

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:01] DC: Print Buying UKvUSA is a series dedicated to helping printers create stronger, more meaningful, and more profitable relationships with print customers on both sides of the pond. I'm Deborah Corn, founder of Project Peacock and principal at Print Media Centr.

[0:00:21] MP: I'm Matthew Parker, the Champion of Print at profitableprintrelationships.com.

[0:00:26] DC: We may not always agree, but that's when it gets interesting. So, turn up the volume, get out your notepad, and welcome to the program.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:41] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. More specifically, we are here today with the UKvUSA podcast. Sitting in front of a very spooky background on Halloween today, across the pond, the creepy pond, we have Matthew Parker.

[0:01:07] MP: Hello, Deborah. I like to think of my background as nice and autumnal rather than Halloween. So, I'm not at all scary. But then, people sometimes change their view later on, so we shall see. Are we going to have a scary podcast for people today?

[0:01:21] DC: I'm not sure. It could be scary. It could be enlightening. I think it's always scary to take a look back at the year and say, "Huh, how did I do this year?" But it's also a great time to look at trends, and patterns, and ways to improve on your success this year, and ways to improve on things that maybe you didn't have time for or need improvement. So, that is our topic today.

What I have done is I've actually divided the assessment into three sections that I'm calling communication success, sales success, and customer success. Meaning, do you have the right customers? So, starting with communication success, looking back on the year, did you get

customer feedback and satisfaction? That's something you always talk about, Matthew, and I hope you can elaborate some ways that people can get feedback from their customers.

Looking at your social media, did you have engagement? Were people clicking over from your posts? Were they leaving comments? Were they making inquiries based upon emails, and newsletters, or even printed pieces that they might have gotten in the mail? What is the length of time in between sending something out and starting to get responses, or questions, or clicks, or whatever that might be. And have you noticed that the more personalized you send information, is that doing better for you?

I'm not going to say it's necessarily an A/B test, but if you have been sending out communications, are you getting better results when they're personal communications to the specific customers you serve? Is the business getting inquiries based upon generic service, or sales, or supportive emails that they're sending out? Looking at all of that can help you improve your communication plan for the coming year. I know I threw a lot out there, but I'm assuming you touch upon a lot of these points in your training, Matthew. So, take it away.

[0:03:45] MP: Thank you, Deborah. So, I think there's two key things that companies have to do. If you haven't been doing this already, then looking back at your year might be the time when you start asking yourself these questions. So, the first thing is, how do you want to communicate with your customers? Because you've thrown out approximately 537 ideas there. I think I counted in what you were saying. And no one can possibly manage communication on all those levels efficiently and well. So, what are the ones that you're going to work on? Are you primarily an online company? Do you measure your success by talking to people at events? Do you measure your success by traditional phone calls and emails? There's so many different ways to do it. Then, of course, there's social media. What platforms are you on?

So, the first thing is, how do we communicate with customers? How do we want to build that communication? How's it been going this year? And, are there any changes that we want to see? Because we've seen, for instance, that our engagement on one social media platform has been dropping, and we really maybe should investigate some more up-and-coming channels instead.

The second thing I always say is that you need to set yourself some metrics. So, how are you going to measure that success? Now, on social media, that might be clicks. Personally, I prefer to actually look at engagement on my social media, and it will be different for everyone. I'm not saying that's the right way, but I would far sooner have three or four meaningful conversations on a social media post than a gazillion likes or post impressions. That might not work for people who are trying to reach more people. So, how are you going to measure that success? What does that look like to you, and what's the end of that communication? Now, obviously, a lot of it is, we want more business out of it. But, are you wanting people to go and visit your website where they do online e-commerce? Are you wanting them to come and visit you at an event? Are you wanting them to ask for samples? There are so many different ways that we can encourage people to start a conversation with us.

The last thing I'm going to say on this. I'm seeing Deborah getting all geared up now for some responses, which is great. The last thing I'm going to say on this is, how are you actually measuring – and I'm going to put this in communications, your customer happiness? Am I all right to put this here rather than in the customer section, Deborah?

[0:06:05] DC: No. That was actually the first thing I said, and I wanted to – I was going to circle back to this as well, so please.

[0:06:12] MP: Fantastic. The other thing that I do is I train printing companies in customer management. Now, originally, this comes because an awful lot of buyers used to practice supplier management and still do. Very few suppliers actually practice customer management. Are you setting KPIs for your customers? And this may sound crazy. We can't tell our customers what to do. You should be measuring them and working out if they're being profitable for you or whether they're just costing you an awful lot of time, and money, and resource because they're not working well enough, and maybe you should fire them.

