

EPISODE 716

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:02] 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.

[0:00:14] JM: Hi, this is Jamie McLennan.

[0:00:15] WC: And this is William Crabtree.

[0:00:16] DC: And I'm your host, Deborah Korn. Welcome to the PrinterChat Podcast.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:26] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts From The Printerverse. This is Deborah Korn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. And we are here with the PrinterChat crew. It has been a while, gentlemen. Hello, Jamie McLennan, DMR Graphics. How are you, sir? Powered by Innvoke.

[0:00:43] JM: Yes, powered by Innvoke. Hello, Deborah. Hello, Will. How's everybody doing?

[0:00:48] DC: We are okay.

[0:00:48] WC: Hello.

[0:00:49] DC: William Crabtree. How are you doing, sir? We're going to get a little bit more into how you're doing. But how are you doing, sir?

[0:00:57] WC: I'm as good as I can be.

[0:00:59] DC: Okay. And we will explain this a little more in one moment as soon as we do our check-in. It has been quite a while since our last podcast. And Will and I will share more information about why that is. But right now, Jamie, you always have interesting things going on. You participated in the Sign Manufacturing Day. You participated in International Print Day. Please, what's going on at DMR? And what have you bought since last time we've spoken?

[0:01:32] JM: Yes. We have. We can finally announce that what we bought. Yeah, October has been a pretty good month for us up here North. Sign Manufacturing Day, we had a great open house. We had a lot of cool people come through. Prospects, and stuff, and some clients. And the IAGA here in Philadelphia came through. We created a whole black-lit neon room, which was really interesting. It was the highlight of the tour. That was really a cool day.

We had a couple of vendors here and they said they had some great time, great conversations. They've already had information with clients and passed on stuff. Sounded like a great day all around. And then just last week or so, we had International Print Day, which was always fun. One of my favorite days of the year getting to share things and do different things. But the beginning of the month, October 1st, we purchased a roll label company down in Woodstock, Georgia. BCW. Which is now part of the Innvoke family. And I think we're going to be rebranding soon with everybody becoming Innvoke.

Yeah, I spent three days down there last week getting to learn all about roll labels, and tags, and all the sticker world as I've come to know it as. But, yeah. Learned a lot. And very cool. Cool little facility. 12 people there. They got digital flexo, the whole ball. Yeah, fun stuff. Deborah and I have been talking about labels a lot lately. I kind of know a little bit more about what I'm talking about. Very cool.

[0:02:50] DC: Yeah. I mean, it was so eye-opening. I've been to Labelexpo before but I didn't really learn things. I was working and doing other things at the show. But this last time, I was able to actually learn about how you make labels. There's so much science involved. It's really fascinating to understand that there's a reason why that label sticks on the product in the freezer or in the cooler.

And while certain ones can go on olive oil and it doesn't get – and it's not just for food products. I mean, it goes the gamut. The glues, the substrates. There is such consideration to all of that before you even push print.

[0:03:38] JM: Yes. Labeling for machinery. All that kind of stuff. Tags, the hand tags. They do tons of hand tags for just clothing manufacturers and stuff that I wasn't even thinking that was part of the label world.

[0:03:49] DC: Oh, yeah.

[0:03:49] JM: Yeah. It's cool. Watching these run four across or six across. Getting wind down and cut into different rolls and different sizes. Yeah, it was kind of amazing. Yeah, neat stuff. And I'll share more as I learn more.

[0:04:03] DC: It is true at Labelexpo is when I have my most moments of zen. They have really cool machines that make all these things. Packaging too. The most fascinating one I ever saw in action was a machine that puts tea in tea bags and then staples the little printed piece to it and makes tea bags. I was like, "What? That's part of the printing industry?" Honestly, I had no idea. It was just very cool.

Okay. I'll do my catch-up very quickly so we can get turned to will. As Jamie mentioned, International Print Day was on October 23rd. The holiday actually started in case anybody doesn't know that. It was the 10th anniversary. Craig Bower from Design That Rocks made an amazing poster celebrating print life. Everything which was really celebrating all of us who have a life in print as well as reminding people that, when things are special, we print our lives.

And I just used a quick example that you don't hang an iPad on your wall with your diploma on it. Or why do people make photo books, and keepsakes, and things that they really want to keep? Print is part of our lives in all ways.

And I do have to say that I monitor those streams for 24 hours. And, my God, were they active this year, especially on LinkedIn. I couldn't keep up. As a matter of fact, there was so much information there that LinkedIn kept timing me out because my cache kept filling up. I couldn't

go back 15 hours. It just wouldn't let me. It was insane the amount of time it took for me to comment on every single post I saw on that stream. But I did because I wanted to engage with everybody who engaged on International Print Day. I'm going to figure out some of the stats and share those.

I'm preparing for Girls Who Print Day Annual Conference, which is next week. Anyone listening to this podcast, it's definitely over by now. But replays are at girlswhoprint.net. Go check that out. And Will and I have lived through two hurricanes within 3 weeks of each other down here in the St. Petersburg/Tampa area.

I will say that even though I did have to evacuate my home with my two pets, which nobody wanted, there's two cats, nobody – by the way, if you have cats out there, nobody wants to let cats in your house.

[0:06:29] WC: I offered to let you stay with me, by the way.

[0:06:31] DC: Will had it. Will said I could come over. And I almost did. But I got this tent for them and it worked out. Except for the fact that I learned that they don't like to be in the tent together. Now they each have their own tent, God forbid, we have to leave again. But even with all of that said and the fact that I don't really have a patio and some water got under my door, I was basically not touched at all compared to Mr. Crabtree. Sir, turn it over to you.

[0:07:01] WC: Well, the first one, Helene, we made it out completely unscathed. Other than being closed for a couple of days to allow people to evacuate. Because there was evacuation orders throughout Tampa Bay. And we have employees scattered throughout Tampa Bay. We did shut down for a couple of days for Helene. But lose a couple of days of business is not that big of a deal.

Unfortunately, with Milton, we were not as lucky. And the sign shop got completely flooded out. It's pretty much a total loss. There was standing water throughout the entire building. There was literally waves. You could see waves. You could see – it looked like a river ran through the building. There was just debris everywhere.

