[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:01.9] DD: Does your printing need some passion?

[0:00:04.7] NT: Your design, some dynamic dimension?

[0:00:07.8] DC: Are you stuck in a CMYK rut?

[0:00:10.8] DD: I'm David Drucker, founder, and CEO of highresolution printing and packaging.

[0:00:16.2] NT: I'm Noel Tocci, founder of Tocci Made, Bespoke Print Consulting.

[0:00:20.5] DC: And I'm Deborah Corn, The Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. Welcome to Making It With Print, the podcast that takes a deep dive into the conception, creation, and production of amazing printed products.

[0:00:33.6] NT: If you can dream it.

[0:00:34.8] DD: You can make it.

[INTERVIEW]

[0:00:38.9] DC: Hey everybody, welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. More specifically, we are here with the Making It With Print crew. I'm so happy to see you guys, it's been a while between hurricanes and illnesses and trips to Europe. David, hello sir. How is everything in your world?

[0:01:02.5] DD: Oh, you know, everything is just dandy. It's great to be back, it's great to be in front of everybody, and I think today's topic is grand.

[0:01:10.1] DC: Excellent. Noel Tocci, hello sir, how are you?

[0:01:14.3] NT: I'm well, and hope you both are as well. Yeah, I'm excited. I'm looking at these topics and I'm ready to go, it's been a couple of months.

[0:01:20.9] DC: It has been a while. So, first of all, if you're not familiar with this podcast, David and Noel are creative consultants, and they are called in to make really spectacular print come to life and I encourage you all to click on the links in the show notes and see how they could help you speak at your event, share some cool information with you or anything else, they are very handy to have around.

Today, our topic is actually for creatives, marketers, designers, and anybody on the print buying side, including the production managers, and we've titled it, "Crafting Creative Briefs for Printing Success." Now, I come from advertising so I would call it a creative brief, although it might translate as a request for a proposal for some people or a request for an estimate but I really wanted this podcast to focus more on the collaborative side of seeking out help from partners, and the basic information that you could share to help it be successful in all of the ways that a purchaser of print and a marketing device, a communications device, a sales device, which is what print is, you know, to make the most of it and make them successful.

So, just in a very loose way, a creative brief is a concise document, outlining project goals, audience, key messages, and tone to guide creative work effectively. So, we're going to take some of these points one by one, and we're going to start with defining the objective and the audience. So, David, when you're contacted by a customer, a client, a prospect, and they say, "We want to work with you," what do you define as the project objective and the intended audience for that project?

[0:03:47.2] DD: You know, that's really the basis of any project, is to know what it is, where it's going, who your audience is. For instance, if you are going to do a mailing piece, is it a hundred thousand envelopes or is it a hundred envelopes? That's going to determine equipment that you're going to go on. Knowing what the image looks like, that's going to determine equipment that we're going to go on, and you know, then we have timing as well.

So, I think the absolute basis is having that conversation and getting as much information as you can get upfront. That information is going to lead to what we will be doing then after. So,

you know, we want to also know what this piece is going to be used for. Is it going to be a book that's sitting on a table? Is it going to attract somebody to a website for a sale that's going on, and is it going to "meet the budget" of what needs to be done in order to fulfill their needs?

[0:04:56.7] DC: Noel, when you're contacted by customers, do they often have a clear objective, know exactly what they want to use the print for, and the target – this very specific target audience, or is it more general, and maybe you help them narrow it down?

[0:05:15.4] NT: I've encountered this a lot lately and I've actually started to think about who our customers are, and what I've realized lately is they come to me and come to the table with one thing that's very important to them, right? They might say that, "You know because we do want to know," like David just said, "What is the desired result? You know, who are you trying to reach?"

But they'll typically, caught my head one recently, "I want to do a great book, I know you do beautiful books, but this has to be about sustainability and helping people." So, you know, and it doesn't have to be you know, something that's part of what we do but in that case, you know, it's about materials and stuff but what I have found is they come with one thing that's really important to them.

