

[INTRODUCTION]

[00:00:00] DC: Today on The Print Report, Hunkeler AG and Hunkeler Innovationdays.

[00:00:06] PM: We are going to connect.

[00:00:08] DC: Welcome to The Print Report with Deborah Corn and Pat McGrew, all the print that's fit for news.

[INTERVIEW]

[00:00:16] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to The Print Report with Deborah Corn and Pat McGrew. I'm Deborah Corn.

[00:00:22] PM: And I'm Pat McGrew.

[00:00:24] DC: You are Pat McGrew. Pat, we have the Hunkelers on the podcast today. You know how I feel about my Hunkies.

[00:00:34] PM: Arguably our favorite people to have a podcast with.

[00:00:37] DC: Seriously. Are they not the best?

[00:00:40] PM: Yes.

[00:00:40] DC: Specifically, we have Daniel Erni. He is the CEO of Hunkeler AG. For over 100 years, Hunkeler has stood for innovative solutions in the printing industry. Anyone who combines digital printing and paper finishing knows their name. The 15th Hunkeler Innovationdays is taking place February 24th through 27th, 2025 in beautiful Lucerne, Switzerland, showcasing the latest and greatest in digital print, inkjet, and finishing technologies. You can join Team Hunkeler and industry leaders from around the world to explore cutting-edge solutions for continuous and sheet-fed trends shaping the future of print. By just going to

innovationdays.com, getting information, registering, getting a plane ticket, and hopping over there, the links are in the show notes. Welcome, Daniel.

[00:01:42] DE: Hey, Deborah. Thank you very much for having me on here and Pat. Great to be with you again.

[00:01:48] DC: As I mentioned, this is the 15th Hunkeler Innovationdays. Daniel, do you want to give some history about the event and let people know why you created it?

[00:02:00] DE: Hunkeler started way back just as an in-house event, and it just took off right away. I mean, it was so well-accepted from the industry, as they learned that there is something else where they can get together and talk about the industry. I think that the big difference which Hunkeler made on that in the early, early days already focusing really on having equipment. Really bringing the gear into the showroom, having right their live, running, and presenting applications, so with that, the real world of our industry. I think this is the big part and very major part that it continued to be successful as it is until today.

[00:02:49] DC: Pat, I remember back when I first started Print Media Centr, and you were going to all the events, and I was not. One of the events that you made YouTube videos for me from was Hunkeler Innovationdays. I just remember looking at the scenery and looking at everything that you and doing and you sharing those stories. It was one of those events that I was like, "My God, maybe one day I can go to this event."

You go to so many events around the world. I happen to know that this, like with me, is one of your favorites. Can you just give everybody out there some perspective on why this event really is unique and super important to the industry for people making plans about their future?

[00:03:36] PM: Yes. Deborah and Daniel, first, the Hunkeler is honestly one of my favorite events. It is often there are attempts to imitate what Hunkeler Innovationdays does. But I don't think anyone actually meets the brief because what Hunkeler Innovationdays does is provide a neutral playing ground for printers to come and actually see the size of the equipment, how it fits together, what a finishing line looks like when it's in line, when it's near line. It's a chance to see finishing innovations in a way that you can't see anywhere else.

I would argue that even at drupa, as much as we love drupa, you've got to walk a long way and burn a lot of shoe leather to be able to see all the variations, where the value proposition of this amazing event in Lucern is that it's one-stop shopping in a building that is very walkable. Where else will the hosts give you water, coffee, whatever your favorite soft drink is, and a little bit of beer and wine in the afternoon, and help you relax your way into understanding the power of the hardware that can really help you grow your business? It's the thing that differentiates Hunkeler Innovationdays from everybody else, even the imitators.

[00:05:17] DC: Yes. I mean, they also give you lunch. Don't forget about the international lunch that they do there.