[0:07:42] DC: Will, can you just give people an idea of the square footage we're talking about? I mean, I've been there. It's gigantic.

[0:07:47] WC: Yeah. The sign shop is 13,000 square feet. It's broken up into four quadrants. You have the front offices. You have the wide-format production. You have the wrap bay. And then you have the fabrication warehouse.

[0:07:59] DC: Which you had just redone, the wrap bay .

[0:08:01] WC: We just remodeled the wrap bay. We just put in a new air conditioning unit on the ground floor for the production room. The new AC unit that we just spent eight grand on is toast. All of our equipment is toast so. Our Mimaki, which the ink system is on the ground. The take-up reel is down. We had at least 13 inches of standing water throughout the whole building where it sat for a long time. But the water rushed in so quickly that everything was just moving around. Literally, it looked like a river ran through it. It was pressure. It just flowed through. And where the building is located is not even in a flood zone. It wasn't from storm surge. It was just from the sheer amount of rainfall that happened from that storm. And where it's at, it's –

[0:08:43] DC: And from Helene, the ground never dried. It just had nowhere to go.

[0:08:47] WC: Right. There was just so much groundwater from – I mean, it's been a very wet summer to begin with. And then the hurricane had just happened. And the devastation that happened to the West Coast of Tampa and everybody in St. Pete Beach, and Treasure Island, and Clearwater, and all of those places, it was already destitute. Right? Devastated. And then to get hit with this one again.

And the way it came in through south of Tampa Bay, which my shop is located just south of Tampa Bay, we were pretty much in the eye of the storm where my shop is. When I was driving in, the whole street was still flooded. There's a sandwich shop down the road from us that looked like a tornado just tore it up. It was just mangled.

And when I pull up to the shop, the only thing that's broken from the outside is you see a couple – there's a propane tank in the yard and a couple – a little bit of debris. And we have this long

sign that we changed with ACM for seasonal stuff. It's real tall. All the ACM was ripped off of that. Wind, whatever.

And then I walk up to the front door and I opened the door and there's like boxes by the front door. I'm like, "Who left this shit here?" And then I looked down, there are frogs hopping around on the floor. Literally, as soon as I woke up the day after the storm – the storm hit overnight. And this is like 8am. I get out. I'm driving around. And you're not used to being out and about. There's trees down. There's wires down. It looks like a danger zone through this whole city.

But I'm checking on the buildings and that was what I found. And just as we gradually go through it, it's been a mess. I was fortunate in that I have the Gorilla Consultants office. I had moved all of those employees to the Sign Parrot office so they could be close to me. That whole office space was vacant. We moved the remaining employees. Unfortunately, we had to let a bunch of employees go, which sucked really bad. I mean, payroll – I mean, we're not operating at all. Right? So we can't afford to pay – we can't even afford to pay the people that we kept. But we're still paying them and keeping them.

Fortunate enough that we had a space to move some administrative people into. We rearranged a bunch of stuff in the production floor of Tampa Printer. Got rid of some stuff. Moved some stuff to storage. I actually did a post in a couple of the groups on Facebook. And a company responded. Nite-Bright Sign Company out of Fort Myers, they donated us an HP 370, which is a Latex 365 but with the large ink capacity. They donated one of those.

And then when we were on our way down, they're like, "Also, we have a laminator. Do you want a laminator too?" And we're like, "Yes, please." That. And then we bought a Graphtec. So that gave us back vinyl. We have vinyl production back up and running. We're doing print and mount. And we're doing some decals. And we're doing stickers. And now we're going back and reprinting all of the jobs that were damaged in the storm. Because we literally had \$26,000 worth of completed work in the building that we have to reproduce now. We're reproducing that, playing catch-up.

I lost over \$100,000 in inventory because all of our roles were set vertical on floor mounts. Everything in the whole building, from our roll media. And even the stuff that was brand new was

laid out horizontal underneath our working tables. All of that got completely saturated. Every roll of media in the entire building other than like five pieces that we were able to salvage is toast.

I mean, our CNC controller, vacuum, collector. The gears, the electronical wiring that go into the CNC, all underwater. The flatbed, all the mechanics and the guts of the flatbed. The computer is basically on the ground. That's gone. I mean, it's a complete loss basically at this point. I've been navigating this dealing with insurance trying to keep business afloat, trying to keep my other company afloat. Making sure that I can at least retain some employees. And been through a lot of shit in my life. And maybe it's because it's recent. And I guess being homeless probably would be worse than what I'm going through right now. And I have been homeless multiple times. It's been a long time though. I've kind of gotten used to some of the creature comforts that I have these days. But it's been really fucking hard.

[BREAK]

[0:12:51] DC: Print Media Centr provides printspiration and resources to our vast network of global 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, these podcasts, Project Peacock TV, and an array of community-lifting initiatives. We also work with OEMs, 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]

[0:13:45] DC: So let me just go back and share some information for anybody who might be thinking, "Well, why was it on the floor, Will?" and things of that nature. In Florida, they separate neighborhoods or miles away from the water by zones. And it doesn't matter if it's the gulf or the bay. You could be near a big pond. Or they had really a lot of problems with these little rivers that kind of run through people's properties and things like that.

[0:14:16] WC: Near coastal. Yeah.

[0:14:16] DC: Yeah. Just the water had nowhere to go. It was just kind of going over golf courses and things like that. Depending upon what zone you're in, is what you're allowed to do as far as what the insurance companies say is okay. Where Will was, did you have it – I'm in evacuation zone A, which basically means, if you watch the news, they were like, "If you're in A and you stay where you are, you're going to die. We've just warned you. Enjoy yourself." Sign Parrot is not near the water at all. It's like back there. Is it even in a zone?

[0:14:54] WC: It's not even in a flood zone. We were very fortunate. I always carry flood policies and flood insurance on any property I own whether it's flood zone or not. I am very fortunate and that I do have insurance. But still navigating that. My loss just from a content standpoint is more than double what my insurance policy actually carries from a premium. Or not a premium. But what it pays that premium which pay for it.