"Yeah-yeah, we want to reach a lot of people, yeah, we thought website, it's a mailer but this is who we want to reach by mail," or, "We want, you know, wealthy people, or this is our target audience." So, they generally – because it's – they feel very strongly about one thing, and I find I have to sit down and have a meeting and pull the rest of it out because you really need a fully formed plan, as you said, right?

"Well, I know that's great, and you just have this idea in your head." But usually, if I'm answering your question, it's one component or strong thing. Like they'll say, "It's definitely a mailer, I don't know anymore," or it's, "You know, it's going to be mainly website but we need some collateral." So, there's always something that's really important and then we get into, well, look at it from 30,000 feet, you know?

What is you when your brand is connected to it? What's it look like, smell like, feel like? You know, is it a coffee table book? Oh, is it just a giveaway? Is it – and you know, that usually goes hand in hand with what they're trying to do or what's really important to them? You know, I'll have people say, "Yeah, that's all good but you know, you have to be able to eat it, it's about sustainability."

And you know, you have to coax them, but yeah, that's what I find. Does that make sense? That there's something that's very important to them, it's not usually fully formed but then stuff forms around that, you keep that, make them feel it out because you go, "Well, you can't just do something with that. What else?"

[0:07:14.4] DC: Right. Well, most of the time, I can tell you like in an advertising agency, I never had those conversations with my printer. I just said, "Here is the number – " you know, to David's point, "Here's the quantity of the mail that I want." We've decided to put an aqueous code on it because we wanted to "stand out in the mailbox" but when I was buying print, we didn't collaborate like that.

We collaborated more on, you know, "Do you have a format that maybe we haven't seen before?" And we're going to get to that in the moment but understanding that really is helpful for the partners that you want to work with because Noel made a very good point. If something is about sustainability, of course, that's going to – and if that is your main objective, and you want to reach an audience who you want to educate about sustainability or show them that you're participating in sustainable practices, whatever it might be, then, of course.

From that moment on, your partner has to be thinking materials, process, working with printers who can prove that they offset their carbon or have electric vehicles or solar panels, just to take it to another level. So, it's super important. As well as the intended audience. Are they five? Are they 25? Are they 55? You know, we're not really the designers of this but that would affect a lot of the design, I think, in the imagery and things of that nature.

And certainly, with digital printing now, you can hit all the demographics you want in one print run. Here's my question to you guys. Does the message matter? If they know that the campaign that they're doing, and the message they're communicating, let's take it away from sustainability

because that is really, really specific, right? But does the message matter? Like, for example, what Disney says. It's the happiest place on earth, right?

So, that message could drive how a partner suggests to execute something. So, what do you think, David? It matters, it doesn't matter, sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't.

[0:09:27.9] DD: Oh, I think absolutely, it does. It helps you to determine, you know, papers that you're going to use, maybe some techniques that you're going to use, colors. You know, you're bringing in a partner that hopefully has some insight into, "Well, I've done something like this before and this is what we've done." Now, not that we're going to be doing that but it's the beginning of a conversation that might lead completely in a different direction.

So, you know, I think it's important that we all get into this and we begin to feed the fire, and let's see what comes out in the end.

[0:10:08.6] DC: Yeah. I mean, I honestly didn't even think about color. Now, again, we're not creating the files but that means you maybe want to suggest a colored paper or a different type of texture, Noel?

[0:10:20.8] NT: Yeah, well, you said something before that was really important and you harken back to your past and said, "Well, we would tell people what to do." I tell people sometimes, "If you know what to do, with all due respect, I can refer you, we're not for you." When I have a conversation, I want to hear more about that, you know what I mean? And color, when you said the word "Disney," I thought, "Well that could go wrong in a hurry."

You're not going to use any, you know, dark, moody grays. It's you know, what we call, and I don't mean this disrespectfully, cheap and cheerful more, you know what I mean? And that's what it is but the bottom line is, I think we need to encourage people to build partnerships and then ask questions and encourage us to give our thoughts, as opposed to, you can't possibly have it all figured out.

