talking to people, making appointments, press appointments, and things of that nature but yesterday, I actually got to walk the show with Jamie the Printer and I learned so much more because you know, nobody talked this technical to me at the booths because they know I have no idea what they're talking about.

So, a couple of times, I would stop and say, "Hold on, I need Jamie to interpret to me what you're saying." But we saw a lot of cool things and since we were actually at the show just a few

hours more than you, Will, I'm going to start with Jamie the printer. What did you see on the show floor that is interesting to you as far as your business and looking forward?

[0:05:48.7] JM: Well, let me start here. The first thing I really liked about coming to the show and doing these types of shows are I like to stop by the booths that we bought equipment from. Our suppliers, there's a bunch of our suppliers here, that community has been very helpful to our company. We have good relationship with our suppliers, with our manufacturers, and just being in the booths yesterday, getting there, whether it was just coincidental, good timing.

But a couple of booths, we just hit it off. Other customers were there, you get to talk with other printers and actually, customers because I got probably two or three leads. You know, one of our friends over at Swiss Q yesterday for doing some pretty cool stuff that we'll talk about in the trends section. That's what I like coming to these shows for. It's the people that you get to see, you don't get to see them all the time.

But you get to create those relationships with your suppliers and the equipment manufacturers. So, building on that, we did stop by a lot of booths yesterday, a lot of great printing equipment out there. We are looking at laser cutting to expand our areas and that some of the POP we do and signage in our facility. So, I was looking at maybe three companies and probably, there's more than 10 companies here that have lasers.

So, that was really incredible. I got to talk to some great people, learned a lot of new things that I didn't know. So, they were very helpful and yeah, everybody was upfront. Everything you asked about, what it is, "You know, you guys are in Texas, we're in Philadelphia." "No problem, here's the price, installed, ready to go." No haggling, no nothing. So, it was pretty cool, yeah.

[0:07:12.4] DC: One of the things that I didn't even know existed until yesterday was that water laser cutter things.

[0:07:20.6] JM: Yeah, water jet. Yes.

[0:07:22.3] DC: Water jet, water and sand goes through like, this entire building.

[0:07:26.0] WC: What booth is that? I got to see that.

[0:07:27.4] JM: Oh, I guess they're over here somewhere, it's amazing.

[0:07:28.8] DC: It's crazy. It reminded me of the movie, Aliens where the acid drips through all of the floors.

[0:07:36.0] JM: Yeah, they'll cut through anything.

[0:07:37.1] DC: I feel like we can turn this on.

[0:07:38.3] JM: Very cool.

[0:07:38.6] WC: Yeah, I want one. I haven't seen it yet and I want one.

[0:07:42.0] DC: It was really – I was like, what? It was really enlightening so, but, you know, because I thought it was a laser cutter just because we were looking through that. Okay, you came in towards the afternoon.

[0:07:53.8] WC: Yup.

[0:07:55.2] DC: And you're on a mission, you were looking for something specific but as we actually did an episode of our podcast from your print shop yesterday.

[0:08:04.7] WC: Yup.

[0:08:05.3] DC: And we talked about how you like to do shows, which is almost like if you think about like, you go to a city and you go on a double-decker bus and you see the whole city and then you can decide what you want to go back and see later on, that's how Will runs through a tradeshow.

[0:08:20.6] WC: Yeah.

[0:08:21.0] DC: So, what were you able to see in those three or four hours that you were literally tearing through these aisles last night?

[0:08:27.6] WC: Well, my experience yesterday was a little different than the way I normally do shows because I, you know, I'm here with my lovely wife, Ashley and she's more of a planner than I am. So, she had some spots that she specifically wanted to see so we hit those and we actually still covered a lot of ground in a short amount of time.

[0:08:41.3] DC: You did.

[0:08:42.4] WC: We saw a lot of stuff. There's some of the things that I'm really excited about and seeing a lot over the new EMCs. So, the technology behind those, the electronic message center, so the LED screens. The technology behind those has advanced so much that like, it's a TV screen. Like, from any distance, it's high res. You know, it looks amazing, and the way they're put together now is so much more simple and easy.

So, I'm excited about those, I've been on a mission to find different types of hardware. So, I'm not in an equipment mission, I'm stacked on equipment right now but looking at like, different types of extrusions. So, we were doing a lot of signed rehab, it's a really good niche for us to be able to bring a sign back to life. So, looking for like the soft signage conversion systems or even like the approaches or the extrusions to be able to make soft signage for indoors to light things up.

So, I saw a lot of that stuff, that was really cool, and then always looking for little tools to make people's lives easier. So, when I see something that takes a lot of time on my floor, I'm always trying to think of a way to solve that or to make it go faster. So, I saw a really cool tool called the Glue Easy, which was like a pen that you could run across acrylic and it like glues immediately, instead of that little squirt bottle with the needle that the guys are on the, you know, trying to put the trim cap on.

So, that was really cool, and then, all the suppliers. So, I'm always engaged and intrigued by the different materials that are coming out and I got a piece of mail yesterday before I left. So, it showed up yesterday right before I left and luckily, I still had not left so that I received it, maybe

they should have mailed it a little sooner but it was the Economy Sign Supply, which now, they're located in Florida.