[00:05:21] PM: Oh, there's lunch. There's food. There's conviviality. There is an opportunity to sit and talk with people that you might never meet otherwise. But if you're a printer and you are coming to Hunkeler Innovationdays, it's a chance to talk to all the vendors you may never have another chance to meet because of your existing vendor relationships, because of where you live, where your business is operated. It's a chance to see things that could help you build a differentiation for your business, and that's what I love about it.

The old building was fun. The old building had a certain smell about it and a certain feel about it. But this new building, which we've had now for really quite, it's not new anymore, but is so well-suited to being the home of every piece of important equipment for printers, as the digital printing printers cut sheet now and roll-fed. It's just a brilliant environment. The length of the show is right, the timing of the show is right, and the location is spectacular.

[00:06:36] DC: Spectacular.

[00:06:38] DE: Just let me quick make a point, Pat. Yes, it is called the Hunkeler Innovationdays. Yes, it is the Hunkeler family which puts that together. Then it's all my employees which are contributing a lot of their hours also on weekends on that to put that great event together. But other –

[00:06:55] PM: And their kids, too.

[00:06:56] DE: Yes, right. You're right. Even their kids are helping on it. But it is truly a partner event. Then you mentioned, I mean, the food is free. The drinks are free. You can walk very easily to the whole event and going across aisles to all the different partners, competitors as well in that area. But it is a true partner when everybody pulls over those four days on the same string to make a very, very efficient show for our industry to help our customer to grow their business. Showing just on one place, how much we have developed over the past two years and give them a path forward.

[00:07:41] DC: I mean, the fact that it's a family-run event shines through in every sense, from family-style dining in the lunch area where everybody sits together, to networking in the outer hallway of Messe Luzern, so much so that we've actually outgrown the original space that we were using Messe Luzern, which was like two of the halls. Now, you've expanded. Can you talk about that and how you're positioning the halls if they're any different than has been in the past?

[00:08:14] DE: Now, even if we are much about the history and the tradition, but it's very important to see also the focus going forward and how we are developing as an industry. It is important to us and to our partners that we get the chance to not show just the roll-fed equipment so that we are really also reflecting the overall inkjet industry in that aspect. With that, we are really taking on also the sheet-fed portion of the industry.

As I said earlier, as we are a pure equipment show to show the applications or life there, it was necessary to allow for more space to bring more equipment to Lucerne. With that, we did have to adopt the concept slightly so that we are really using, as you mentioned, Deborah, the two halls as entire halls for our partners to give them the space. Now, don't worry, Pat. It's still great food. It's great still drinks. We are moving that a little bit further over. You do have to walk a little bit further over to get that. But this is also a nice smaller hall which accommodates the conversations, very good for the whole industry.

[00:09:31] PM: Daniel, are we going to be talking about workflow as well? In past Innovationdays, one of the things that I've loved to watch is how workflow vendors – actually, they kind of have to prove their point when they're there. Very often, they're working with the hardware vendors to show things like dashboard metrics and to show jobs being submitted and actually running all the way through finishing. Will we see that again this year or in 2025?

[00:09:59] DE: Absolutely, absolutely. We're definitely heading even more in that direction. Now, I'm not going to tell you and say that we are on the end of that, that we have reached all of that. I mean, there is still a lot to gain. We still have to do a lot of development to really come up with that ultimate connected solution. But we are going to be another major step forward, and we are going to have other partners in the show which are cross-connecting across the different booths of the show. I mean, we are going to have the connect system. We are going to have to spend some metrics and many others out of the industries which are showcasing that right there.

[00:10:39] PM: Which are two of my favorite workflows, by the way, so excellent. I am really excited about that.

[BREAK]

[00:10:46] DC: Are you looking to elevate your game, take your bottom-line customer relationships, and events to the next level? Then, I want to work with you. I'm Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. I engage with a vast, global audience of print and marketing professionals across all stages of their careers. They are seeking topical information and resources, new ways to serve their customers and connect with them, optimize processes for their communications and operations, and they need the products and services and partnership you offer to get to their next level.