If you're coming up with the idea and you're in charge of the brand, well, you know your brand inside out and backwards and you know in your head what it looks like and feels like but if you

can't delineate that, or have a conversation about it because you don't know how to – about papers and process and what's possible and all of that but if you can clearly delineate your idea and what you're trying to do and your brand to someone like David or myself or any good partner where there's back and forth, you're leaving something on the table.

[0:11:32.9] DC: Yeah. I mean, if you just take the message part in a really simple way to understand it, think of like an insurance company. "Are you preparing for a rainy day?" And then there is spot varnish where the water is, you know? Like, the message can drive the execution, although everybody isn't that far along in the process. Sometimes, when they are – they know they have to do a mailing, they just know how you know, to David's point before, they just know how many they need and they're requesting an estimate.

But what we're trying to say here is that the more information you have, the better your projects will end up if you collaborate. So, the next thing is, possibly the most important part and that's outlining the deliverables. So, this is what would be, you would put down in a request for a proposal or a request for an estimate from a vendor if you already have established with them, and in that sense, you would outline the deliverables, communicate any mandatory elements.

And when I say, "outline the deliverables" is it like, if you think about something in a supermarket for example, is it the package, is it the shelf notes, is it also the display that's next to it? Is that all going to be tied into a coupon that's in the circular? Is there going to be a mailing, is it going to be inserted in one of those Valpak things? These – in the United States, we have these things where you mail a big thing of coupons to people.

So, you certainly have to know, you know, as much as possible, I think it's helpful for the partners to know that. Specify brand guidelines, communicate mandatory elements if there are any, and I think, if possible, show your partners a sample as close to what it is that you think that you want even if it's online. There is nothing wrong with going online and saying, "Yes, I can't touch it, I don't know the size of it but I want it to look like this in some manner."

Do you think that that that's, there's still an opportunity to be collaborative in that moment, David?

[0:13:49.1] DD: So, the last thing that you had said is, you know, having a sample, having an idea of what something's going to look like. You know, that's really great for the upfront. The other part of this is you know, we might have a set printing press or a location that we want to print in but then what comes in is logistics of any production, and you might get into something where you're doing coupons or hang tags and they have to go to, you know, about hundred thousand different places and each one has a different copy to it and such.

And for me, that's one of the most difficult parts of putting any project together. So, you know, going back to your first question, and into this question is the overview of exactly what you're going to get. That might change where in this United States you might be printing, based on delivery, maybe that splits up where you're printing based on delivery, and then you know, the logistics of having to get it to where it has to go.

For me, the logistics of this is something that I have to know, and I have to know upfront, because we might quote on something and say, "Hey, yeah, we got it in the bag." And then the hook comes in and you're scrambling.

[0:15:07.0] DC: Yeah.

[0:15:06.8] DD: You're scrambling to put this together.

[SPONSORE MESSAGE]

[0:15:11.5] NT: Hi, I'm Noel Tocci, founder of Tocci Made. The printing industry has changed quite a bit, and I've learned a lot since I joined my brother's small, but mighty printing company in Newark, New Jersey, back in 1980. Over the years, while focusing primarily in the design and creative communities, I've come to understand and believe wholeheartedly that powerful, effective, and impactful print communication always lives at the intersection of great design, appropriate materials, and thoughtfully curated execution. Making beautiful work is a journey from concept, or idea, to desired result, Tocci Made is here to help you find your way and create work that is not only effective but something you can be proud of. Head to toccimade.com and find out how we can help.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:15:56.4] DC: You're quoting or you're trying to find, you know, partners, and you find your best partners and then you come back and you find out, "Nope, there's a PMS color and they don't want any breakdown of that PMS color, they want that." So, getting those brand guidelines upfront could be very handy. Noel, something tells me, you've had some experience with this and brand guidelines.