They're opening a facility here in Orlando. I think this is their grand opening thing is being at this event, yeah, and the mailer was amazing. It was an invitation, it came on this acrylic plaque and I knew that I had to go and see them so I saw their booth. They were great and excited to potentially start working with them. So, it's been very productive in a short amount of time already. So, I'm excited for today.

[0:10:26.8] DC: You are.

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[0:10:29.8] DC: Print Media Centr provides printspiration and resources to our vast network of print and marketing professionals. Whether you are an industry supplier, print service provider, print customer, or consultant, we have you covered. By providing resources and strategies that enable business marketing and creative success, reporting from global events, this podcast, project Peacock TV, and an array of community lifting initiatives.

We also work with OEM suppliers, industry organizations, and event producers, helping You connect and engage with our vast audience, and achieve success with your sales, marketing, and conference endeavors. Visit Print Media Centr and connect with the Printerverse. Links in the show notes. Print long and prosper.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:11:24.2] DC: You were very productive.

[0:11:25.2] JM: Going back to that glue thing with the thing. Both of us were at the booth.

[0:11:29.2] WC: Yeah.

[0:11:29.3] JM: We're like, "We'll buy one now." He's like, "I don't have any." "I already sold out." I was like, "We're ready, we'll take it with us."

[0:11:34.7] DC: On another conversation, we had about, you know, how we, you know, work before, during, and after a tradeshow, what the research we do, what we do at the show, how we follow up after, one of the things that we identified is a great reason to attend to a tradeshow is discovery, and that's exactly what happened. You actually found a useful tool that's going to save you time, money, and hassle, and I learned that you can basically drill through cement with water and sand.

So, it just depends upon where you're coming from but certainly, I like to look at tradeshow and try to understand where is everybody going. You know, what are the things that they're showing that gives me an idea of the vision of the company or what they think the vision of the industry is, or what they think the vision of the needs of the printer's customers will be, and I'll say, I've created my own trends that I believe I've seen here.

But I'll chime in last, Will, let's start with you. I know you only had a short time yesterday, you'll probably get more information today but in your time running through yesterday, what did you kind of gather?

[0:12:45.6] WC: So, I think, one of the biggest trends that I've seen at the show is that almost every booth, whether it's equipment, material, or other tools is there's vehicles being wrapped all over the show and not every booth, but in a lot of the booths, there's vehicles being wrapped, which is exciting to me. I've been learning vehicle wrap, that was a new part of my business when I bought the sign shop that I had stayed away from previously. So, it's interesting to see that the color changes versus just print, right? I think that's something that's kind of new this year.

[0:13:15.0] DC: Can you just define what you mean by color change in case people don't know that?

[0:13:18.7] WC: So, color change is taking the color of a car and changing it with a colored film, right? So, instead of painting it, you would wrap it. Where, I think, previously, it was more heavy

on the print side of advertising and commercial wraps versus the color wraps that are happening all over the place, which is a huge, huge market.

[0:13:34.3] DC: And it opens up a consumer market.

[0:13:36.6] WC: Yeah. Yeah, if you're printing and installing wraps, then it's a little bit of a learning curve but your installer should be able to do color change. So, if it's something that you're not doing already, it's definitely something that you should be doing and obviously, we see it with the trends that you know, it's happening throughout the industry. So, it's definitely something that you should adopt.

[0:13:51.8] DC: I wasn't looking for it but now that you've mentioned it, there's certainly tons of substrate vendors here and film and things like that. I'm going to start looking if I see those metallics and those solid because most of the time, we see that color change on really fancy cars and I mean, there was one that somebody pointed to me on a Lamborghini, I didn't believe it wasn't painted.

I've seen work you do from your sign shop where you're actually doing like, a matte black and then some gloss on top of it, which looks really, really cool. So, I love that people are skewing more to auto decoration than just signage on a car, which still, by the way, is a fantastic – if you own a retail business or you deliver and you don't have freaking graphics on your vehicles, I don't know what to say to you. Like, look, open up your eyes, and go find a printer that will help you.

[0:14:46.1] WC: Yeah, I didn't see nearly enough graphics on the vehicles out on the parking lot as I came in. There should be much, much more. If you're in the printing industry or the sign industry, and you don't have graphics on your car, you are missing an opportunity.

[0:14:55.7] DC: Okay, I'll mostly going to point out that there's a lot of people in here without business cards but that's a whole thing.

[0:15:01.8] JM: Hey, I have business cards today.

[0:15:03.0] DC: Okay, thank you. Okay, Jamie. Will, anything else trendy-wise for you?

[0:15:07.1] WC: One of the thing is and it's kind of in the same vein is more of like the textile type of films. Getting into more of like architectural decoration. Again, kind of getting away from the printing side of things but using the same tools and the resources that we have available to people that do printed install on a wall can install textiles. So, you could decorate offices and add these as extra embellishments and extra services when you're selling or pitching a sign to somebody.

[0:15:30.6] JM: I saw that too. It's not just vinyl but there is a company out there, I believe, called Kennametal. They we remaking thin metal sheets that were put on walls as decorative textures, different stuff like that, it was very cool, and they had wood and metal. So, it was kind of neat, so different avenue going in that way.

[0:15:44.8] DC: And Dimense had the like that –

[0:15:46.6] JM: That's part of the thing we're going to bring up, yeah.

[0:15:47.3] DC: That furry, felty thing. I mean, it was so soft. We were putting it on our face.

[0:15:52.2] WC: Even the fabric, the adhesive fabric on the entrance, did you see that as you were coming through?