I'm lucky. But I don't know what I'm going to get at this point. I'm still navigating it. I have to actually submit the claim tomorrow. I just got done compiling all of what everything is and all the pictures. And we always want to make this podcast informative. Right? This isn't Will's pity party. This isn't feel bad for me. But we're still trying to tell you what you can do to help yourself and prepare yourself and things that you can navigate.

And if you're in the Southeast or anywhere that floods and really anywhere – if it's not a flood zone and a flood area, flood insurance is so cheap. And it's becoming a bigger problem everywhere. If you're anywhere near a body of water, I would encourage you to carry flood insurance for any property as well as contents that you have. If you're not anywhere near a flood zone, it's very cheap. And it's still not even a really expensive policy even when you are in a flood zone in comparison to the premiums associated with hazard, and property, and all of that.

One thing that has kind of bit us actually in this instance and another piece of advice that I would give is, when you lease a piece of equipment, there's an insurance policy that comes with that that you pay for it. And they don't tell you about it. It's just on your bill. It's in your line items. And there's an insurance policy that you pay.

Unfortunately, my bookkeeper is really good and she saw that. And she was like, "Hey, we're spending like an extra \$1,200 a month on these little extra insurance policies associated with every piece of equipment that you have. Do you want me to take care of that and get rid of that?" And I was like, "Yeah, yeah, sure." It was kind of like a nonchalant thing. Well, unfortunately, she followed through with that. All the insurance policies associated with all the leases that we have are not in place. But I would encourage you again from a nominal standpoint of what the cost is against the repercussions of a disaster, just keep it and pay the extra whatever it is a month.

[0:17:00] DC: I want to pull Jamie into the conversation. But I just want to finish the thought that I was sharing before. Will had his shop set up based upon what was the acceptable specs of where everything could be in his shop because there were no specific issues at that time in his area where this had ever happened. Actually, the last time it happened was a hundred years ago per the historians, the weather historians out there.

Now I would assume when you build back – and we haven't even gotten to the fact you basically have a frame of the building right now because of the mold and everything else that happens in Florida. It has to be –

[0:17:43] WC: Don't use the m-word. We don't use the m-word in Florida.

[0:17:45] DC: Sorry, sir. The thing, the ick. Whatever we want to call it. It has to be gutted. Disinfected, sealed. It is a freaking process that goes on there. But I'm assuming now, when you build back, you're going to account for things that cannot be on the ground. Correct? If they cannot.

[0:18:08] WC: If we build back.

[0:18:09] DC: Oh, if you build back. Okay.

[0:18:10] WC: If we build back. Yeah.

[0:18:12] DC: Do you own the land? Or do you just own the building?

[0:18:15] WC: Well, if you own the building, you own the land underneath it. Unless you have –

[0:18:18] DC: Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't realize.

[0:18:19] WC: Yeah. No. I own the property. It's mine.

[0:18:22] DC: Okay. All right.

[0:18:24] JM: The amount of water Will had, even if you had that equipment on –

[0:18:27] DC: 12 inches. It's a foot. Yeah.

[0:18:29] JM: If they weren't bolted to the floor, they would have just probably moved anyway.

[0:18:33] DC: Yeah.

[0:18:34] WC: Yeah. Being in a flood zone, you can't keep everything off the ground. When you live in your house –

[0:18:38] DC: But you weren't in a flood zone, which is the whole point.

[0:18:42] WC: I wasn't in a flood zone. But still –

[0:18:42] DC: I just want to make that clear to people out there. That Will didn't do anything to bring this upon himself.

[0:18:49] WC: No. I did not.

[0:18:52] DC: Every piece of equipment that was on the floor was fully reasonable to be on the floor up until two weeks ago. Now it is not reasonable for certain things or as much as possible not to be on the floor anymore.

Jamie, you live through Hurricane Sandy. Correct?

[0:19:10] JM: Yeah. And that was what? 2012 or something like that? 2012 or 13. Same thing, Will. I know a bunch of printers that had the same thing that, "We've never had a flood. We've never had anything." Their equipment was on the floor. They lost their compressors. They lost all the motors. They lost all that.

We were in Princeton at the time. Basically, there was there was a canal down the road that broke and flooded like part of Route One. The main road up and down into Princeton. One side was a river. You could drive on the other side. Not too many people were driving on the other side. The only thing keeping the water was the barrier. The cement barrier. I have photos of that. But we lost power for almost a week. It was a while to try and get to the shop. And then we were bringing in our own compressors and running certain pieces of equipment. We can run the Canon copiers for a couple of hours today. We'll plug the cutter in. We'll run the cutter. We couldn't run the Heidelberg because that took too much power. And it was during political season. We were doing political mail non-stop. Yeah, it was unbelievable.

We had a couple of people that we know in the industry that reached out. Just like you met somebody and they're like, "Hey, what can we help you with?" Some of the small format stuff got reprinted. And then what we did was we made it a fact to kind of reach out to a couple of people and like, "Hey, if you have an issue –" South Jersey didn't get affected. Middle and North Jersey got slammed, which was kind of weird. We made some packs back then like, "Hey, if something happens in South Jersey, we'll be your backup. We'll help you out if it doesn't hit the whole state." If it happens to us again, they were going to be our backup. We made some handshake deals.

We went in and talked to the owners and we said, "Look, whatever your cost is, we'll print for your cost." And they'll do the same for us. So that way, we're all staying sort of solvent and keeping things moving. But it's just the hardest thing. Nobody's looking for that. Back then, it was a 100-year storm. Never even happened before. I know I reached out to Will to see what we could do up here. But just the shipping alone to get it back down to you is crazy, especially for large-format printing and stuff like that. It's not worth it. Yeah.

[0:21:06] DC: I mean, trucks are just starting to come back over the bridge here in St. Petersburg. I mean, there was a very strange carrot crisis. There was no carrots here. I don't know why. Or bread. I mean, there was milk and eggs. But there was no carrots or bread. It was just weird. Again, it's all relative.

[0:21:25] WC: It's been crazy though. I mean, watching just things come back to life, right? Because, I mean, not only just the storm, but we were without power at the Kennedy building. The Kennedy building was actually the last thing to get power. I got power back at my house.