So, I'm a great believer in setting customer metrics, and KPIs. Sometimes, you might do it directly with your customers, sometimes you might do it without them knowing. But you know, how well do they come back to you, how well do they actually manage their communications with you, what about the amount of issues that you have on their artwork, for instance? All of

these things could have a big impact on your business. I'm a great believer in actually having KPIs on those and assessing them as well.

[0:07:15] DC: Okay. Well, all of that might have fallen under whether or not you have the right customers for your business, and not this particular section, but we will readdress it then. What I wanted to go back to is the customer feedback issue. How do you know if you're having communication success? Are they responding to you asking questions? And, I would also say that, reviews are really super important. And there might have been a time, not even just a few years ago, that I would have said, "You know what? It's so subjective." Somebody's upset about something, or they're very happy about something, or somebody was happy to get a business card with their name on it. It's very subjective in the printing industry. I agree. But it's very subjective for a restaurant. It's very subjective for a hotel.

I will say now that customer service has become such a critical component of whether or not a business is going to have success moving forward, that I have become a reviewer. I bought a broom the other day on Amazon, but not before I read customer reviews on three different brooms. This is something I never would have done before. I know, it's insane.

[0:08:39] MP: Wow, that's impressive. Was it a Halloween broom? Did you want to –

[0:08:42] DC: No, it was like this special broom I saw on TikTok, but I won't buy anything on TikTok. I always go over to get it somewhere else. But there were three different versions of – you know, there's one version and there was two, like other versions. Anyhow, the point is that, leaving it up to the consumer to believe the descriptions, to believe the little happy videos of satisfied people sweeping isn't enough anymore. Now, I want to find out, is it going to last six months? Is it doing what they said it was supposed to do? Was it easy to assemble? It was a broom; I know, it's crazy.

[0:09:28] MP: Sorry, I've just got this old yard broom, which is wooden, which has lasted for years.

[0:09:32] DC: Okay. Well, I'll take a picture of my new –

[0:09:35] MP: I'm intrigued. When we post this, I think we've got to have a link to a picture of your broom.

[0:09:39] DC: Okay, fine. I'll show everybody my broom. But the point is that, if it's a broom, which is mildly important in somebody's life, what about that brochure or those materials that are going to the biggest client pitch that your company has ever done? What about the first time you're introducing your business to the neighborhood? These are the things you want to look in those reviews and just hear, and to feel confident, to give that level of trust, because it's coming from somebody else. And yes, you have to address the negative reviews. You can't just leave them unanswered.

I've seen there are people who are great at it, there are companies that are great at it. Basically, any sort of response that translates to, "We hear you, and we want to make this better for you, and we're sorry that you had this experience," is all anybody on a ledge wants to hear. The most important part is whether or not there's ever a resolution with that specific customer. Everybody else reading those reviews sees that you're not afraid to comment on them and that it is your best intention to try and make it right.

Now, I said all of that, but what really triggered this is, when I sat through your "Don't Buy on Price" seminar. One of the things you said was that, after every job, to put a little note in the package and said, "Is there anything we could have done better on this job?" So, in regards to customer feedback and satisfaction, can you talk about that and any other ways that you have developed since the last time I took your seminar on how else that can be accomplished?

[0:11:47] MP: Thank you. Yes, I think it's really interesting. I was going to come back to exactly what you've asked me because you said all this is very subjective. I think we can make it objective with these scores and metrics. We can send out, "And is there anything we could have done better" notes with every job, and that would be really useful to do or to ask the customer, "Can we analyze those trends?"

Alternatively, we could actually run a customer survey maybe twice a year. Don't do one of those ones which says, "This will only take up 90 minutes of your time," because no one's going to answer it.

[0:12:21] DC: Or, "Somebody will get a \$25 Starbucks card if you answer this," which by the way, buyers, that could be considered a bribe, by the way.

[0:12:30] MP: Good point. So just 10 questions on a platform like SurveyMonkey where you literally score someone between nought and 10, and there's a box for comments if you want to add anything afterwards. Then, you can see how you're scoring on the areas that you want to be seeing on timeliness, delivery, good communication, smart packaging, all these things. And you can see, is there any improvement to be done? Have we improved since last year? Have we got worse since last year? So, that will be one way that I would think about doing it.

The other thing I'm going to say is, I've seen an increasing number of printers that are going online and wanting Google Reviews, Trustpilot, FIFO, all of those companies. And they're going on there so that people can see how they're performing, particularly the online printers. Anyone who's in the online space has to be on there now, I think. That really can make or break. I mean, there was one company in the UK that really wasn't delivering at one point. They were just getting absolutely crucified on there. No one in their right mind having read that would have placed any business with them.