[0:15:56.4] DC: Yeah.

[0:15:56.5] WC: It's self-adhesive fabric. That whole wall is covered with it. That stuff is awesome.

[0:16:00.1] DC: Oh, I didn't know that was fabric.

[0:16:00.2] JM: Yeah, we use that a lot.

[0:16:01.7] WC: It's fabric, yeah-yeah-yeah.

[0:16:02.9] JM: It can be pulled down.

[0:16:03.5] WC: There's so many things you can do with that, outside of just putting it on a wall too. Sure.

[0:16:06.1] DC: That makes total sense because there was this guy standing out this morning and he was like, touching everything. I was like, "What is he?"

[0:16:12.7] JM: Admiring the wall?

[0:16:12.4] DC: I was like, "What is he? Marrying the wall?" I was like, "What is this guy doing?" It was a little crazy.

[0:16:17.8] JM: Those fabric graphics are great for going over like, vinyl walls, for like professional sports and minor league sports and they go to playoffs, you add a graphics to the inside of the dugouts and stuff, so yeah, very cool.

[0:16:28.3] DC: Okay, the Jamie the printer. I was with you yesterday. So, what sort of trends were you seeing on the show floor?

[0:16:35.9] JM: One of the big trends I saw with the suppliers with the number of them here, a lot of environmentally – however you want to call it, eco-friendly materials. Most of the signs I've noticed in here is all being able to be thrown away, it's all paper-based. We had a lot of customers, that's all they're looking for right now. So, I came here looking for recycled plastics and other types of papers and I've seen that in a number of booths.

So, that was really cool. I found a couple of suppliers from Ireland, that was kind of neat that I didn't even know existed. Some friends over here in the booth over here at 3A, they have some really cool thing called suede board, which is dimensional thick, like honeycomb-type material, and a polar board that you can do displays that you can actually walk on and build a platform, some stuff. Yeah, so that was kind of cool.

But I've noticed that in a couple of different places. That was really cool, and then, in the printing world, in the different printing booths that we've been in, it's slowly been coming along. Swiss Q started it a couple of years ago with textured 3D printing so you can take an artist's wet painting, add a 3D scan, and actually print it so it looks like it's brush stroke. Amazing, and I've seen other companies starting to do the same.

They're offering their white, their clear eggs, and white, so they can build up the ink to create these different textures. I see that trend building and building, I know, in our shop, we have a lot of interest in it and people are asking for us. We're getting referrals for that all the time, and then the Lenticular thing we saw, you know? I'm bringing up one of my favorite companies again.

[0:18:00.3] WC: From booth 10.

[0:18:00.9] DC: Yeah, mutual had it, which is kind of interesting. They did it on a solid substrate where you can kind of look at it, kind of like – kind say, the cracker jack thing from when you were a kid. Like, that kind of lenticular, and then, some of the other ones were acrylics where it kind of builds a depth and the clear ink gives it a lens. So, that are some of the trends I see, which I think are exciting. I know we have some exciting customers about it and are looking for the right fits to add this to their business world. So, those are some of the things I saw.

[0:18:25.6] DC: I, as a recovering print customer from an advertising agency, I walk down the aisles without looking completely differently at everything because sorry everybody, but I'm not going to buy any equipment in here. I don't have a print shop or I sign shop. So, I look more at, "Do I have a clear understanding of what these companies do and how they claim that they can help printers do something or add something to their business?"

Are there samples adequately representing what they want to represent about their products and the way they print or the way the ink lays down on a certain subject? And I have to say that for all of the talk about sustainability that is going on here, I don't see the messaging on the signage on the booths. I don't see a lot of you know, maybe people don't want to reinvest in their tradeshow booths.

But times have changed and there are definitely printers walking around this tradeshow, Jamie the Printer was one of them, specifically looking for more sustainable substrates to use. I only found one booth that literally had it plastered up there. Everybody else, we had to dig in too long and I guess what I'm saying is that if you are just walking by, you're going to continue walking. So, I would say a trend here is to after the show, go back with your team, look at what you're trying to say, and make sure that that's clearly communicated.

Regarding the samples, I don't know if people are printing them on the show floor. I don't know if they just want to have things, to have things at a tradeshow but for me, the way I look at those samples is a direct reflection of the equipment or the process or the – whatever it is they're trying to show me, and if those samples are not as close to pristine as possible, for me, that's a problem.

[0:20:31.7] WC: Right.

[0:20:31.2] DC: I start questioning the technology. I was told that maybe I should question the operator's skill and I would like to just preface that a lot of times in a tradeshow, it's not an operator actually on the machine. It's an engineer or a technical person.

[0:20:48.7] WC: Or a salesperson.

[0:20:50.5] DC: I mean, who, whatever. I mean, I'm just saying that pay more attention to that, it matters. So, when you go back from this show or any show, have a plan, have a person whose job it is, is to make sure that the samples are the way that they want to be, whether you're shipping them in or talk to the person who is printing them on the show floor, and just make sure that you're showing off the best that you can be.

The last thing I want to talk about is a really cool trend that I noticed, which is using really big wide format flatbeds to print many-many-many-many-many-many little things and then cut them out with the – what's the –

[0:21:31.2] JM: CNC, yeah.

[0:21:32.7] DC: I call it the cutting thing, they tell me, it's called CNCs. The CNCs or the lasers or if you dare, the water, sand killer thing but incredible, almost strategy about that.