Print Media Centr offers an array of unique opportunities that amplify your message and support your mission across the Printerverse. Let's work together, bring the right people together, and move the industry forward together. Link in the show notes. Engage long and prosper.

[INTERVIEW RESUMED]

[00:11:48] DC: There's also a lot of exhibitors there who bring big presses and things of that nature. Pat, last year, we noticed that to your most excellent point, in previous years, the presses were in the front of the booths. All of the software and workflow solutions were at the back of the booths. Last year, there was a complete shift in that in where you couldn't even see the press until you walked past or at least spoke to somebody who was explaining to you about how to integrate everything into the process. I'm assuming that's even going to be more

important this year. I know we just touched upon it, but I want to tie it with the exhibitors that are there.

Daniel, even though you've expanded the space, it's still a relatively – I don't want to say it's a small show. It's a medium-sized show. It's a manageable show. Everything there is super relevant, but not everybody is there. I'm assuming that there's a reason why the people that are there with presses are there. If you want to elaborate on any of that, Pat, maybe you want to help as well at the end.

[00:13:00] DE: Deborah, I mean, how it is in the business, I think if you are focusing in what you are doing good, in what you are doing well, I think you are most successful. That's exactly what that show, Hunkeler Innovationdays, is doing, too. We are focusing in inkjet technology, and that fits just perfect with all the major partners around the globe in those two halls. With that, let's say over two days, you get a great overview of what's possible and what the future is going to bring in that industry.

[00:13:33] PM: Daniel, how much interactions do you have with your partners about the kinds of applications that they're going to bring? We know that in digital printing, we used to just worry about transactions. Then we kind of got brave, and we got into books. Then we got a little braver, and we got into direct mail and more colorful pieces. Today, it feels like the sky's the limit. You can print anything using digital technology and get spectacular results. Do you encourage them to do specific kinds of applications? Or do they come to you and say, "Hey, this is what we want to show?"

[00:14:11] DE: The process for that really starts right off the [inaudible 00:14:14]. It is quite a bit of a task for my team to really line that nicely up. Everybody wants to go to that sweet spot of the high color, high-density area. To be honest, everybody should have the chance to really show and prove his capability during the Hunkeler Innovationdays. Trust me, we are also going to make sure transactional is reflected. Then transactional, it's still a big part of our business.

Also, we as Hunkeler, we are still very proud to support the transactional customers in a good way, and we still will have new equipment for the transactional market, too, as well as for the book market. I mean, this is definitely a sweet spot in our industry. From that standpoint, yes, we

will make sure you're going to have the experience through all the different segments of our industry.

[00:15:07] DC: Last year, you introduced the Starbook system to everybody at the event. Any new things coming from Hunkeler, and are you going to have the Starbook on display in all of its glory again this year? It was so cool. I love that thing with just how it separates the different insides of the books. It's just very cool. One of those machines I like to watch all day long.

[00:15:31] DE: You know it is also important – that even the engineer which have designed that piece of equipment still love to watch it.

[00:15:37] DC: Yes. It's so much fun.

[00:15:40] DE: It's going to take just about another 170 days, 17 hours, and 31 minutes before we start with that Innovationdays. I have to say you really have to come to see the new things which are appearing. You will not be disappointed. There is quite a bit of new stuff which we are going to show on the roll-fed area, as well on the sheet-fed area. It is not just Hunkeler which is going to bring new stuff.

There are also all the other partners on the software side, as well as on the hardware side, on the printing side, as well as on the finishing side, which are eager to prove themselves and show you something new, even though we are just relatively close after drupa. Some of them, as this is such a specific show, are actually waiting specifically for Innovationdays to get their big thing for the inkjet industry on Hunkeler Innovationdays.

[00:16:40] DC: It's a great time to launch something. It's the first event of the year. It's when everybody's thinking about looking at new equipment and even helps people who don't get to go to Innovationdays understand what to look for at the shows that they can attend.