But generally, most of the people on there are getting reasonable reviews, is interesting just to see what the scores are, and it's interesting, like you said, to see how companies are dealing with the people who leave bad reviews. Generally, they're getting a personal response and an invitation to reach out, an explanation to people who are reading that, actually, "Yes, we know who you are. What you forgot to say is about our late deliveries that you resupplied the artwork 15 times after deadline," or whatever it is that happened at that point.

So, those would be my key ones to look at. If you're going on the online ones, you should measure yourself and see how you're going. You should ask people to leave honest reviews on there. As you said, you should absolutely come back and show that you are committed to resolving issues with dissatisfied customers. Because, actually, to me, the prime measure of customer satisfaction is not that you get everything right all the time, because no printer gets everything right all the time. It's how you put something that you did wrong right, and you can show that on those review pages.

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[0:14:36] 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, 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.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:15:37] DC: As somebody who's a review reader now, I can get the feel of the people who are complaining or just complaining to complain. There are some people that are just that way, and you can read it in the – they're just not going to be happy with anything. You jumped but you didn't jump to the height I wanted you to jump to. You didn't answer the phone quick enough for my liking. I agree with you. If there was a collaboration in that problem without coming off defensive or accusatory, providing more information around it for other people who are like, "Okay, there was obviously something more going on than just this review." I'm really glad the company chimed in on this because now, I can make a different assessment on whether I want to include that in my overall assessment of the business, or think it's an outlier and put that on to the side, and go back, and see if there's anyone else who –I'm going to use the word legitimate – who had a legitimate complaint. And legitimate is me judging that.

I'd like to move on to the next topic within our topic, assessing success through the sales lens. I've divided this up into sales versus growth targets. Whether or not you have exceeded your sales based upon business development, more ways of serving your current clients. Were there any clients who did not fit into that for whatever reason? What was the average deal size of the business? What was the sale of the business? Was the average sale higher than previous

years, lower than previous years? If you look at the highest sales that you made, are there ways that you can develop packages, or promotions, or marketing around that to go back and to sell those clients more things or to find more customers that would be interested in those offerings? The sales conversion rates, how long does it take to convert a lead into a customer or a conversation into an inquiry?

I know that there is a long sales funnel, but just looking back and asking the salespeople, how many times were you on the phone with these people? What did they buy from you? How much time were you spending on these accounts and what was the actual yield of that time? The lifetime value of the customers. Do you have a bunch of customers on your roster that chime in every once in a while, and create chaos? Or, do you have customers on your roster that are continually buying from you or at least asking you for estimates, which means that you're still in their top-of-mind when it comes to printing things for them?

I think that's a little side note point that, yes, it's a pain in the ass to keep doing estimates when customers ask for them if you're not getting the business. But it's also an indication that you're still in their mind and they haven't moved on to somebody else. But that was just a little side note. Sales from new versus existing customers. How was your new business gain last year? Maybe you didn't go after new customers because you didn't have to. There was enough work from your current customers and an ability to sell them more things, and you did not have to go after new business.

Now, it doesn't mean – I'm not judging whether that's a good or bad thing, but that's something to look at during the year about how much time and effort was spent on current customers versus new customers. So, what do you have to say about any of that, Matthew?

[0:20:00] MP: I think that we can probably boil down our measurement of sales success down to a couple of things. So, the one thing that you spoke about there, they're all good things. When you spoke about how is the size of the job changing, I think that generally, unless you're really bucking the trends, your job size is getting smaller year on year. That's been highlighted just recently by Heidelberg in terms of the average job size. They've got on even their largest presses now. It's getting smaller and smaller because customers are buying less print at a time.

I wouldn't worry if you saw that your average job value was going down. However, what you want to measure is if your profitability is going down. That to me would be the key bit. There's two really key elements that any salesperson or any sales team should be looking at, and this comes into marketing as well if you're online. That is cost per acquisition. So, how much does it cost you to get each job? The cost of your salesperson or your sales resource, whatever that is, any website marketing, everything that you're putting into that. What is your cost for acquisition per job, and measure that as a percentage of job value. If your job size is going down, you want to make sure that your cost for acquisition is going down as well.

The other thing that I think it is really key to do, and lots of people are going to go, "We don't do this because we don't have them." Is your performance against your sales plans. You must have a sales plan. If you don't have a sales plan, quick plug, go and buy my book, *How to Succeed at Print Sales* and you'll find out all about how to do it. But if you don't have a sales plan, how do you know if you're selling according to your expectations and what you need to do for your company? A sales plan in my world is – I'd like a 13-week sales plan, because then, you know if you're on track or not.