[0:16:22.2] NT: You have no idea, and that's why I look so tired today. I'm not even going to bore you with what I'm in the middle of but I will say, to what David said, it's really important, and going back to your first point, when you're having that overview and talking about what's important, that's really important. Somebody might explain the whole thing, what's important, and all of that.

But they might not tell you what David said that, "Oh, by the way, we're distributing only on the West Coast, only on the East Coast." And now, the thinking is, "Wait a minute, why am I going to do this and truck it? Maybe I can do it there or do it in this place." The other thing is, it might need two kinds of equipment or processes that are in two disparate places. I'm doing one of the most impressive things I've ever done and it happens to be in Boston, and there's a piece of this that's so critical that I couldn't find anywhere.

And it's in New Jersey and someone just drove from New Jersey to Boston, thinking that stuff through. New Jersey to Boston is not a big deal. LA to New York or to Maine. So, that's a part of it, and I don't think – I'm glad you mentioned that, David, I don't think people part of – think of it, what you want, the end game is the desired result. It's not just, "It has to be beautiful and for USD 10,000."

No, it has to be in someone's hands in May and, "This is my budget, and by the way, some of them are in Indonesia, some of them are in California, that's where our real hotspots are." Those things matter, you have to pull out the things that people think, "Well, Oh, I didn't know that mattered." It's up to us to decide what matters because it's how we put Humpty together, right?

[0:17:54.1] DC: Yeah. I'm going to push back a little on that because at the end of the day, yes, everything you said is absolutely right Noel but at the end of the day, they want that piece of print to drive the result in some manner. It could just be, "Wow, this is the coolest thing I've ever seen," And if that's what's –

[0:18:12.4] NT: No, no, that's very important, I didn't want to –

[0:18:13.7] DC: Somebody wants but otherwise, that thing needs to get somebody go online and register for an event. That thing needs to get someone to go to a car dealership, right?

[0:18:23.3] NT: A hundred percent, that's the most important thing. I guess, I'm thinking on our side of it.

[0:18:27.7] DC: Yeah, I know.

[0:18:29.2] NT: That was more, it will help us figure, they shouldn't worry about our side of it but it might help us do a better, more efficient, perhaps more economically sound job. That's all, and you're right, it should be all about what's going to drive whatever they want it to them, a hundred percent. I'm just giving you – because David brought up –

[0:18:49.8] DC: No, but I love what you guys are bringing to the table here because you're right. If we just go to use the example that I use, you might have to get your packaging in one place and your postcards in a completely different place, depending upon the quantities, the printing method that you have to use, the thickness of whatever substrate you're thinking of. So, at that point, you are a logistics person if you are a printer or a vendor or creative consultant like you guys.

So, you do need to know every single deliverable and not just that but when they are due, which we're going to get into right now, as a matter of fact. So, now that you have your deliverables outlined and hopefully, you've had the appropriate conversations of the objective, the audience that you want to reach, the intended use of the print, and the result that you want it to generate, you kind of have to have a budget in mind, or at least be willing to put out your wish list of desires, get it back.

And then, from there, start working towards, you know, putting things back within your budget, or, if you're lucky, adding more things because you didn't spend all the money that you knew that you had, which every once in a while, does happen, by the way. It's so much fun when you're like, "Oh, we could add more stuff to this, who wants something, you know?" So, perhaps you have a budget.

I would always say to a partner, "Give me what I asked for, do not mess with anything we've agreed to that I've asked for." Especially if it was for an advertising agency, I have to bid that three times, "And if you change my specs, I'm going to be very upset because it's going to waste time." But then maybe come back and say, "And here's other things we could do." Yes, they're going to add money but you decide if you want to do it.

For example, upgrading the paper using a specialty paper or something with the texture to it, putting a die cut on it or emboss, deciding how you're going to print it if you want to do something cool with like screen printers or something to create a really interesting effect, and of course, timeline and key deadlines are super important because that drives everything else of working backwards, right?