[00:16:58] PM: Deb, the other thing I'd say is that Innovationdays is I think it's more egalitarian. I think a lot of people look at drupa as not being a show for them. Maybe it's too big. Maybe they don't think that it's got the right equipment, whereas people who come to Innovationdays, printers who come to Innovationdays, usually come with a shopping list and a checkbook, right?

They know what they're looking for. They've got hard questions to ask. I have lurked behind printers as they walk down the hall, and they stop at printer A and printer B and printers A. They're asking. They've got their questions, and they're looking for answers, and they're making notes.

Daniel, if you were inviting a printer who'd never been to Innovationdays before and they've got that shopping list in the checkbook, what advice would you give to them to prepare to come to the show?

[00:17:49] DE: I mean, most important, make that bucket list. Make that list, what you want to do. Then enjoy the ride. Come to Lucerne, get in on your first day, and let's say take about two days. Think about two days walking up and down the aisle, asking that question more than once, going from booth to booth, and asking the same question, and see what the different answers. I'm really certain, after two days, you've got so smart about that industry that you're going to do the right decision for yourself.

[BREAK]

[00:18:27] PM: McGrewGroup helps printers and the vendors who support them with strategy, product triage, print sample assessments, education, and consultation. We help our clients with assessment reviews, workshops, research, and education. After all, understanding the capabilities you have isn't always intuitive. Let us help you polish and shine your processes to enhance your road to long-term growth. McGrewGroup is ready to help you grow, expand, optimize, and thrive. Drop us a note on LinkedIn or at our website, mcgrewgroup.com.

[INTERVIEW RESUMED]

[00:19:04] DC: Ever since I have been attending, I don't know if this is my fifth. This might be my fifth or sixth time attending. Thank you guys so much again for inviting me. Previously, it's been a pre-conference, but you work with a group called DOXNET. This year, the conference is going to be actually on the 25th of February. Can you share more about what that is and who's eligible to attend it?

[00:19:31] DE: DOXNET, it's traditionally an organization mainly of Germany, heavily in the transaction business. However, also they are developing actually quite heavily into other areas of our inkjet industry. They are gathering together on that 25th from the morning until the evening to share information with each other, having a couple of great presentations, having also a pretty good discussion round with each other where they can exchange their experience.

DOXNET, it's also growing above and beyond the German-speaking area of Europe, and it attracts with that more and more people to that organization. As I say, also covering other segments of the industry in the meantime. From that standpoint, we are very glad to have DOXNET participating in that extent of the Hunkeler Innovationdays.

[00:20:29] PM: Daniel, the history of DOXNET is really so interesting because many, many years ago, like multiple decades ago, there was something called Explore Germany. Explore International was built out of the transactional digital print in the early days in the eighties and nineties. The Explore Germany organization became so self-sufficient that they actually broke away from Explore and created DOXNET on their own. From the day they did that, I have just giggled at watching them grow because they reached all the DACH countries. They absolutely do that.

Everywhere I go in Europe, people know that organization, and they know that that's where the smart, innovative folks hang out, so it does tend to attract people. They are definitely a German-focused organization. But if you look at who they attract as speakers, they're really a pretty amazing group of people. It's such an interesting market in Germany because of how they approach things that if you speak German or you understand German, this would be a place for you to hang out for some time because you might learn things you didn't know people were doing.

[00:21:48] DC: Okay. Now, I know why I don't go to that. I didn't realize they spoke German. I'm so sorry. Sorry. I'm like, "Well, how come they never asked me to go to that thing?" Okay, Daniel. Sorry, I didn't mean to cut you off.

[00:21:58] DE: Don't worry about it. I mean, just don't forget. That's a great, fun, part of it. It's a great bunch of people. They do have also a big party in one of the hotels on the 25th in the evening. They do speak English, so don't worry to join them.

[00:22:16] DC: Daniel, this year, the theme of Innovationdays is connect, to connect people, to connect solutions, to connect processes. How is Hunkeler going to deliver on that, and why don't you personally invite everybody out there listening to come and join the event this year?