[0:21:35] DC: Oh, that's right. You just got the power back. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah.

[0:21:37] WC: We just got power. It was not this week. Last week. I don't know. Everything bleeds together anymore. I can't remember what day it is anymore.

[0:21:43] DC: It was at least a week after the hurricane, you still did not have power.

[0:21:47] WC: Yeah. Yeah. We had power at the Sign Parrot building four days after the storm. And then my house came back on two days later. And then it was like a week-plus that we got back at the Kennedy building. Then we're like trying to just communicate with people. We don't know what's going on. Because all the employees are freaking out. And it's been a lot. It's been a mess.

[0:22:09] DC: What happens to contracts that you have in place? I mean, obviously, anybody who's in Florida. You said you were doing a work with Florida Law Enforcement and things like that. Obviously, they're here too. They might be a little more understanding. But what happens with people that are out of state? Do you have act of God clauses in your contracts? Jamie, same question for you after.

[0:22:31] WC: I mean, for me, I don't have contract contracts with any clients. And this is always been a weird thing in my world. And I'm sure it happens. But any contract that I've ever had with a client has been a handshake agreement. Or they agree to pay terms and that they're going to

pay their bills. It's the only contract or agreement that's in place. We did just actually land the St. Petersburg banner contract.

[0:22:54] DC: Congratulations.

[0:22:56] WC: We were awarded the contract right before the storm.

[0:22:59] DC: Amazing.

[0:23:00] WC: And since a crane fell in downtown St. Pete and among the other many things that have happened in downtown St. Pete, I'm sure the beautification and the new banners in the city is the least of their worries. And they have not followed up to let us know what's going on with that contract after we were rewarded it. We don't know details and if it's even still going to happen. But outside of that, we deal with the Sheriff's Department. We had some jobs that we had fulfilled for them that were damaged by the storm that actually closed out at the end of last month. September 30th was their fiscal year.

And so, Deb, the last time I saw you, which was at that trade show. From there, I went into closing out the trade show going into closing out the fiscal year for HCSO. We did 14 installs in 10 days. Made all the deadlines. Got through that and then literally rolled into the hurricane. And I haven't had a day off. Actually, I did just have a day off yesterday. I take that back. Yesterday was my first day off in over a month and a half of not having to really work. I still did a little bit of work. But I basically spent the most of the day in bed yesterday, which was nice. It's just been insanity.

But to answer your question. Yeah, we don't have true contracts like that where we have obligations. That's the fortunate thing, I guess. But on the other side, I do have a tour with HCSO tomorrow on one of their facilities to do a bunch of sign work because lots of signs have been damaged. There's a lot of work out there. But we don't even have the bandwidth or the capacity to even try to chase it right now.

[0:24:28] DC: It was unfortunate because I was actually texting – Jamie's like, "What can I do to help?" I'm like, "Get down to St. Petersburg and sign some of these businesses that need

signs." I mean, Will's not exaggerating. I don't think there is one sign intact anywhere near me. And we were very fortunate over here. We did not have the tornadoes land. But it honestly looks like there was a tornado. I've never seen – I mean, the Wendy's sign. I have to assume that that's pretty sturdy in the ground. I mean, over not just like broken – I don't know. Backlit signs like up in the air with the lights in them.

[0:25:10] WC: The foundation of the pylon is toast and the whole thing fell over.

[0:25:14] DC: The whole thing. Totally sideways. Then there was other ones that just like you're driving on the highway, you see them high up in the air and they're lit. It wasn't just that like a little pieces missing or it was craft –

[0:25:27] WC: The whole face is gone.

[0:25:28] DC: It's gone.

[0:25:29] WC: Faces are gone.

[0:25:29] DC: You just see the frame of it. There was another place that had their entire awning was this structure. Because you can sit under and eat your lunch or something like that. Just not that it was down. It was like the metal legs that were holding it were bent like Z's. I don't even know how something like that happens.

And then I didn't even think that where I live was so bad. And I was just driving around before and every roof in my complex has blue tarp on it. Every single one. Now I live on the ground floor. I had a different problem with water coming into my doors as I said. But it wasn't a lot. I MacGyvered a barrier. You guys would have been impressed with me. I taped two garbage bags to the front of my door. I took an area rug out of my house and I put it in front of that. And then I put my doormat in front of that. And I'm like, "I don't know what else to do. I don't have sandbags." But some of my neighbors had sandbags. It was crazy.

Jamie, I know that in advertising, I have put act of God clauses and my estimates and things like that. Any experience with that?

[0:26:41] JM: I will have to check some of our contracts. I know we have a few contracts. I'm not sure that's in there. But most of what I work on is PO. I'll have to look in the fine print. But, no. Most of it's like here's the purchase order. Here's what you're promising to do. It'll be done by this time. Yeah, I'm going to have to double-check this now. Not something I really thought about until you just brought it up. But, yeah. We'll take a look at that.

And then when you brought up the texts, like, "Hey, just come down here. Every sign needs to be fixed." I'm like, "How can we retrofit a tractor-trailer with a flatbed, and a roll press, and a generator? We can get down there. But we'll need another tractor trail of material."

[0:27:16] WC: – do any of that. No. Jamie. You're way going out. Talk to the logistics guy over here. Come on. No. All you need is a way to ship it in. Right? I need guys to come down here and help me scout. We can have it produced and have it installed.

[0:27:31] DC: I can help you scout. I mean, just on my street down here –

[0:27:34] WC: Scouting is easy. Scouting like, "Hey, there's a sign that's broken." You need someone that's actually going to go in and give the pitch, "Hey, I saw your sign was broken. Do you need someone to replace that for you? We've got someone that can come and do a survey for you in the next couple of days." That's what we need. We need that workforce.

[0:27:52] JM: In the list now. We'll be back here in two days. We got 20 businesses to go through. Yeah.

