

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:05.0] DC: It takes the right skills and the right innovation to design and manage meaningful print marketing solutions. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse, where we explore all facets of print and marketing that creates stellar communications and sales opportunities for business success. I'm your host Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. Thanks for tuning in. Listen long and prosper.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:31.6] DC: Hey everybody, welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse, this is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador, and today, we are beaming to the greater Toronto area of Canada, and we are speaking with David Borochoviz. He is the letterpress operator, project consultant, and social media marketing person at Passion Letterpress, a full-service, custom stationery studio providing wholesale luxury print services to designers and stationers.

David's passion for collaboration with designers and artists and the craft of printing is evident in the work he shares through the Passion Letterpress account on Instagram and through his personal account on LinkedIn, which is where I first noticed him. Hello David, and welcome to the podcast.

[0:01:20.2] DC: Hey Deborah, how's it going? I'm super thrilled to be here, I have been listening to this podcast since probably 2020.

[0:01:26.6] DB: Excellent. Well, first of all, thank you so much for that, and also thank you so much for your dedication to the craft of printing. Let's actually start there. How did you get involved in letterpress printing?

[0:01:44.3] DC: So, I went to art school first of all, so I had a creative background and then I worked for probably four years after college, after university, as a picture framer in art galleries, and I did that for four years and then somewhere along the line, a customer of ours at the framing place introduced me to Andy Ribau, who owns Passion Letterpress here in Oakville Ontario.

Yeah, I met Andy and I was fascinated by these machines that he was working on. It was one guy running all these printing presses in this place, and I very quickly, like, took a real interest in the processes and the possibilities of what it can mean for like, me to learn all of this, and yeah, I quit my job and I never turned back and I've been doing this ever since, since 2017, August 2017.

[0:02:29.9] DB: When I think of letterpress, I mean, craft is the first thing that comes to mind. There are craft people that have to be involved in the process and I also, when I think of craft printing, I also think of apprenticeships and not even internships, literal apprenticeships, and I kind of think like old tiny. Like, in my mind, maybe it's like colonial times in the United States but that's really what I'm thinking of, which isn't so crazy because the presses, the technology is relatively old.

But what it can do, the appeal of it hasn't changed over all of these years. So, how did you transform from something you thought was really cool to being a master of the craft?

[0:03:16.3] DC: Yeah, so apprenticeship being the keyword, I guess. So yeah, like I'm – I realize that I'm incredibly fortunate and that I think these opportunities still exist in 2024 but it takes a different kind of initiative for an individual to like, seek them out and find the right match for it to become a thing. It's not like an industry where apprenticeships – where you are placed into apprenticeship and you learn something like this because it's so specific and so niche now because there's just not a lot of people doing it anymore.

So, there's an aspect of legacy I guess, with this kind of training. So, because this wasn't a formal – it was a formal apprenticeship in some ways, it was – I took it very seriously. We approached it probably similar to how apprenticeships would have been approached when there was more of them in this type of work but yeah. So, I didn't quit my job initially, I worked with Andy about one day a week for a couple of months I believe.

And then we made the decision that yes, this is going to work and then I took the full-time position here and yeah, it was a commitment from the start. So, there was a level of seriousness that I had. Like, I was at the stage of my life, I wasn't super young, I was 26 years old. So, I was

out of school for a while and I was trying to figure out what I was going to do with my life and I really knew that I wanted to do something creative and I'm a creative person.

But I was also trying to figure out how I was going to build a career and be able to support myself. Yeah, so I approached it with a serious attitude and I learned from – I learned in a very similar way in which he learned. So, Andy learned from the guy, from the gentleman who owned the business before him and he took over the business in 2007 from a gentleman named Bill Praxton, and Bill was a real old-school press guy from England.

And he came over here with his brothers and they worked together and then Bill broke off and started our business, which was called House of Foil. It still is, that's where our foil stamping, wholesale foil stamping trade finisher. Passion Letterpress is another name that we use to attract the wedding stationery clients, the people who sell and design wedding stationery. It's the same business.

So yeah, I work with Andy every day, I was fortunate in that we were – we still do a lot of work for other printers where you know, we'll get boxes and boxes of sheets that just all have to be creased or proofed or crash number, crash numbering or die cuts. So, I have a lot of opportunity to work on some of the jobs where they would just be running for a really long time. Longer run jobs on the hundred over one mill.

So, I was able to really learn the operation of the machine without worrying about burning extremely expensive paper on short-run types of things. So, yeah, I was really lucky because we had that type of work when I started, and we still do it. Now, we're doing a lot more shorter runs, specialized, more expensive, yeah, shorter run jobs. So, it would be different if we were training somebody again today.