[00:22:36] DE: I personally believe our marketing team, together with our partners, have done a great job on that. I think that theme just catches the pure moment of our industry, what's so important. Let's start with connect people. We do want to have the experts of our industry in Lucerne. If we do have the experts in Lucerne, we do want it that they are networking with each other and sharing their experience with each other.

I'm not just talking about in a formal way. You will see if you come to Lucerne. That's also such an informal way where you can get hooked and getting to talk to each other in a very easy way. As we are so focused on those experts, you will very easily find the language with each other and the theme and the topic where we understand each other very well.

[00:23:35] PM: Daniel, when we talk about connecting solutions, it's a hardware thing at Innovationdays. How do we tell that story? How is Hunkeler telling that story in Innovationdays?

[00:23:47] DE: We are taking that up with the solutions specifically in that that we are connecting equipment with each other. We are not purely just showing pieces of equipment on one booth and on the other booth. We are actually connecting equipment across the different booths. We are connecting across all the different partners. There is a printer on one side and then walking over cross aisle and finishing piece of equipment. That shows then also how we interact with each other today, how we are eliminating complicated interfaces and are just going directly together with each other.

Don't forget, and this is going to be another great thing this upcoming Hunkeler Innovationdays, intralogistics. Then the one thing, as long as we are in the stream of the paper, it is easy to just squeeze the equipment together. But as soon as you, let's say, have a pile of paper, if you have

another roll, what you are going to do then? There, intralogistic is going to play in quite heavily in 2025 Hunkeler Innovationdays.

[BREAK]

[00:25:02] DC: Like what you hear? Leave us a comment, click a few stars, share this episode, and please subscribe to the show. Are you interested in being the guest and sharing your information with our active and growing global audience? Podcasts are trending as a potent direct marketing and educational channel for brands and businesses who want to provide portable content for customers and consumers. Visit printmediacentr.com, click on podcasts, and request a partner package today. Share long and prosper.

[INTERVIEW RESUMED]

[00:25:36] DC: It's such an important thing to present in a way that people understand what their options are. Obviously, all the equipment that's in at the show can work with Hunkeler or your partners. Finishing is one of the things that can freak a printer out if they don't plan for it ahead, so showing how everything works together or could work together is super important. It goes back to the shopping list that you have where you could just say, "I need something this size," or, "I need something that goes this fast." Then you can go to one place, and see a bunch of that stuff, and then work on connecting the solution that's best for your business, which leads us into the processes, how everything works together after that and talks to each other, right, Pat? I mean, that's got to be the next step.

[00:26:30] PM: I think, Daniel, one of the things that always impresses me is that the partners buy into the theme and the stories. When we start talking about connecting processes, a printer who comes to the show will be able to talk to any one of your partners about how they've connected their solution into the Hunkeler universe and be able to demonstrate it, which is really the only place I can think of where you'd be able to have that question multiple times within 25 meters of the hall floor, which is a fascinating way to really realize that connecting theme.

[00:27:08] DE: Absolutely. Specifically then connecting processes plays heavily into it as we, I think, truly show the digitalization of our industry, how we are connecting those different

processes. Once more, this is going to bring the efficiency which our customer need today and, obviously, even more tomorrow, as our industry is a competitive industry. That's no question about it. If we have that all together, if you have connected the people, if you have connected the solution, and if you have connected the processes, it's going to be much easier to handle automation.

Automation, it's not an easy topic. For automation, you do have to do something and arrange it around you. But exactly in that line, in the sense of people, solutions, and processes, this is going to work in the end.

[00:28:05] DC: There are no sessions at this event. It is purely to walk on the floor. The exhibitors, some of the bigger ones, will have demos going with schedules. Or they'll have somebody speaking in their booth. Pat, what are the things that people should be looking for or asking the people in the booths because there are no sessions? You're not going to go and hear like another show you go and you hear from an analyst or something. You literally can go and talk to the people. The engineers who make the presses are there. It's different.