So, is that how you guys work as well? I always worked backwards from the date my printer told me they need the file. That's it, that was D-day, and everything else was my problem to manage on my end up into that point. Now, obviously, there's always a little wiggle room in that. If a printer is smart, they don't give you the drop dead on the first time, on the first time you ask for a deadline but don't go crazy out there print customers.

There's not that much extra time, especially if they have other work, and they have accounted for your pricing, meaning that certain things have to be at the press at certain times. So, you can't always count on it, but sometimes, there is wiggle room.

David, budgets, timeline, and key deadlines, how do you work with your customers to establish all of this in a rational and reasonable environment where everybody gets enough time to do what they want to do?

[0:22:16.8] DD: Well, hopefully, our conversations are far enough and advanced that we can begin to plan on this. That doesn't happen and in most instances, it doesn't happen but I lay out why I need files at least for maybe the front end of this upfront and if we begin to lose those dates, it's going to affect the tail end or it's going to affect budget, and that's something that the clients really in control of.

The other thing added onto this is you know, let's say that we have their budget or maybe we can buy it even better, I mean, for me, that's a goal. How can we buy this better? How is this going to be most efficient? How is it going to be most efficient for me for travel to get there and so on? So, once I have established that, I begin to think about what this production actually is, and I might think, "Well, you know, this would look much better on a heavy-weight paper or changing the papers that are on the inside, or maybe adding a lamination to it, or maybe you know, whether we screen print or whether we engrave or whether we emboss," and at least put that out there. I have found out in most instances, a client is really unaware that they can go down these roads, especially based on the suppliers that Noel and I are using, might have a piece of equipment in Tampa.

Timed right, it might be able to get onto that sewing machine in time that it all coordinates and it all balances itself out. I've always really worked for whatever that budget is but I've always given my two cents more of a direction I would like to go in, is an awakening, client might not have known, and now they're saying, "Wow, you know, you really over-delivered on this piece. We just wouldn't have gone down this road."

And you know, that goes back to the very first question of the message is that message of hitting the right audience, are they being treated special if it's a special event, so on and so forth. So, you know, as far as deadlines, I have a very easy time meeting them as long as we're set up the right way. As far as getting extras, I try not to go beyond that point if it's going to affect.

If it is going to affect, and then I really have to be really upfront, and say, "You know, we can do this but." And that might say, "Well, we are not doing that because of the timeframe." But I think it's our obligation to make sure that our clients know everything that our abilities are, maybe not for now, maybe for something up the road. "Hey, you know, I remember talking to him two

months ago about doing this technique. This is kind of perfect for that. Let's call David, let's call Noel." So, you know, budget is budget, you know?

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[0:25:23.9] DC: Printspiration is streaming across the Printerverse on the Project Peacock Network, and our mission to provide education and resources for print customers, students, and printers around the world has never been more accessible. Watch what you want, when you want, where you want. It's free. Visit ProjectPeacock.TV to access original programming, and replays from our online events. Learn about the Peacock partners and companies featured in our shows. Join our mailing list to learn about new episode premieres, and series launches, and create a free account to make watchlists. Ready for your close-up? Get your Peacock show on air by visiting ProjectPeacock.TV and request your partnership proposal today. Peacock long and prosper.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:26:15.7] DC: And I don't want anyone out there to think that you know, everybody is just into upselling and doing you know, things for more money. A lot of times when you collaborate with your printers and you find out if you just made it a tiny bit smaller, you can get more up on the press or if you are, you know again, going back to defining the objective and the audience and what is the piece going to be.

If it's something that is just going to, you know, get people to scan a QR code and go in the garbage, then maybe there's a way to use less expensive paper and put a finish on it and you know, so partners can also help you save money on your budget if you collaborate without having to sacrifice quality and we actually did a podcast on that. So, I'm going to link it in the show notes about doing amazing print on a budget.

Noel, budgets, do you follow them? Do you make options for, you know, things you think you should do that would affect the budget, and how do you provide timelines and get your clients to adhere to deadlines?