But yeah, I got to learn on like, you know, put a crease in 10,000 sheets perf like, you know, 30,000 sheets, lots of jobs like that. So, I got very comfortable very quickly feeding the press, learning what to be concerned with learning, what not to be concerned with, the operation of the machine itself, which allowed me to learn that aspect of it quickly, and everything else that has more to do with the subjectivity of what looks right. "Should we do it like this or should we do it like that, things with color," that all built from there.

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:07:25.0] DC: So, you mentioned, and I mentioned in the introduction that Passion Letterpress is essentially a trade printer. You work with other printers but more specifically, you work directly with design and marketing agencies who have customers that require letterpress in some manner, and you kind of glossed over wedding invitations, which happens to be one of the most lucrative niche markets for letterpress.

So, first, let's tackle why do you think that letterpress is still so much in demand for this type of application.

[0:08:04.1] DB: It's a hundred percent the tactility of what you can achieve with letterpress and any pressure-base printing that you're just not going to achieve with digital or offset. Yeah, it's the field. So, we have all of these incredible papers at our disposal as printers and letterpress allows us to manipulate the paper in terms of pushing it up, pushing it down, and cutting it in all sorts of shapes.

[0:08:25.5] DC: I completely agree with you that when you get an invitation on letterpress, the tactile nature of it is certainly the first thing that attracts your senses, right? You're touching it, it's usually softer, sometimes the paper has a deckled edge, or I've seen ones with burnt edges, I've seen ones with gold edges. I've seen very, very fancy letterpress invitations but it's not just the letterpress itself.

A lot of times, there's a lot of embellishments on letterpress. Can you review what the elements are in a letterpress job and are more people using special effects these days?

[0:09:05.1] DB: Yeah, for sure. So, okay, I guess, when we say letterpress, what we automatically think of is a raised surface that takes ink and gets pressed into a sheet. So, printing with ink, that gets impression into paper but the machines that we work on, they're Heidelberg Windmills. Most of them, that we have in our shop are from the 50s, 60s and 70s, and they do all sorts of processes.

So, when I refer to letterpress, I'm referring to all the processes that we're applying pressure to achieve these results, which include hot foil stamping, embossing, debossing, die cutting, producing a perforation in the sheets, creasing a sheet. Anything where we're – we have some kind of surface and we're pressing it into the sheet to get some kind of impression or result. Hot foil stamping is what this business primarily did, along with die-cutting before we got into doing a lot of printing for wedding invitations.

Printing, as in, letterpress printing. So, we say that as a trade finisher, we've always done hot foil stamping. We still always do hot foil stamping, I'm doing it every single day. It's an incredibly popular process for all types of print projects, stationery for stamping, for covers of books. Yeah, we do tons of hot foil stamping.

[0:10:15.6] DC: I mentioned in the introduction that you are also the social media marketing person at Passion Letterpress, and I want to speak to you about that but in a collaboration sort of education, more than I'm trying to sell things because you're really not trying to sell things, you're a trade person. So, you're not out there for consumers. I mean, we had a crazy conversation that you turn away a significant amount of requests because it's just not what your business is for.

It's not a commercial enterprise, it's a very niche, luxury print service but the collaboration actually starts with seeing an image of possibilities, which is what attracted me to you on LinkedIn. I saw something and I was like, it stopped me in my tracks. I was like, "What is that?" And then, comes the, "What is possible from that?" Which is, usually, comes from conversations that you have with people.

So, can you discuss how your collaborative process with clients because you are also a project consultant, you wear that hat as well, and how it manifests into some of the amazing projects that you actually share through your channels?

[0:11:27.9] DB: I would say, it always comes back to past experience and past jobs that we've done. So, yes, we can work off a picture. Sometimes, somebody sees something in a photograph online and they reach out to us, a customer we've already worked with or a new customer but we always like to try to share physical samples whenever we can because it's just, that's the expectation in terms of what this process, what satin gold foil is going to look like on this paper.

What this color of ink is going to look like on this white cotton paper, et cetera. So, in terms of collaboration, we like to flag things that we see right off the bat in artwork or in combinations of materials that we know are going to be problematic. In terms of certain foils don't like to stamp on certain stocks, if we know they were going to be gluing different sheets together, perhaps, you know, we're able to hit this a little bit harder than we normally would because we can get away with the bruising on the back.

Whereas, if it's just a single sheet, we don't want the bruising. So, these are just things that we like to communicate with our customers, and a lot of the customers that we work with we're working with every week, all the time. So, they have our samples and they know – they already know what we like to do, what we're comfortable with, what our specialties are, what we're doing every day in terms of getting around things and sway or that way.