[00:28:36] PM: Take the time to figure out what the presentation schedule is in each one of the stands because all of the major vendors come with stories to tell. They come with demonstrations. They come with storyboards that they would like to share with you. Even if you buy from vendor A, check out the presentation schedules for all of the vendors in all three of the halls because I think what you're going to learn is that there are different approaches to meeting that efficiency requirement that every printer has. You might discover new ways to think about how to map your workflow together and how to map equipment together.

Again, this is the place you're going to be able to see how much footprint the solution that could be most efficient for you actually takes up. Find out what it really takes to put it all together, what the software frontends are, what the supporting equipment pieces are. Ask what those schedules are. Most of the time, the vendors will have a board by their reception area at the front of each one of their stands, and they'll tell you what they're going to be talking about all day long. Figure out what those schedules are, and plan to spend some time standing there, listening to – because it's usually engineers making the presentation. This isn't really a marketing show. It's an engineering show.

[00:30:03] DC: No, it is not. If they don't happen to have a sign, all of the booths pretty much have a welcome desk that you can ask somebody there what is going on. Daniel?

[00:30:12] DE: That's one of the shows where you can walk on the booth from all the partners attending and ask a question. Show it to me, and they will.

[00:30:22] DC: Not only that. I mean, I tell the story all the time where all the exhibitors also attend the show, as well as exhibit at the show. They're walking around to each booth with their heads in the presses, and it's a little crazy. Daniel, last thing, just to go back for a moment, I'd like you to extend a personal invitation to everybody out there to come to beautiful Lucerne, Switzerland. It cannot be described on a podcast. I would suggest that everybody look up Lucerne, Switzerland in your image library of the search engine of your choice and get ready to have your breath taken away. But please.

[00:31:01] DE: You know, Deborah and Pat and everybody listening out there, I'm so glad to be the host of Hunkeler Innovationdays 2025. We are really glad to invite you all to that show over to Lucerne. Then you can contribute. With that, you are coming to Lucerne. You can contribute to our industry, that we do have the chance to develop further. All our partners will appreciate that very much. Then it's going to be exciting with each other.

As we were talking already, with the motto of connecting the people, and showing the connected solution, and showing and proving also connected processes, it's just a great part of that show. Having all you guys right over there would be just fun.

[00:31:52] DC: Is Carnival happening this year at the same time as the event?

[00:31:56] DE: Yes. That's a little bit of a concern of mine. Then that starts actually in the early, early morning hours of Thursday of our last day of Innovationdays, so we will have a big party on it on the last day.

[00:32:10] PM: There will be that cannon going off. Yes.

[00:32:13] DC: I mean, I get up at four o'clock in the morning. Last time, I walked around with Jim Hamilton of all people walking. It is an incredible experience if you're willing to get up at four o'clock in the morning and walk around. It's absolutely fantastic. The other thing I would say is if you're going, please look up Old Swiss House and make a reservation now because I'm going to take up every table until I leave. I just wanted to mention that Pat and I will actually have a Print Report podcast booth at Hunkeler Innovationdays next year. Anyone who's interested in recording some podcasts with us during the show, you can get in touch.

Daniel, thank you so, so much for joining us, for being a friend of the podcast, for just being part of one of the most innovative, open, and welcoming companies that are out there, especially when it comes to producing this event. Pat, any last words for the people out there?

[00:33:12] PM: Oh, I just am going to be using Daniel's phrase, show it to me, over and over and over again between now and Innovationdays 2025.

[00:33:22] DC: Excellent. Well, everything you need to get yourself to Hunkeler Innovationdays is in the show notes. Again, thank you so much. Until next time, everybody. Print long, finish long, and prosper.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[00:33:38] 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:

Daniel Erni: <https://linkedin.com/in/daniel-erni/>

Hunkeler AG: <https://hunkeler.ch/en/home/>

Hunkeler Innovationdays 2025: <https://innovationdays.com/>

Hunkeler Starbook Plowfolder: <https://hunkeler.ch/loesungen/starbook-plowfolder-buchloesung/>

DOXNET: <https://doxnet.de/>

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