If you leave a sales plan for a year, if you're off horribly, then it's too late for the business sometimes. A sales plan doesn't have to be, go out and get a quarter of a million dollars worth of new business. A sales plan can be we are going to reach out to our lapped customers and try and get 10 old customers back on board. And that's a really simple thing for someone without much skill to do, did they succeed on that? If not, why not? It might not be the person's fault.

It could be that you went through a really bad patch and no one of your old customers wants to deal with you at the moment for various reasons. It may be that you are going out and you are going to go and get two new customers in a big sector, or you might be going out and getting 30 new online customers, but create that plan with a sense of what those customers are going to bring to the company for you in terms of turnover and profit and measure the success of that plan and are those customers performing as you thought they were. If you're doing that and you've done your planning right, then you're on track.

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[0:23:01] MP: Do you need some direction or new ideas for your business? Would sales goal setting and accountability improve your revenues? Or do you have a member of staff who could be performing better?

I'm Matthew Parker, the Champion of Print at profitableprintrelationships.com, and I offer a personal mentoring service. Together we work out exactly what you need, we create a personal mentoring program for you, and then we speak twice a month. You get set goals and action points to make sure you progress. What makes me different is that I'm the buyer. I've been approached by over 1,400 different printing companies. So, I know what works and I know what doesn't. If you'd like to find out more, go to profitableprintrelationships.com, click the Training tab, and then go to Mentoring. Or alternatively, just hit me up on LinkedIn. I look forward to working with you.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:23:54] DC: Okay, Matthew, let's move on to the last topic within the topic, which is something that you and I have touched upon in the other two topics, but it is assessing whether your business has the right customers. As we said, the profitability analysis, were the profit margins better or worse, are these profits sustainable? Have they been doing it for a few years? Can you count on them doing it for another few years? Alignment with your business offerings?

Another way to see if you have the right customers, Matthew, is are they the right fit for the equipment that you have? Or do your salespeople find themselves saying, "Well, actually, if you did it this way," and you're saying that because you want to retrofit the assignment into your equipment instead of selling to customers that are a perfect fit for your equipment. And perhaps that enables you to do more with them, which goes back to the repeat business and customers that you have had for a long time. Are they repeating those orders with the same amount of frequency? Are the long-term clients, as we said before, spending the same amount with you? Are they asking for other things? Are there things they're not asking for that you can possibly offer them?

That goes back to getting customer feedback. Not only is there anything we could have done better for you for this job, but did you order anything else from another vendor for this job?

Maybe it was a T-shirt, maybe it was a hat, maybe it was a button. And then you can start learning if there are partners or additional things you can offer based upon if you can find some sort of patterns and a way that you can add extra value to your customers.

So, those are my offerings for assessing if you have the right customers. Matthew?

[0:26:10] MP: Okay. So, you've inspired me on this one, Deborah. I have not thought of this before, but once a year I think every print company should sit down and have an internal review of their customer base. Who's good, but we need to keep them? Who's an opportunity? And who, if at all possible, do we need to re-educate, re-profit margin, or get rid of?

So, the first one should be really easy, but actually, most of these customers that I'm going to go through, you only need to sit down and have a chat with them either before or afterwards, because like you said, the customer who's always been a good customer, there's a tendency amongst many printing companies to go, "Right, they did X amount last year, really will put them down for the same this year, or we'll put them down for the same plus 10 %this year."

What happens if they plan to change their mind? What happens if they are changing their strategies and moving away from print? What happens if they are changing the sizing of their company or going down different directions? Go out and ask them what their plans are for the next few months. Very few companies sit down with their customers and go, "Tell us about your company and what your strategy and your medium-term plans are." That can have a huge effect on your business and customers will generally be quite happy to tell you if you ask them if you've got the right customers.

The next one are the people who you think are opportunities. Again, sit down and have a chat with them. Find out if there are opportunities. But whom should you be nurturing? Whom should you be giving a little bit more resource to? Maybe they only did a few hundred or a few thousands pounds or dollars' worth of business last year, but you know or you have that gut feeling there's more there despite the fact they're relatively low turnover whom should you be spending more time on. And most importantly who are the customers who are a pain in the backside and what are you doing about it?

Now, sometimes we may just have to go, “You know what, they're a pain but they're 10% turnover and there's not a lot we can do about it.” I'm pretty sure you've got a lot of customers that you would very happily never have to deal with again. When you look at their turnover, they're not doing that much with you, and yet they're sucking up a huge percentage of your resource.