[0:21:45.3] JM: Yeah, they run.

[0:21:45.9] DC: You know? Yeah, I can make you an eight-foot sign or I can make you 300 little buttons, and there's some really cool acrylic samples that I see a whole new opportunity to almost enter the premiums. I call them premiums, what do you call them? Promotional items space. I loved the decals, all the transfers that people were putting on like stickers and things like that, and I start thinking about like, working out things with high schools and camps, like kids go to or even going into like, some of these booths where they have 30, 40, employees with you know, from a place where a lot of employees are.

[0:22:28.1] JM: Universities, prep schools.

[0:22:29.3] DC: Exactly.

[0:22:30.2] JM: You can print all their things that their students will take and put on their notebooks, their computers.

[0:22:33.7] DC: Yes, and you can sell them. I mean, just like you sell, you know when they sell photos of children, you know, your school photos, you could add to it. You could start putting stuff in college bookstores. I know you can't just walk into a college and say, "I want to do something like that." But some of the people out here are already printing for universities.

So, it's just another conversation to have or it's a way to talk to somebody about, "Look, I don't want to talk to you about your signage. I know you have that covered. I want to talk to you about something you're not doing." So, that's just a way to have a new conversation. So, that's what I took away from, yes.

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:23:49.0] DC: We're actually going to have a drop-in right now. We've mentioned Ashley a few times, so this is Ashley Crabtree. She is a first-generation family-owned business owner. She is Will's wife as he mentioned. She works at the Print Shop, in a management position and I am proud to say, this is her first tradeshow.

[0:24:09.3] AC: Yup.

[0:24:10.0] DC: And we wanted to get a newbie perspective on everything. So, just tell us about your tradeshow experience.

[0:24:19.8] AC: Well, I wasn't expecting it to be this big, to be honest with you. I'm like, wow, the sign industry and printing in general is huge.

[0:24:29.2] WC: It's massive.

[0:24:29.6] AC: Right? Well, I was really blown away by the technology, like, so many cool machines, so much new technology that I've never seen and just learning all about that, watching the big printers print different things. The laser cutters, all the LED things that you can do, and like how that has changed so much from like, even what I've seen as a consumer. So, that was really cool.

That's really exciting because that's something that we can offer as our company and it was interesting just talking to everybody and getting to learn about the machines because I don't always dig into that part of it. Honestly, I'm more administration and management stuff. So, that

was cool to see how those machines operate so I can better talk to even like, our own employees but also customers, about things that we offer.

So, that was really cool. I also liked you know, you can stop by all of our vendors, things like you know, you were saying Jamie, that's cool. Like, I recognize all those names, deal with all those POs and things like that. So, I'm like, "Okay, like, yes, I know you, we order a lot of stuff from you." So, that was really exciting to kind of see all the people in person and not just the name, right?

Because a lot of times, I only see the name, I'm like, "Yes, I know you, I know what you offer, I know what you sell." But that kind of you know, personal relationships and seeing those people in person for the first time.

[0:26:00.5] DC: You also made one of the best discoveries, that flexible electronic side.

[0:26:05.2] AC: It was, yeah, the LED signs, those were super cool. I was like, never seen anything like that in my life.

[0:26:10.0] WC: It's like a giant coke can, it's somewhere in the middle of the show. It's an LED giant end, so they've got flexible magnetic LED EMC.

[0:26:19.3] AC: Yeah, like if you could put that on the back of a wall and just have it like a TV, that would be amazing.

[0:26:25.3] WC: We're going to do it, we're going to put a giant TV at the shop.

[0:26:27.6] AC: It's definitely like an eye-catcher because everybody that walks by is like, "What is that thing?" Like, never seen anything like it.

[0:26:34.7] DC: I am definitely going to look for it but based just on the videos that you took of it yesterday. So, Will said that you had some things in mind that you wanted to see at the shop.

[0:26:44.4] AC: Yes.

[0:26:44.7] DC: Again, I know you only had a few hours yesterday and you got to spend the time today, did you get – were you able to get any of that done, is that right?

[0:26:51.3] AC: Yeah, I did.

[0:26:51.8] DC: And now, you want to share more about that?

[0:26:53.7] AC: Yeah. So, I was really interested in the whole graph experience because we do a lot of graphs, that's something that's something that we do. I thought it was really cool to see like all the competitions, even like the sign competition, so cool. It like gets people involved, that's something different, so you're not just like walking around looking for vendors and kind of like you can see how things work.

You can see the material, all of those things are super helpful when you are looking for things to buy and seeing them in action. That was really amazing, loved that. I also wanted to see the sign agent, that program that they had and they had mentioned it on email. They kind of like, emailed blast and I was like, "Oh, I really want to go see that." Saw them yesterday, that looked like super cool technology and software that can kind of help sign makers from like the conception part all the way into installation, which is really cool and I don't think –

[0:27:45.8] WC: And necessary.

[0:27:46.3] AC: Yeah, and I don't think there's a whole lot of software out there. That's what I would like to see more of is more software, honestly. There is not a whole lot of software out there, start developing software, better software people.

[0:27:57.4] DC: It is out there, it just doesn't do what you need it to do.

[0:28:01.7] WC: Right. Well, you have to use like 10 pieces of software.

[0:28:02.2] AC: Yeah, but I would like to see more of it. Yeah.