When somebody comes to us with a crazy idea, then yeah, it takes a little bit more thought. The image that you saw on LinkedIn that started this conversation was a little gelato cup that has two scoops of gelato and that was actually a contest. That was the winner of a contest that we ran and that was the most interesting entry, and then, yeah, so we selected it based on artwork that was submitted.

And it was just an opportunity for us to do something a little bit different and yeah, we had some conversations back and forth with the company that submitted it and yeah, a lot of it was Andy and I having the conversations and trying to figure out how can we make a piece that still feels

cohesive and not over the top. Like, yeah, a piece that doesn't feel like too much but it's kind of showing off everything that we can do in a very small area, you know?

That was kind of the idea, so we have two colors of ink platformed well in a pretty large area, embossing that also shows on the reverse side, so it is like an emboss-deboss combo and die cutting and the second pass of ink on the reverse side happens to sit perfectly into where we had already embossed. It was like, yeah, like what's the craziest thing we can do in a small little space and still make the customer happy at least or the winner of that contest.

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:14:42.9] DC: So, back to the social media aspect of all of this, so you're balancing this really weird fine line, at least I think you are from my perspective. One, you want to share all the amazing work that you're doing as well, it helps your clients share their capabilities too. I mean, it's because you're not designing these things, someone else is designing them and sending them to you. So, it's a great cross-promotion.

Wedding invitations is still one of the crazy, has one of the top searches of all printing products, and Instagram and Pinterest are still going to be your number one search results for all of that. So, how do you actually balance? You are sharing things on social media but also maintaining the fact that you're not going to work with everybody who reaches out.

[0:15:36.9] DB: Yeah, we talk about this all the time. So, I have this desire, well, we have this desire as a company to show off as much as we can so there's a lot of projects. So, because we are a trade printer, there's a lot of jobs. I would say the majority of jobs we can't show. We do so much wedding stationery, I'm not taking pictures and videos of those processes because that's our customer's, customer's personal information.

So, there is a lot of stuff that I am able to show and then there's a lot of stuff that doesn't get shown but in terms of marketing, my approach to marketing this business and what we do here every day is it's not really about the number of people that follow us that see the work online and like, anyone can grow the Instagram and I put a lot of time and effort into putting together the video and the pictures but it really to me just functions as a portfolio.

So, I want when the perfect individual or customer that isn't already working with us stumbles upon our Instagram, I wanted to look amazing for that person, that's the objective. I wanted to look as sharp and I wanted the best work to be, you know, at the top of the feed, and I want it to be eye-catching for the individuals who are going to be our next ongoing relationships and partners.

[0:16:43.7] DC: How do you actually make those determinations when you are trying to keep your customer base manageable? And I say that only because we had a preliminary conversation and there's still only so many hours in the day, so many times a letterpress can press down during the day. It's not like you can turn on your inkjet press and just run ten million things, you know, during the week. How do you balance all of that? How do you choose who you're going to work with?

[0:17:13.5] DB: Well, I don't really think that's exactly the case. Any inquiries we get, we respond to and we provide a quote for that. It's within the realm of what we do, so you know, there's lots of requests that we get that are just not what we do at all but yeah, when people send us a request for fine stationery, whether it be for like wedding suites or anything else, yeah, those are the jobs that we do.

We both work a lot and we just get it done, so yeah, it really just comes down to our business is set up to work with people who are designing, who are designers. So, work that comes from other printers, work that comes from agencies, work that comes from graphic designers. Yeah,

it's just that's how we do it, we're working with the individuals who know what the boundaries are in terms of prints, who have worked with printers before versus the end consumer.

[0:18:02.3] DC: I mean, not all designers have worked with letterpress technology. So, how much of a learning curve, how much support do you give them and showing them how to set up files or giving them tips?

[0:18:12.9] DB: A hundred percent. Okay, so we always recommend the little shop tour in studio bit as whenever it's possible. If somebody is local, like in the GTA, in the Greater Toronto Area, we always encourage them to come by, take physical samples. We show them the machines, we explain that anything that you see on a sheet that's a different element requires a different plate.

We show them the plates, we'll often send them away with old plates that we aren't using anymore so they can show their customers, "Hey, do you want a foil stamp? We need to make a metal plate like this. If you want to print, we need a plate like this" et cetera, et cetera. So, yes, there is education that is necessary to have a successful relationship with the customer and yeah, the more they understand about what we do, why the costs are what they are, the more successful they're going to be in selling these processes.

And yeah, it just works better for everybody. In terms of file setup, our file setup isn't that complicated. The most important thing is just we need to be working with vector outlined our work. So, to produce the plates we need outlines around whatever we're going to be shooting into that plate, and then beyond that, it's just like some things equal marks, some things don't, and everything needs to be a hundred percent black.