[BREAK]

[0:27:59] 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 and 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]

[0:28:39] DC: That's actually what I wanted to speak to you guys about. Because Will has shared with everybody what he's been going through. And just driving around when you see these dumpsters in front of people's businesses and everything that was touching the floor is in the dumpster. And then you see signs like, "We will return. We will be back." When is the appropriate time to speak to – Will, if somebody came to you and said, "Hey, do you need a sign?" Would you be like, "Get the freaking hell away from me." Or would you be like, "Okay, thanks. Not right now." Or, "Okay, we're thinking about it." What is the appropriate moment?

[0:29:23] WC: It depends on the value that the person that has the sign gives on the sign. From a business's owner standpoint, there's a very definitive kind of business owner that just doesn't give a fuck about their sign versus one that knows the value of their sign. And just going and kicking rocks, we've gotten a few jobs. Not trying hard. Not workforce. Not out knocking doors. Not doing anything of any substance. And we've landed some work.

But there is a very definitive line of the people that cheap-out on their signs, the people that don't care about their signage, the people that don't give value to their signage. And that's going to be the least and last of their worries. Versus the people that actually know the value of signage, that's going to be the first thing that they worry about. I need signage to tell people what's going on. I need signage to tell people that my business is open. It's out there right.

And you'll get people that'll tell you to go kick rocks. And you'll get people that are like, "Nope. Fix it right now." And also, it's feast or famine. All the local companies are all inundated. We've all been hit by it. And you have outside companies that are coming in now from regionally and even out of state that are scouting and that are picking up business down here. It's interesting thing.

This is another thing that I wanted to add as a value point of this podcast is, if you ever go through a disaster, I don't care if it's a hurricane, if it's an earthquake, a tornado, whatever it is,

the idiom is is if the people that are there immediately are not there to help you. Help doesn't arrive for at least a week or so.

Now these companies that are down here scouting, they're just doing business. They don't fall into this category. But I like to call them storm chasers. I had a friend of mine that owns a restaurant that sent me a message with a guy's contact that says, "Hey, this guy is doing work. He's fixing stuff. He's down here. He's got a big crew. Maybe you can get a discount."

We got the guy's information. And I called him immediately because it came from one of my best friends. I talked to the guy. And within two minutes, I knew that he was full of shit. He was trying to get me sign over my insurance policy over to him. Knew it immediately. I carried on the conversation. I called my buddy afterwards and I was like, "Yo, what's up with this guy?" He's like, "I don't know him from Adam. He's been in my restaurant a couple of times. I do not vouch for him." "Cool. That's what I need to know."

I go ahead and proceed. This is the first company that gives me an estimate. They come in day after things open back up. Two days after the actual storm, power is still out. We have no power in the building. I walk around with this guy. I'm talking to this – he didn't show up. He sends me some other dude. We walk around the whole building, they don't measure a single thing. We're in the building for maybe five minutes. And he sits down in front of a laptop in the decimated kitchen and starts typing shit.

I'm like, "Yo, what are we doing here? I don't want to sit in this building while you do whatever you're doing. If you're building an estimate for me, why don't you do that?" Because what they were trying – how fast are you trying to get this to go? What they were pushing at is they wanted me to sign a document that gave them the right to represent me to the insurance company. And they wanted to start demoing and doing their work immediately. And they wanted to be paid upfront.

And this is what – if you talk to anybody that's been through a storm, anybody that's coming around doing roofs, doing remediation down here in Florida, these specific things, they are companies that are predatory that come in and get you –

[0:32:32] DC: The tree people. There's a ton of tree people driving around. Because there are trees all over the place.

[0:32:37] WC: Well, the tree people aren't the same. It's not the same thing. But what I'm talking about is these are organizations that will trick you into signing a contract that make them the intermediary between you and the insurance. They become your representative to the insurance company. They're going to bloat your policy out to the max and they're going to put as much of that in their own pocket as possible. They are not your representatives. They do not have your interests at heart. They are going to do anything and everything that they can to put money in their pocket and out of yours. It's a predatory thing that happens in every disaster. Short end of it, do not ever sign paperwork for a contractor without reading it. And specifically, don't sign over your rights for them to claim on your behalf for insurance.

Another quick example of this, which is a really funny thing, and it's not related, but it is, but it's the same vein, is the windshield people. And I think this has happened in a lot of states. It's not just Florida. So, "Hey, I see you have a crack in your windshield." They're door to door. Door to door. They come into your business. "Who's the blah-blah-blah out in the parking lot that's got a broken windshield?" "Oh, that's my Toyota Celica or Toyota –" they don't have Celicas anymore. Whatever. "It's my Toyota." "Oh, yeah. We'll take care of that. We'll replace it for you for free." You sign a contract that makes them the representative to the insurance company. Yeah. No. It's no out of pocket for you because it's an insurance claim for a windshield. But a windshield that should have cost \$500 now cost \$5,000. They're going to put all that extra money in their pocket. And now your insurance rates are going to go through the roof.

It's a similar thing. But in that instance, in the windshields, they're not taking money out of your pocket. They're just bloating the insurance policy. Within this one, your limits are your limits. What you get paid out is what you get paid out. And if they put all that money in their pocket versus you dealing with the contractors, hiring it, etc., etc. Which a lot of people don't have the capacity to do this.

I have an answer for that as well. There is what is called a public or private adjuster. It's actually the same thing. Private and public, which is a weird convoluted thing that they use. It's the same thing. But it's an adjuster that you hire. The adjuster that you hire now becomes your

intermediary. They take 10%. 10% off of whatever they get you they represent between you and the insurance company. But they're not the company that's doing the work. They're an agent. It's the same thing as hiring an insurance agent or anything else. They're a broker. They go between.

Whereas these other companies, they're also doing the work. They're doing all this other stuff. They're hiring everything. There's all these different moving parts associated with it. But, again, be very cognitive. Be very careful. Do not sign any paperwork. Do not sign over your rights for your insurance or allow someone else to be your intermediary unless you've done your research on who that is and what they do.

[0:35:34] DC: Jamie, comments?