[0:28:05.1] DC: It's like it has to be a Frankenstein thing.

[0:28:07.6] AC: Yeah.

[0:28:07.6] WC: Right, that's what we have seen.

[0:28:08.4] AC: And we only like two things, so I would like to see more software here. I think that's super helpful, programs that can help people solve problems, that's super helpful. So, yeah, but it was really cool to see all those things. I thought the emails they sent out were really helpful because it highlighted different businesses, their booth numbers, and things that you might be interested in seeing, which is helpful if you have never been here before.

[0:28:32.1] DC: Yeah.

[0:28:32.4] AC: So, I like that, that they did that.

[0:28:34.5] DC: Excellent. You know, I was thinking about you yesterday when I was sitting right next door in the Hub, which is [ISE's 0:28:42.1] area, where they have all the regional organizations and associations that people might not know of in their area that new sign people can tap into. I mean, even if it's just getting some online education for your installers or for a graphic artist.

I know you have a lack of graphic artists in your business and help create the work for people but you know, I think that that's a really valuable area and I wanted to mention it to you.

[0:29:15.1] AC: Yeah.

[0:29:15.6] DC: Listening right next to it, so it enabled me to remember. Is there anything else you want to say about your experience so far at the show?

[0:29:24.2] AC: It's been great. I loved it, having a lot of fun. Yeah, I think the organization and the time it took to put this together, you can definitely tell they spent a lot of time and energy, and money to make this happen. So, they did a great job. Yeah, I had a lot of fun. I'm looking forward to seeing other things and going back to other booths that were like didn't have time to

see really and like, talk to those people, see what they really do. So, looking forward to doing that today.

[0:29:53.7] DC: Excellent. So, you're more than welcome to stay here if you'd like, it's up to you. So, we are going to talk now about what happens next, yes?

[0:30:04.0] WC: Yeah.

[0:30:04.7] DC: So, what I mean by that is we had a really interesting conversation that I think is worth repeating on this episode of the podcast, which is what happens when a trade show ends and how much following up do the manufacturers, I mean, the exhibitors who are scanning badges actually do with people and what is that type of follow up? We have – all right, so why do we talk about, we'll lay the foundation of previous experiences, and then we'll talk about what we hope will happen here. So, let's start with you, previous experience.

[0:30:44.5] WC: Previous experience, I am a weird duck when it comes to trade shows. I hide my badge, I try to avoid being scanned, I try to avoid being talked to as much as I can unless I'm really interested in something. If I have questions that I want to talk to somebody, I'll engage but like, I am the guy that's trying to dodge the sales reps in the middle of the aisle that are trying to rope you into their booth.

But no, if I am really interested in something I let people scan my badge because I want the information and I want to learn more and I think what really happens and where it falls short is that you get an email, right? And it usually kind of ends there and you don't have someone calling you, you don't get any mail, you don't get really much from most people. There are vendors that do a really good job with this.

But there's other vendors that you just, you literally get one email and then it's done, right? You don't have any more engagement unless you chase them, right? And I'm not a chaser, so unless I really, really want something but I'll figure it out on my own, right? One of the things that I think that we fall short on is a lot of the things here, you can't buy from the manufacturer. You have to go through a distributor.

But they don't tell you who the distributor is or they don't tell you who the local sales rep is and they don't connect the dots for you. So, you come and you see all this amazing stuff and you see so much in a short amount of time that some of it gets lost in your brain, right? Especially if you are really busy and you run businesses and you got a lot of things going on. I think that there is a very big missed opportunity in follow-up marketing and how you continue to engage with the people that you interact with at these shows.

[0:32:13.6] DC: Agree. Jamie, past experience.

[0:32:16.7] JM: Past experience is pretty much the same as Will said. I usually don't try and hide from the people in the booths but I don't like getting roped into a booth that I don't have any interest in but when I am there, I'm like, "Yes, scan my badge." And if it's somebody I really want them to get back to me, I'm like, "Here's my card because we're interested in this. Here's our timeframe, three months."

Six months, sometime in the next year or this is something on our list that we need and more times than not, it's a couple blanket emails, nothing personal or nothing like, "Hey, I saw you at the booth, please get back to me." That's rare, you know, once or twice but that's what's needed, follow up especially if I've been like, "Yes, scan my badge. Here's my card, I am interested." Phone call, follow up, send an email, I'm going to call you at this time.

And, as we said before, especially if you're at some of these booths, especially the supplier's booths like materials, vinyl, and stuff like that, send the samples. They want to see samples. We want to touch samples, we want that in our end, say, "Hey, I remember you were at our booth. I know you were looking at this, here is a sample pack" or, "Here is something you are interested in." Send it to me and then follow up because that is the only way I am going to get back to you.

Because like Will said, we're busy, we're running around, we're selling to people, we're running the business, you know we are not sitting there waiting for the phone call. So, yeah, so that's the best way to get back in touch with me but far too many times, you're not. So, that's just one way and now, everybody hearing this will call next week?

[0:33:35.4] WC: Spread it out.

[0:33:35.9] JM: My phone's going to be blowing up, don't call three days after the show, give it a week or two, and then call.

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[0:33:44.0] DC: Calling all fierce fabulous females, Girls Who Print is waiting for you, and our global mission to help empower and connect the women of print is stronger than ever. Join our 10,000-member growing women-only LinkedIn group, connect with us on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Celebrate Girls Who Print Day and find out who wins our annual Girly Award. Join our ongoing initiatives, online events, in-person conferences, and global mentoring program.