[0:27:25.1] NT: So, we're I guess probably so, maybe a hundred percent referral. So, it's an unusual role for me to get somebody that we do business with all the time but more frequently, "Hey, it's been two years, how are you doing all? I need you, where's Tocci?" and I go, "Okay." And I go in and so I know something, they're dreaming something up that not only that someone else can't do.

But then I know they're probably not a hundred percent sure of what they're doing and they want to have a discussion. My first thing is, "Let me hear about it but what's the budget, what do you want to spend, and what's your time?" If either one is unrealistic, we want to have that conversation upfront and go, "Hey, listen, I love you but you know you got to go to chippy print and do, you know what I mean?"

"You get by with it, tell them to do this, tell them to call me to look good, you get what you need." But you need to establish that because usually, they call you in because they want to know once you get those two things, you start to work, and you can figure out what you can do in the timeline and the budgets are important but timing is very important as well because of something else David said.

You know, I could do some amazing things but moving them around and coordinating, David said something, "Well, if I'm on the press and then I've got – I had to figure out what other piece of equipment." This happened to me, I was supposed to print and then I had to go right into foil stamping and dye cutting, we weren't ready, and we went and did another press group for everything else.

By the time we did that, we were going to move into stamping and it was a week out. So, I ended up moving it because if you get shoehorned into something you promised a date wise and you're doing new things, it doesn't always go so cut and dry but what I can tell you is we won't be late and we'll somehow get it done and it might cause me more than it should but I will tell you, like David said, it will always be beautiful.

But it wouldn't have been – it would still be good and commercially acceptable. We're not in the commercially acceptable world, right? I, like David, want them to go, "I never dreamed it was going to look like this, thank you." But that is a lot of back and forth and it's a lot of openness

and honesty. "Yeah, yeah, is that a really good date? You know, you got two more days." You know, because people go, "No, no."

And then you go, "Well, we could do this." And they go, "Oh, well, you can have three more days" you know what I mean? So, it's that understanding but right up front for me is budget and its schedule, and then I think about how realistic it is, and how much they really want to push, and how excited they are, and what you know, and then all the other stuff, and we start figuring it out. It's hard to do crash and burns and do them really, really well.

But it is always nice when you get in early and then you start to even have more than one conversation, right? Because then you start to like David and I, "Oh, this is right for this right here, you know when I did it this way." So, that I think is in a nutshell and the trust and again, I can't tell you enough, the people that have projects, they want to do something really special, they need to be – it doesn't have to be else.

They need to build a relationship and communicate back and forth. If everything is just typed up on purchase orders and that was the day, that was the price, I told you to do this, like that, you know what I mean? You're not going to –

[0:30:36.4] DC: Yeah.

[0:30:36.9] NT: You know, I'm pretty sure Van Gogh didn't have a watch on, you know what I mean? Not that we're making that, you know what I mean? Like, "Oh, I thought I'd finish it by Tuesday, I'll just throw it out."

[0:30:46.3] DC: Right.

[0:30:46.9] NT: But wait, let me get my –

[0:30:48.3] DC: Oh, I missed the deadline, this is done, right?

[0:30:51.0] NT: And I don't want to say we're just inventing in a vacuum, we're not but you can do beautiful things if you really are honest with each other.

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[0:31:02.3] DD: Are you a frustrated creative and want a print partner that takes an artisan approach? Do you want to be inspired with techniques that will enhance your next printed or packaging production? Or are you a printer that has unique abilities and need a liaison to enhance your exposure? I'm David Drucker, owner of highresolution printing. I am an independent creative consultant with access to every printing technology out there.