[0:35:35] WC: No. I've seen it in with friends' houses get burned down and stuff like that. In our networking group, we have a private broker. Yeah. He's like, "Look, let me take a look at your insurance policy." He's like, "I'll do this right now." He's like, "Bring it in. You're good with this, this, this." He's like, "Watch out for this. If something ever happens, you're never going to get paid for that. You're never going to get paid for that. I know how to talk to them and say, "Hey, look. This has happened. That's why you don't use the m-word. You you got to use something else." He'll tell you the vocabulary to use. Because I've seen people not get anything paid for because they said, "Oh, yeah. The whole house filled up with water because of blah-blah." And they're like, "Well, you're not covered for that. Your insurance says you're covered for this."

You've got to watch out how you word things. Yeah, I've learned a little bit about that just from a couple of friends that have had some problems. And Will is having the same kind of runaround, it looks like. Yeah, keep mindful of what you're looking at. Yeah, don't sign over your insurance policy. It doesn't make sense. You're in charge of that.

[0:36:29] DC: And what is your feeling about let's just say that you were fortunate enough that DMR Graphics didn't experience what Will is experiencing and you are actually able to help people with their signage. Is there an appropriate amount of time to wait before you do something like that?

[0:36:48] JM: Like Will said, there's definitely a group of people that they're going to want to know that up. They'll probably have something handwritten already, "We're open. We're doing for business." They're the people –

[0:36:56] DC: There was some handwritten yard signs. People did that. They're like, "We're open," with a little arrow. You're right. I did see those.

[0:37:02] JM: Yeah. Suddenly, a lot of people are going to wait for the landlord to come fix that sign up front because that's not their problem. the landlord takes care of the signs out front. That's not my problem. But I want my building sign done right out front. My windows need to be taken care of. Yeah. Those guys, you'll feel them out and see. They're ready to go. They're in business. And they got to get going.

[0:37:21] DC: Yeah. Here's just a crazy idea, because I can't help myself and I just thought about it. I guess I'm looking more or I'm emotionally connected more to the people who are panicking and they want their signage back. My building's okay now. My electricity is on. But my sign – nobody knows I'm open. Nobody knows I'm here. And I need my sign back. Imagine if you had like a wrapped truck and that is just where you – through Facebook or through Every Door Direct Mail or something you say, "We're having a signage –" you just go into an open parking lot somewhere where there's a lot of stores, strip malls, or whatever it might be. And you park the car there and you're like, "We're here to help you all with your signage."

And because, to your point, they might not be educated about the signage. Their sign shop, I'm sorry, Will, to say this, might be down or potentially not coming back. And maybe there's an opportunity – you know what I mean? You kind of just drive up to a place and say – a food truck. But you're a signed truck and you're like, "Anybody who needs help, we're here to help you because we're part of this community." Crazy maybe? No?

[0:38:43] JM: I'd rather give Will help first and then do that. Like –

[0:38:45] DC: Of course.

[0:38:46] JM: [inaudible 0:38:46] customers. Somebody like that. Yeah. That's kind of like I said. I'm like, "Can we put a roll printer on a truck, and something else, and material and show up and go, "Hey, we're here."

[0:38:55] DC: No. I mean, just take the orders.

[0:38:56] JM: [inaudible 0:38:56] because they're gone.

[0:38:58] DC: Yeah. I don't really mean make the sign right then and there. Although, it could be cool to give them just a vinyl banner that says we're open. I agree with you 100%.

[0:39:05] JM: Yes. Everybody needs vinyl today. Yes.

[0:39:07] DC: But I mean more like there's a blood drive or something. You sit down at the table with the consultant and you're like, "Here's all your options for signs. This is what you used to have. Here's something that maybe is –" I'm not sure. Because I don't own a building and I don't own a sign shop. But are there different types of levels of signage materials for that thing, Will, that are wind-resistant? Roofs have to be wind-resistant. Well, I'm just saying maybe this is something we should start thinking about. Something that bends and doesn't break. I don't know.

[0:39:40] JM: Like you said, even the Wendy's, their big monument sign was down –

[0:39:44] DC: This is true. I mean, there's trees down from their roots. You're absolutely correct. I know. But maybe there's lesser degrees –

[0:39:50] JM: 120 mile an hour winds.

[0:39:52] DC: Maybe there's a lesser degree of things. But any of the substrate people out there. If you could figure out a way for sign to bend and not break. And, also, the other weird thing is I was sending you guys photos of – okay, it seems like all my examples are from drive-throughs. But it just happens I was driving around. And when I saw it, that Taco Bell, taped garbage bags over their sign. And the United States Post Office had like a white bag that they

put over the mailboxes. I thought that that was really interesting too. Perhaps that is something that could be like the protection somehow. I don't know. Maybe there's something to think about to Will's point.

[0:40:37] JM: [inaudible 0:40:37] bags that cover certain signage so it doesn't – yeah.

[0:40:39] DC: Something that maybe also makes it so that it's padded. So if something slams into it. I'm not talking about the situation where the monument sign is lifted out of the ground and the wind was 150 miles an hour. It was blowing through around here for a little while. There were 90, whatever it was when it first came over here. But I don't know. It just seems to me that if things keep trending the way they do with the weather, that these events are going to be more frequent than infrequent. And maybe to Will's point, we look at this as an opportunity to do things differently moving forward.

Let me just ask this last question. Do you think that this is an opportunity to go a digital sign versus a printed sign? No, Will? Not going to help?

[0:41:26] WC: No. I mean, in your EMCs, electronic messaging centers, or LED signs, whatever you want to call them, they're damaged easier than a normal sign is.

[0:41:37] DC: Because of electronics and a screen?

[0:41:38] WC: Well, no. Because the faces of them are very sensitive. Anything hits them, it takes them out. If they're off for a long period of time, they also fry out because the fans that are on and keep them running are also what cool them. And when they're not on and there's heat blaring on them, it burns out their boards.

Look, I'm not talking shit on EMC. I think EMC is a cool thing. It's never going to be one or the other. EMC is always going to be a compliment to rigid substrate, or to pan faces, or to whatever it is. There's never going to be a complete change to one or the other. And there's pros and cons to everything. You take anything in this industry, DTF versus DTG, polycarbonate versus acrylic, digital press versus offset press, screen printing versus DTG. All of these things, there's

pros and cons to every one of them. And it's great and easy to look at it from like, "Oh, this sign made it. And this sign didn't." But that could also be environmental as well."