Visit girls who print for information on how to get involved and get empowered. Links in the show notes.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:34:23.5] DC: I mean, I think it's so important that we talk about this because you know, the industry is in a flux, right? There are less printing businesses, this is a fact.

[0:34:23.5] WC: Yes.

[0:34:35.6] DC: There are less people on planet Earth who think print first. It's a fact, it doesn't mean that print is not a viable medium or communication channel or sales tool, or educational tool. That has nothing to do with it.

[0:34:51.3] WC: Right.

[0:34:51.8] DC: There is just less people using it. That means that there is more pressure on printers to find customers and there's more pressure on exhibitors to find printers as customers and there is more pressure on trade shows to attract printers if they say, "I went to this trade show and I scanned all these badges and nothing happened" right? What I've been learning

more and more talking to printers after the show is who's actually not doing something at that point?

I mean, you came here, you allowed your badge to be scanned, you had conversations with people who told them you were interested, and you get a generic, "Thanks for visiting our booth. If you have any questions, visit our website. Contact us." You get a contact page, which essentially puts you through the entire experience you had in the booth again, or to your point, you are not even talking to the right person because you need a distributor.

So, there's got to be more skin in the game with the exhibitors in my personal opinion and I agree with you, Jamie. You know, there used to be a time where if you gave somebody a business card, you walked into a booth, they'd write something on the back of it so they remembered what they talked to you about or something and you did say in the HP booth, it was a little more.

[0:36:13.7] JM: Yes, they actually scanned my badge, and then it had like a little questionnaire, and they were like, "What are you interested in? Why do you like this? When would you like me to get back to you? How would you like me to get back to you? What's the timeframe?" Just a couple of other questions and it was pretty interesting because that's the first person there –

[0:36:28.0] DC: They asked you where you lived.

[0:36:28.9] JM: Oh, they asked where we were and where the company was.

[0:36:30.8] DC: So, they were going to send the right person to [inaudible 0:36:32.5]

[0:36:32.5] JM: It was actually the person that was in that territory came over and said "I'm in that territory" so that was good but yeah, a lot more questions than just a scan. So, that was interesting.

[0:36:40.4] DC: So, that's another way of doing it, that pre-sorting, right? So, they are getting the information upfront then they'll disseminate it to the right people. Everyone else is going to have to weed through that stuff and I don't know and they are going to get the blanket email. So,

I just think there has to be more skin in the game. Okay, from this show, what are your plans as far as following up or what you hope is going to happen?

Well, I'm just saying, I was with Jamie and he had some really serious, what I would categorize as buying conversations.

[0:37:11.3] JM: Oh yeah, no, for sure. There is definitely stuff that I am buying from this show.

[0:37:14.9] DC: Okay.

[0:37:15.2] JM: And you know, I am under supervision right now because I buy stuff at shows that I probably shouldn't buy but there is –

[0:37:20.4] DC: Jamie and I have experienced that by the way, where are you though?

[0:37:22.8] JM: I bought a lot of equipment at shows, I'm not buying any equipment at this point.

[0:37:25.5] DC: I just bought something in aisle three, I'll be over in that lane.

[0:37:28.7] JM: But no, I mean, there is a lot of that glue thing. I'm definitely going to buy that, the affordability of that is insane and the amount of time that that will save is ridiculous –

[0:37:28.7] DC: And I just want to say you want it, so you don't care what you have to do.

[0:37:40.8] JM: Yeah, I'm going to find – if that guy doesn't get back to me, I will find that guy. I am going to buy it.

[0:37:44.4] WC: I scan the thing, right?

[0:37:45.2] JM: Discount both, yeah, I got the show special, right? You know, so –

[0:37:48.2] DC: Oh yeah, I want to mention that too.

[0:37:49.6] WC: Yeah, we'll talk about the show special. Why don't we go ahead and talk about it now while we're on the subject?

[0:37:53.7] DC: Yes, please.

[0:37:54.2] WC: I assume most people that are at the show know this but if we're – for people that may be watching this that are not at the show or never attended the show, they're almost – everybody has a show special, right? But that doesn't necessarily mean that you have to pay or buy at the show to get the show special. Most of them will carry it for a month and even a month or two after the show takes place.

So, you're not under necessarily pressured to make your purchase here but you know, you can still take advantage of those discounts in most cases but yeah, I mean, I'm definitely going to invest more in the EMC side of things. We have one on our sign shop building that we inherited that's really old, I'd like to replace that. I had a conversation with one of the vendors about potentially having that replaced by them and then giving us a discount so that we have –

[0:38:34.4] DC: Really?

[0:38:34.9] WC: Like a showpiece on our building to upsell. You know, I'm really big on making things and having things to be able to show customers because that is the easiest way to get them to buy stuff. Again, why we need samples, send us samples as much as possible. Anybody that you interact with if you make a thing or you have a thing, send samples to the people that are at the show that you're interacting with so that we can show those to customers and customers will buy them and then we buy them from you.

[0:38:57.4] DC: Absolutely, Jamie?