I work hand in hand with creatives and printers, creating projects that are complex, and require meticulous detail, and precision, from concept to completion. Want to see what I mean? Go to guruofprinting.com and get inspired.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:31:46.2] DC: I mean, there are so many printers I speak with who just don't want to rock the boat and ask additional questions or suggest other ways of doing things. Now, I will say partly that is because of something you just mentioned Noel, which is the customers are so nervous about getting the print when they need it if it has to be timed for some very specific thing. They're just like, "Please just take this and just print it, and just do it, like leave me alone." I –

[0:32:14.3] NT: But the print to do themselves a favor if they say, "Listen, I'm going to do exactly what you said but did you ever think about this? It would take a couple more dollars and it might take another three days. I'm just saying because think about…" And you never know. They can always say, "No, no, just do what I asked you to do." "Okay, but not only that…" If they go, "Wow, okay, yeah that sounds good."

Guess what you're doing there with that interaction? You're getting a relationship. Now, the next step, "This guy's got my back. He cares." And that's where repeat work comes from, you push each other.

[0:32:48.8] DC: Yeah, and the other thing is that it's not always the printer or the creative consultant or who – whatever intermediary you're working with that has to take on the rush end of things. I know when I built out production schedules, there is always buffer time in there

because you can't count on the creatives to do things when they – you need them to do it because they have to be creative about it, and it might not be approved.

So, it's going to wait, which is why we have buffer days but a conversation of saying, "Look, we can meet this date and we could still do something great here. I just need the file two days earlier, you know?" So, there's a way to push back on the customers too without freaking them out about it not getting there on time or being rush charges at the print shop.

[0:33:40.0] NT: Yeah, we're not going to get off-put or insulted because I bring that up. If it's everybody's on pins and needles, nothing good is going to happen.

[0:33:46.8] DC: No. I mean, ultimately, everybody should be working towards the same goal, especially if you're trying to collaborate with your partners. David, looking at the three topics that we covered today, if someone was going to just approach you out in the world, what is the best way for them to communicate everything that we've just talked about to give you enough information to figure out if you're even right for the project?

[0:34:15.6] DD: Well, I'm never not right for the project. So, I do have to say that. We just want to really know the full scope of what's going on and if you're not asking those questions upfront, you're not setting anybody up for success. You know, we do, I say we because I know Noel does this as well, I want to see what an image looks like. I want to begin to in my head by the time I'm done having that initial conversation have a direction that I'm going to go in.

If I'm going to begin to quote a production and I don't know everything, there's going to be a mistake made, and then when it comes in, we're going to be wiping our heads in the sweater of ahead saying, "I really messed up on this one, didn't do the right thing." So, that comes right back on me and do I want that? Do I want to live with that? Do I want to wake up in the middle of the night and say, "Hey, you know, I should have asked that question."

So, we just ask it. It's amazing how much information a client is going to give you, a prospect is going to give you. Chances are the conversations that Noel and I have had are not conversations that a standard printer is going to have. They're working with their very standard

layouts and presses and they want everything that they produce to fit within that realm of equipment.

That isn't for us and that's why I say that there isn't a project that isn't right for us. We'll figure it out, we know the equipment, we know the failures, we know the successes, we know the papers that are going, and it's a perfect way to set everything up for me. I want to be set up, they're going to be set up but I want to be set up. Everything goes smooth, the conversations I have with my suppliers are excellent.

And here is a case and point, I just came back from Europe, had three major productions going on. Each production for each client was going to two or three different vendors. I was able to understand what they were, what position each one was going to take, have my clients talk directly to my vendors when I was overseas, and the outcome was, "This was great. It was a great experience. I love talking to your people."

"You really have it down." And when the vendors call and say, "You got great clients. Really set them up, everything went so smoothly." Well, that's what I want to hear, that's what 40 years of practice does.

[0:37:00.3] DC: I'm glad you circled back to it because after you said, "There is no project wrong for me," I've realized because you don't own equipment, you're absolutely right and every printer in the world is – could be a partner for you. So, Noel, I'm going to phrase the question differently, based upon the initial meeting, how do you know if the project is something you want to take on?

[0:37:22.2] NT: At this point in my life and I finally taught myself to say this out loud, if it's something that intrigues me if it's something I think that I cannot only produce but add value that they're not even aware of too, or that something instantly clicks in that project that I know I can do and I am just so set to do it, and David said something very important and I'd like to learn that and he's right.