[0:42:30] DC: Right. That's actually what I've been looking at. To see if I can see any patterns. But I really can't. I mean, it just depends upon how the wind got you. The angle that it got you on. And it's just so random because it's the wind. I did go to ChatGPT and I asked the robots, as Kelly Mallozzi says, to tell us the five most important factors in preparing a disaster plan. I thought that maybe we could just review those. To be proactive. Moving forward for anyone who might not have any of the stuff in place.

The first thing is literally to assess your risk. What is the potential risk? Are you in zone A of a hurricane? Are you in a place that has a lot of power outages for whatever reason? Or any natural disasters? Mudslides, earthquakes, anything like that. The first thing is to say, in a 1 to 10, where is my business starting off at?

The next thing is business continuity and recovery planning. Outlining the critical functions, the responsibilities of the people that work for you, and recovery strategies to maintain or quickly resume operations. For example, Will, you did have to let some people go if you are able to bring people back, and it's not the same people, is there a description or something written in place? Like, "This is your job. These are the 10 things you need to do every day. This is how you make a sign. This is how you cut a sign." That's what they're talking about.

The next thing is data protection and backup solutions. Are you regularly backing up all your essential data? Are you storing copies onsite and offsite? And who has access to it during and after a disaster? Things to think about.

[0:44:32] WC: Can I jump in here really quick?

[0:44:33] DC: Yes. And then I have two more.

[0:44:34] WC: I was on my way out of the Sign Parrot building and I was on the phone with my IT guy and I was like, "Hey, we have everything backed up to the cloud, right?" And he goes, "Yeah." And I was like, "We're good, right? Everything should be good. If I leave the server here

–" this is before the hurricane. And he paused. And the fact that he paused, I went back into the building and I pulled the physical server. And it is backed up in the cloud. We do have it. We have three levels of redundancy. But I had the server that had all of our artwork, and all of our client files, and all that shit on it and pulled it out of the building. We didn't have it.

[BREAK]

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:45:49] DC: The next step is a communication plan. Almost like a phone tree. What is the hierarchy? Will, you would just call one person who would then maybe call another person. And then that person's responsible for calling their team, or the other team, or whatever it is. But it's to keep employees, customers, and suppliers informed during disaster. What if you're scheduled for an automatic ink delivery or something? Is that still coming to Sign Parrot? I'm just saying these are all –

[0:46:21] WC: Yeah. No. These are problems that we've been dealing with. 100%.

[0:46:23] DC: Yeah. But it's really interesting because we always think about customers first. Obviously, employee safety, number one concern. Then after that, where are my crisis situations going to arise with my customers? But I never really thought about suppliers, communicating with them. And, hopefully, there are some suppliers out there who if there's – Will, you mentioned before that you lost all your substrates and media. And that's not coming back. And you're going to have to repurchase it. I don't know how. But I wish there was just like a fund for the industry to maybe come up with things like that.

And the last thing I thought was really interesting, training and simulation drills. I mean, we don't necessarily have that, Will, because we know a hurricane's coming before. But those tornado people had no idea those tornadoes were going to hit on the other side of Florida. I mean, I'm sure there were people in office buildings over there because they weren't told to evacuate at that point and things of that nature. But there are earthquakes, and mudslides, and fires, and all that stuff. Does everybody know how to get out of the building? Does everybody know, I don't know, where to stand if there's an earthquake? Or what table to go under? Or whatever it might be? But those were the top five things recommended.

[0:47:44] JM: Number five makes great sense. Because we kind of do that. We have an area where if something happens, there's a fire or whatever, everybody's going to meet here. It's like, company across the street, in their parking lot, or something like that. Yeah. That makes sense.

[0:47:56] DC: Yeah. I mean, just everybody knows. When I worked in office buildings in Manhattan, I was a fire warden. I was responsible for making sure everybody that I was responsible for went to the exit, the door, to walk down the stairs where we were. And the other side of the office went to another door. We didn't all go down the same door. I mean, I had to check the bathrooms. I mean, nobody could be on conference calls. That's why they made me the fire warden because I was like, "Get the hell out of here right now."

Okay. Any comments on any of the other items I mentioned or anything that we may not be thinking of? By the way, Jamie, I think you had a really great one, which I'm going to title phone a friend. Do you have partnerships in place to say, "I've got 10,000 postcards. It's election things." Just imagine the election people.

[0:48:48] JM: Yeah. You got to get them done. Yeah. Make those contacts. Make an agreement with somebody that's not right in your area that you can back each other up with. We have one. We have SwissQ. We have another company that's got SwissQ. They're four or five hours away from us. They're like, "We have your back. And you have our back." Because there's nobody else in between us that has one. We're like, "Okay." When we first did that, we signed an agreement. Actually, that was a little bit more formal. We signed an agreement and did an NDA and all that. Yeah.

[0:49:17] DC: I'm also going to make a plea to really join the regional organizations. We have one in Florida, Florida Graphic Alliance. I actually reached out to Gabe Hernandez and I asked him if there was anything I could do to help any of the printers who were down in Florida. And they were really trying to do their best to keep people informed and try to see if there was work that could be done in other places. Unfortunately, everybody was in a lot of the same situation here.

But the regional organizations are great places for people to connect with others. And, yet, to your point, you could be in Pennsylvania and they could be in New York. It's still in your regional organization.

[0:49:59] JM: Yeah. Print and communication group that we belong to. And I know you've done some stuff for them. Yeah, we belong –

[0:50:03] DC: The Print & Graphic Communications Association.

[0:50:06] JM: Yeah, I always mess it up. That one. But, yeah. That's a great place to start. Yep. They would definitely be helpful. And they've expanded their footprint. They're also down into the Mid-Atlantic now, I believe. Yeah.

[0:50:17] WC: Yeah. I mean, we have relationships with other shops around town both on all of the garment, wide-format, as well as signs and paper. And when we were without power, we reached out to a couple of colleagues and we got some stuff done. I even met a client when the power was still out and got them their job. I mean, you do what you can to keep the machine moving and the relationships that you have and that you build and doing good business with people in your region, in your area, in and your city is when things like this happen, you have people that you can confide in.