So, things get a little bit trickier when we start overlapping different layers and knocking things out but in terms of easing new customers into producing a one-color letterpress imitation, it's pretty straightforward and that's something that we often help with.

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:20:08.9] DC: I've produced some crazy things on letterpress including using seed paper that could be planted, which was interesting because the actual pressing didn't like all the seeds. You know, some of them were in the wrong places and things like that but there was a learning curve on our end as far as fonts that are better to use and font sizes and the weight of flourishes and things like that to get the best results from the letterpress.

So, I guess that's what I was talking about when I meant like how you're helping them with setting up the files and things like that.

[0:20:40.6] DB: For sure. So, before we accept any job, we have a plate made. Yeah, we're taking a look at the artwork, having these conversations with the customer in terms of yeah, often lines are too thin and we know that they're not going to show up properly in the plate or they might fall away when we're working with polymer or magnesium and some copper. Yeah, so those are all things that we flag.

We get on the phone and we tell them, "Hey, we have to put a stroke here. Can you add a stroke here? Can we change this font? Can we increase the size? You know, yes, we can stamp four points type over here but like what's going to fill in possibly depending on what foil we're using." So, there's the artwork and then there's also what's happening to the artwork on the sheet. So, there's different variables and they all work together to produce very nice results or not.

[0:21:26.3] DC: You mentioned legacy before, right? I think there's something to start off with about why has letterpress printing and still, I mean, offset printing and letterset printing right there the OGs of printing. It's not going anywhere. It's actually more in demand in this crazy printing world, these hands-on, I don't know, I could go on and on and on about that thing but that's sort of what I thought you meant by that.

[0:21:52.7] DB: Yeah. So, I take a lot of pride in what I do because I was taught by somebody who takes a ton of pride in what he does and he was taught by somebody who takes a lot of pride in what they do and I feel like I'm in a, you know, like a family tree or a chain of people who taught other people to do something and there's a level of seriousness in what you do every day and no, we don't –

If something doesn't turn out right, we don't send it off. It has to be right and I'm proud to work that way. It's the only way that I want to work. So, in terms of doing something niche really well, it's become something that has become a career for me just because yeah, there's not a lot of people doing this type of work anymore and it exists and there's printers that offer these types of processes inhouse, like a larger offset and digital printers.

But it's all we do, it's all we do every day, and yeah, we just obsess about every little detail in terms of just how hard we're hitting different levels, different layers like on the sheets, the crispness of foil, of ink. I like getting lost in those little details and sometimes I'm like, "Hey, you know, is anybody else like worrying about this stuff?" But honestly, like I think our customers really do.

And I think if I printed something that was like, not up to par, not as sharp as it's been from the past like, 20 other orders, I really do think the customer would notice and I think the reason why we keep getting work is because we have set that standard for ourselves and for them and for their – and for what they put out too. So, yeah, there's a level of responsibility that I – that is stressful sometimes but I really enjoy. That's just how I like to work, I don't know how to work any other way.

[0:23:25.9] DC: Yeah. I mean, you guys are not trying to be everything for everybody. You're in a very specific lane and even more specific, only work with Canadians not currently shipping out of Canada, so that makes it even more exclusive. So, if you're listening to this podcast and you're a designer or a marketing agency or even a printer who might have a secondary customer and you're in Canada, get in touch with David.

Get some samples, freaking hell, call David, arrange for a tour, go over, and see. We're on video right now, I could see he's just sitting in his conference room and I want to be in his

conference room. There's just amazing things all around you. David, thank you so much for taking your time to share more about your passion for letterpress through Passion Letterpress, and everything you need to connect with David and Passion Letterpress, and the Instagram channel, and everything else is in the show notes. Any final words, sir?

[0:24:28.8] DB: I just really appreciate being asked to be on this podcast. Like I said at the beginning, I've been listening to the show for many years now, and yeah, it's just really cool to be on the list on Spotify that I, you know, click on when I am driving to work every morning.

[0:24:42.1] DC: That's true, you're going to be on Spotify.

[0:24:44.3] DB: Yeah, it's exciting to me. I love working on press, it's often solitary because it's just two of us here and you know, we're kind of working in our own zone all day but I also love talking about it and I'm just really grateful to have the opportunity to kind of go on about all of these things that I consume myself with.

[0:25:00.7] DC: Well, thank you so much for being an amazing member of the Printerverse family and for joining us on this podcast, and for all you do to keep the craft of printing alive. Until next time, everybody, letterpress long and prosper.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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Mentioned in This Episode:

David Borochovitz: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/david-borochovitz-172029251/>

Passion Letterpress: <https://passionletterpress.com/>

Passion Letterpress on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/passionletterpress/>

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