He's got great vendors and everybody loves and respects everybody but he set all of that up and that's by communi – that's by understanding what you're doing, delegating, and putting

certain kinds of processes and protocols in the right hands, after that, it's binary, it's machinery, it works, it's about the planning but – so to answer your question maybe more succinctly, that yeah, I think that's the most important thing to me.

If something strikes me about it that I can do, now, I have to learn to say no because I take things that I can do but I don't – what's the opportunity cost, you know what I mean? For a very good customer, why am I doing you know, a thousand business cards that are you know, four layers and gilded? I could do it and it's challenging. I could that but you know, and I am letting a 200,000-dollar thing that I really want to do where we can really –

I want to be able to flex my creative muscle, I want to show what we're capable of, I want to show off the people I know that are dying to do this stuff because they don't get it from people except there's other people like David and I, and I think that's what drives me. You know, what because I want to be a part of this and I think it's important to feel that way and I think printers, you know, just upfront who gets a customer, and I don't – diminishing them.

They're very important but they should feel that way too. I understand they want to, they have a note every month, they want to do exactly what fits their equipment, right? They want their margins to be high and its value added and all of that but they can still be passionate about what they do and what they want, and recognize those projects that really fit them, and nurture those customers.

So, it's a very long-winded answer but it's about what excites me and about what I think I can bring real value to. If I think I can't bring value, I have even said – you know what? I mean, there's stuff I've thought about recommending David for because he does more of a certain kind of thing that I do and I'm like, you know what I mean? It's all good because if someone gets a good job out of somebody, and that's good for all of us.

If I do something that I'm not really comfortable with, and it's hard to make money and I get exhausted, and I somehow get through it, who is that good for? Or, if I do something wrong but if I do what's really in my wheelhouse, right? Of fastball right down the middle, that's where you belong doing, and if it first somebody else better, I think you owe it to push it that way.

[0:40:25.3] DC: I mean, it boils down to trust, even the trust that David had giving his print customer the direct line to the printer, who technically could bypass him. If they wanted to, now, they can go right to the source. So, I'm just saying, it's a thing that printers get nervous about sometimes. It goes back to something you said before, Noel, you know if you just need something from ACME printing, 1-800-GETME, give me a business card, enjoy yourself.

Then, that printer could be an order taker and just order your business card and go about your life but if you really want a successful project, then you want your printer, your creative team if they're internal or external, to be collaborative in the process, and that is what in my experience, generates the best results, and to your guy's point, every once in a while, there was like, just one art director that was just so awesome.

And you just couldn't wait to work with them because you just – you're like, "Oh God, they're assigned to my job, I'm so happy right now, we're about to create something insane." And then, from that, I knew exactly the printers I wanted to work with because they will go, "Okay, let me be honest about it." There was one printer I wanted to work with, that's the one that I would work with to get the specs, then I would just bid it out because I needed to but I would always as long as everybody was in the range, I still had the printer in mind.

Because that's the one I would call the office and say, "We're just going to talk about this project. I'm not giving you an order yet. We don't even know what it is. Don't tell me it's a postcard." Like, there's a joke about creatives, you know, "How many creatives does it take to screw in a lightbulb?" And answer is, "Who says it has to be a lightbulb, right?" So, you never – you can't even have anything in mind.

You just, you know, going back to what is the objective, what is the audience, you know, what are the deliverables? Where does it have to go? How long does it have to last? All of these things working together as a team can be incredible when you manifest ideas to life. So, thank you, everybody, so much for listening to this podcast, and for manifesting your ideas to life through print. Until next time everybody, Make It With Print long and prosper.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[0:42:50.4] 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:

Tips and Tricks for Print Greatness on a Budget: https://podcastsfromtheprinterverse.com/making-it-with-print-tips-and-tricks-for-print-greatness-on-a-budget/

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