I have a shop that was – I mean, we literally paid their rent for years before we bought Sign Parrot. And when we left, we took a big hit from – they took a big hit hit by us leaving and starting our own shop. But we always remained friendly. And they still did some work for us here and there. And I reached out and said, "Hey, this is what happened." And they jumped right too.

And they've been very helpful in helping us get things done in the time that we weren't able to fulfill anything. We're back up again. We're able to print and produce.

And when I said if, build back – Sign Parrot isn't going anywhere as a brand. Building it back, it will not be the same incarnation that it was before. And what is to happen with that building is yet to be determined as well. I don't want to make this all doom and gloom. I'm going to give you a couple of positive things to end this thing with.

In the last episode, we talked about Red Bull Flugtag. And we did not get into Red Bull Flugtag. We actually made it as an alternative. And it's now October 28th. We have nine days until Flugtag. They gave us 18 days I think. It's was about 9 days ago, they informed us that we were now in Red Bull Flugtag while we were in the middle of dealing with all of the fallout from the hurricane as an organization. And I actually included all the employees in this decision. We had to decide if we were going to participate or not in the midst of everything that was going on.

And it was everyone that remained. This was after we've done layoffs. Everyone that remained was unanimous and everybody wanted to do it. We will be in the Red Bull Flugtag here in Tampa. And the jungle jet will fly with team.media. And there's a People's Choice Award. We'll put a link to that in the body of the comments of the podcast. If you want to vote for our craft and the People's Choice Award, you're welcome to do so. We'd appreciate it very much. And then lastly – and maybe I should save this one for the next episode. But the software deal is done. It's official. I can talk about it openly.

[0:52:43] DC: Okay. Let's definitely wait on that. Because no one even knows what you're talking about. But Jamie and I do. Excellent, Will. Well, that is some great news. That is good news.

[0:52:51] JM: The Red Bull thing is awesome if anybody's ever seen it. It's cool. I've been to one.

[0:52:55] WC: Yeah, very cool.

[0:52:55] JM: So you guys are going to have fun.

[0:52:56] WC: Yeah. We're going to have fun. We're making the whole thing out of 10 mil Coroplast. I've got all the materials in hand. We've got the outline done. We've got the artwork done. We're basically making a glider out of 10 mil Coro and then wrapping it in vinyl. And then – I don't know. It's crazy. You guys have to see it. I'll send you some pictures.

[0:53:13] DC: I think I was – when I did see the email that said that you were part of it now, I think I wrote you back and I said, "I could come if you need somebody in –" I could be part of the pit crew or something.

[0:53:25] WC: Well, we have – the way it works is we have four crew members and a pilot. I'm the pilot. We have four crew members.

[0:53:30] DC: Okay. I could just come watch.

[0:53:31] WC: Yeah. No. Come, please. Everybody that is in the company is coming. We're going to have an area that we're going to set up where everybody meets and comes and hang out. And you should come and hang out.

[0:53:41] DC: Okay. That would be awesome. Okay, everybody. This was a heavy episode. But, hopefully, you've learned some things or can communicate some things. And everything that we mentioned is valid for a home in many ways too. I mean, if I can tell you the stupidity that I left my house with because I was not prepared to leave my house and potentially never come back again, which is what I had to actually do. Before I locked the door for the last time, I just let all my stuff go. Because anything I really, really cared about, I put as high up in the cabinets as I possibly could. Knowing that if it was 15 feet of water, it wasn't going to make it. But I was hoping it wasn't going to be that. And everything else – I'll tell you. I mean, computers, electronics, anything with all of my – I don't even know people's phone numbers. If anything happened to the – I know nothing.

Realize that that's not such a great system anymore. And to maybe write something print. Make a little spreadsheet. Print it out so you always have something in paper in your hand just in case you need to get in touch with people for whatever reason. And who do you phone? Will knows. I

was calling around at the last minute trying to find a place to escape to because of animals. Not everybody wants animals in your house.

I ended up finding these tents that they're actually for babies. But I just put cats in instead. And portable – litter boxes that are made out – trays. And so, all of this is great to look for before you need it is all I have to say. Plenty of batteries. Plenty of lamps.

[0:55:32] WC: Batteries.

[0:55:32] DC: Oh, my God. I ended up – I didn't want to tell you. The day before I left, I spent \$217 in the supermarket buying things I was not prepared for because I did not think I had to evacuate. Once I had to evacuate, it became a completely different story. And it was very psychologically traumatizing, I have to say, to not know anything. Will, I feel for you when you said you open that door and you're like, "Wait, there's a box here. Now, there's a frog here. What's going on?" And it all comes into view. And sometimes it's not a great view. But as we said, preparation is the only thing you can do. And make sure that you're safe, and your employees are safe, and everything after that comes.

Thank you, guys, so much. Thank you everybody out there for listening. Until next time, prepare long and prosper.

[OUTRO]

[0:56:31] DC: Thanks for listening to Podcasts From The Printerverse. Please subscribe, click some stars, and leave us a review. Connect with us through printmediacentr.com. We'd love to hear your feedback on our shows and topics that are of interest for future broadcasts. Until next time. Thanks for joining us. Print long and prosper.

[END]

Mentioned in This Episode:

International Print Day: <https://internationalprintday.org/>

Girls Who Print Day 2024: <https://girlswhoprint.net/girls-who-print-day-conference-2024-celebrating-girl-power/>

Florida Graphics Alliance: <https://www.floridagraphics.org/>

Print & Graphic Communications Association: <https://printcommunications.org/>

Red Bull Flugtag Tampa: <https://www.redbull.com/us-en/events/red-bull-flugtag-tampa>

Red Bull Flugtag People's Choice Award: <https://www.redbull.com/us-en/events/red-bull-flugtag-tampa/peoples-choice-award>

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

DMR Graphics: www.dmr-graphics.com/

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

Tampa Media: <https://tampa.media/>

Sign Parrot: <https://signparrot.com/>

Gorilla Consultants: <https://gorillagurus.com>

Deborah Corn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/deborahcorn/>

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