[0:38:59.1] JM: Oh, I had some good conversations. So, I'm hoping those people will follow up. I gave them timeframes, I'm like, "I'm not looking for next week or next month. I have certain needs, it's in the next year, this is the direction we're looking to go." And you know, I will be doing more research on the couple pieces that I really like to see if they really fit us and then I will probably do –

If I don't hear from them, I will make that phone call first just to say, "Hey, you know, I'd looked at this, this brochure." I am talking about the show specials, what I found really helpful this year is that most of the vendors had the price right out there, right out front.

[0:39:32.5] WC: Yes.

[0:39:33.1] DC: Yes.

[0:39:33.2] JM: They're on the coffee machine or you just ask the question. I'm like, "What is the prices?" "USD 15,000, it's USD 20,000 installed, ready to go." I'm like, "I'm in Philadelphia, you're in Texas." He's like, "Not a big deal. We also have a service center in New Jersey 20 miles away from you that will service you." I was like, "That's a big help, great." So, that I thought the transparency was great.

So yeah, so those ones that I had good conversations with, I'm hoping I hear back from. If not, I will probably reach out to them once I've done a little bit more research and then we'll see how long that show special lasts.

[0:40:03.5] DC: Excellent. We had a little pre-podcast meeting last night where we talked about things, you know, looking at the show.

[0:40:11.3] WC: Yeah.

[0:40:12.0] DC: And some things that go on about that and one of the things we talked about was hoping that the show organizers, all show organizers not just the International Sign Association but all of them start thinking more user experience, meaning that printers have limited times out of their print shops now. It's way different than it had been in the past and it would be much more user-friendly for like items to at least be in the same rows versus I understand companies don't want to be right next to each other necessarily.

And hear conversations, "Okay, but all the software could be in row 300." It could be spread out but at least you know that's where you go for that and things with that are easily groupable. I understand why they do it to encourage people to walk around and the people who want to walk

around are going to walk around but the people who really need to do their research, have their conversations, and maybe they only have one day.

And maybe, they only have a few hours in one day, especially if they're local to any venue, try to make it easier for them even if you color code the booths on the map so you know that everything blue is software, everything yellow is a cutting device or some manner just to try to make that a little bit easier for you and you mentioned something else that we want to talk about but now, I forgot what it was.

[0:41:49.9] WC: But I agree with that. So, that would help because I mean, I think we probably walked eight miles yesterday.

[0:41:53.7] DC: Yeah, talk about that from a Printerverse perspective even though you had time to do it.

[0:41:58.0] WC: I had time to do it yesterday but yeah, like you said, I zig-zagged back and forth across the thing. You know, we tried to go up and down every aisle, see things, and I'm like, "No, I have a list of people that I want to see today and I want to get an overview of what they have." And then usually, the second day you kind of finetune on what you got to do. I'm like, "I need to go back and see these three different people."

But they're in three different corners, so it's kind of it would be easier if they were then two rows of each other. So, that would make it a lot easier but I think that would help the serious people that are looking for it. Like you said, yeah, I see. I think we'll have the Walmart mentality, you want to go check the whole store out that way. We're going to buy more but I think it would be much more easier if things were you know, in this corner here is all equipment, over here was all materials, so yeah, that would definitely help.

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:43:18.9] DC: And just obviously people that had more than one thing and they may qualify, okay, put them all in a little area too. Like, a one-stop shopping more is there and that's actually – I don't mean to digress for a moment but that was another trend that I noticed on the show floor is that if you look at it as that in the last three years, printers have geared up with equipment, right?

Now, they're looking more in the finishing areas, now they're looking more in the software areas, right? Oh God, I lost my train of thought during the live podcast here. What was I saying about trends?

[0:43:55.1] WC: Trends where we saw, we talked to some of the manufacturers that their equipment is faster than it has been.

[0:44:00.0] DC: Oh yeah, thank you.

[0:44:00.6] WC: But then the cutting equipment is still the same speed. So, the backups are in the cutting department rather than in the printing department. You are printing faster than you have before, so printers are looking for a way to stop that log jam in their C&C department, their cutting department, you know, adding another piece of equipment, or finding a faster piece of equipment. So, those speeds need to kind of match to keep things flowing well.

[0:44:23.1] DC: Right. Okay, and then the thing that I remembered was that what I was seeing is that, the exhibitors who assumed that most people had presses already were like, "What else is out there that you might be doing?" And for example, we were in the Roland booth and we saw some really interesting addons to print like directly on Stanley Cups and Yeti cups and not etching but literal printing.

And if you think about like, what goes with signage, events, you know? And what else can we do for events or you can make T-shirt, they have a small little, very affordable T-shirt press there. So, it's back to your point, also Will, I loved that pricing was out in the open in the show.

[0:45:10.4] WC: Yes, love it.

[0:45:11.9] DC: It's such a relief to not get the, "How much is the cost?" "Well, you know, it depends." And you guys were getting straight answers.

[0:45:23.4] WC: Yeah, you ask and they tell you, straight up. It's great, love it.

[0:45:26.3] DC: It saves so much time on everybody's end. You know, the exhibitors don't have to necessarily spend time with someone who – that might not be in their price range. It also gives printers who equip and is not in that price range what they know that they need to save up for or what they need to get it.

[0:45:45.1] WC: Their goals, yeah.

[0:45:45.7] DC: They have a goal. It just makes for a lot less pressure because now, if somebody's told something is USD 6,000 or USD 68,000, or USD 680,000 if they're still standing there talking to you, then they can afford it. So, I thought it was a great, you know, situation out there.

[0:46:06.7] WC: It's a good change, it's something that I've never – I've been to a lot of shows. I know, you've been to a lot of shows and –

[0:46:11.3] DC: I've never seen prices printed.

[0:46:11.7] WC: I've never seen pricing just listed on the machine. Never seen it before. It's amazing, I love it.

[0:46:16.9] DC: Yeah. It was great, and the other thing we kind of saw that I thought it was interesting is that the base price and sometimes, the added value of two more channels of color

or something, was only a difference of like 3,000 to USD 5,000. I mean, it's like, it's that medium popcorn, large popcorn thing.

[0:46:37.0] WC: Right.

[0:46:37.3] DC: It's like, once you're on a medium, large is only 25 cents more and you can't get your mind around that.

[0:46:43.3] WC: Might as well do it, you know?

[0:46:44.4] DC: But for USD 3,000, why wouldn't you open up –

[0:46:47.1] JM: Yeah, I'm adding white ink and clear.

[0:46:48.2] WC: And more colors, yeah, and more functionality. The more stuff that you can do with your equipment, the more opportunity you have to sell, and it's diversification, right? And even to your point earlier, the different, like, there's garment here, I would like to see more of that sort of stuff. More offerings for – if you're a sign shop, to be able to have more channels of sales, right?

The more you say no to your customer, the more likely they are to go to somebody else that's going to say yes, and then if they ask that person for what you do, and that person says yes, then you just lost a customer. So, the more you can offer your customers and the more diversification you have in your product offerings, the more customer attention you're going to have.

[0:47:23.3] JM: That's what I liked at the Roland booth, I think it was, they had some nice equipment or like it but they were calling it desktop printers and stuff like that, that you can print the Tchotchkes and giveaways. Stuff that you'll probably buy from ASI or somebody like that. That now, you can probably buy a piece of equipment for like five or six grand that you can print your own and have your own branded giveaways that you're going to take to a show, give to your customers and you're not spending extra money on a bunch of different things.

You're actually manufacturing them in your shop, and then that could actually be turned into sales because people will eventually ask you, "You know, where are you getting these?" So, I'm like, "We print them. So, we can do this for you." So, that was kind of neat.

[0:47:58.4] DC: Yeah, excellent. Okay, well, we're going to wind this down. Sir, do you have any questions? Thank you for attending. We appreciate it.

[0:48:05.7] JM: Yes, thank you.

[0:48:06.5] WC: Thank you.

[0:48:07.1] DC: Anybody have any questions? There's a couple of people here. I don't think – usually, we don't ask questions during the podcast. So, but just in case, I didn't want to be rude. Okay, final words, Will, and then, how do people get in touch with you if they're interested? Don't give out your email or your phone number.

[0:48:24.6] WC: Definitely, no, I'm looking forward to seeing more of the show. Thank you to ISA for having us and putting on this event and allowing us to record this podcast. I very much appreciate that. If you want to get in touch with me, you go to Tampa.Media or you could call, 813-Printer, that's our phone number at TampaPrinter.com. If you want some advice on digital marketing, I have Gorilla Consultants and then, Sign Parrot.

We do installation and wrap installation as well. So, if you're looking for an installer in Central Florida and you're not in Central Florida, we can install it for you.

[0:48:54.0] DC: Excellent. Thank you so much for joining us, Ashley, you as well, thank you so much for joining us. Jamie?

[0:49:01.2] JM: One thing I'd like to end on, I think Ashley touched on it briefly was the display they had yesterday where they had that team of people, five different teams putting a sign together, which is kind of giving like an HGTV atmosphere like competition. It was really cool, something I haven't seen at a show before. So, I thought that was really cool, they should do

more of that. I know they do it for car wraps and stuff like that but this was like a backlit sign and they had to put all of it together and make sure it worked.

[0:49:22.2] DC: It's fabrication, yeah.

[0:49:23.6] JM: Fabrication, so it was kind of cool, they had an hour to do it. Really neat, and I am Jamie McLennan from DRM Graphics. You can reach out to me on LinkedIn, find me there, and DMR-Graphics.com is our website and it was a pleasure. Thanks, ISA for having us out here. Like we said, we do the PrinterChat Podcast usually monthly and we've been doing it for about five years now or so.

[0:49:45.1] DC: Oh my God, has it been that long?

[0:49:45.8] JM: It's been at least.

[0:49:46.9] DC: Wow. Time flies when you're having fun. Again, thank you so much to the International Sign Association for inviting me to participate with them at the show and for inviting us to do this podcast. This is one of my favorite organizations and my favorite events. Lori Anderson, who is the president and CEO of the Sign Association is probably very unassumingly walking around the tradeshow right now, just talking to random people who don't even know that she's the president and CEO of the association.

They are community-oriented in a business success manner. It's not so much as, "Who is here?" As much as it is as, "Who is here that is going to help me with the future of my business?" And they have a real big focus on bringing the community together for that. I mean, there is a big sign rotating next to us that says, "Signs Means Business." and they mean business about that.

So, thank you, everybody, so much. Podcast From the Printerverse is the podcast that you can find us on anywhere you listen to podcast or you could go to PrintMediaCentr.com and find it from there and also, all the other work that I do for the industry. Until next time, Print Long and Prosper.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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[END]

Mentioned in This Episode:

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

ISA International Sign Expo: <https://signexpo.org/>

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