So, my advice with those ones will be to sit down and actually go to them, “Either you have to change your behavior, or we're going to put prices up because we need to put those prices up to be profitable. If you don't want to do either of those, that's fine, we'll say goodbye.” Or you may be going, “Here's a customer we want to give the axe to, but we're not in a position yet.” So, part of our sales strategy for the coming year is to go out and replace that work so we can have that conversation with that customer because we don't want to be working with them. Doing that review and then having open constructive conversations with your customers will be very valuable to you as a business.

[0:29:12] DC: You and I have had a previous conversation about the difference between a loyal customer and a sticky customer. In a way, we have agreed that you're loyal to a person, but you're sticky to a process, right? So, it's going to be much more difficult for a print customer to move their work if there's a process, if there's a portal, if there's additional services that are helping them manage those accounts, versus I love my salesperson and wherever they go, I'm going to go with them. Yes, I will still try to get quotes from that person, but I'm not moving my process.

So, I'm mentioning this because if those high-value customers are profitable for your business, then looking at ways that you can make them sticky so they don't go elsewhere in a world of choices. In a world where there is – people are fighting over marketing budgets from the customer side. They're fighting for every dollar that they get. On the printing side, they're fighting for every dollar to keep every dollar, right? And not give it away in a discount or, “Well, okay, fine, I'll lower my price to get this job and then we'll do something later on down the road,” which doesn't always work out for people.

So, in that, what are the ways that you can make those customers sticky so that they become even more high-value moving forward? Matthew, did you want to discuss anything that you created on the list for this?

[0:30:55] MP: I created three ones that people should assess as well. The next one is productivity. Because we focus very much on the front end so far, and it's absolutely important you do. And possibly my ones are a little bit more obvious than ones that the printing companies are going to be more likely to be doing. I think, focusing on the communications, the sales, and the customers are sometimes things that companies don't do enough of.

But what is your productivity like? Are you as productive as you should be? Are there bottlenecks in your system? Are you putting through the same number of jobs as last year or the same number of sheets as last year? If you're not putting through the same number of sheets, why is it? Because you're doing more smaller jobs and that's causing an issue? And have you reviewed your pricing to allow for that? Or are there some bottlenecks that have come up? Maybe you've lost an operator and the new one isn't speedy perhaps? Do you need to do some training to bring them up to speed? Also, what's your profit per thousand sheets?

Now, I know that's a hard one to do because every job is different, but actually looking at what is profitable for you and what isn't, just reviewing with your sales team, what they should and should not be selling, what equipment have you invested in over the year? Or what equipment have you decided you no longer want in the year, that has maybe changed what jobs are profitable and which jobs are right for you? And are your sales team up to speed with that? Because they're not always.

So, that would be my first one, is the productivity side. The next one I've got is financial. Again, are you creating what you wanted to create financially? Have you got the right turnover? Have you got the right profit margins? Are there things that you could be doing to change that? And maybe very simply, there may be some accounting things that you could do differently. It may mean that you also have to have a hard look at your overheads. If you've done less jobs this year, or if you're creating less profit from your jobs, you may have to take hard decisions. Do you still want to be employing the same headcount that you do already?

A very useful metric is turnover per head of the company, and there's a huge difference between lots of companies. Now, sometimes there's going to be really natural reasons for that. Some companies are much more automated than others. Some have a lot more handcrafting in their work. But against people in your sector, it's generally not too difficult to drag out some company accounts. They might be right up to date, but drag out some company accounts and work out the turnover per head of the staff, of people who you view as not dissimilar to competitors.

So, I would encourage you to look at all those headline figures and make sure that you're happy with them and that you're on track for where you want it to be. A lot of this is looking back and going, "If I'm not, what went wrong last year and what do I need to address?" And if they are, or even better, I'm ahead of target, "What went right this year? What do I want to replicate?" And I'm on a roll here, so I'm going to keep going, and I'm going to go to my third one, and this is emissions. I'm thinking specifically of carbon emissions.

Now, this may not be as relevant yet to people on your side of the pond, Deborah, so do feel free to tell me here. But certainly, in Europe, the legislation is here where you have to be able to look very hard at the emissions that you're producing, not just from your factory but from your products as well. If you're not doing this already, then you should be. I would suggest that if it's not as common in North America at the moment, it will be becoming more popular, particularly because the brands are driving this, because the brands want to be seen as companies that are good for the environment. We're at a better place to start and to put all the burden onto their suppliers rather than to do the work themselves. Sorry, cynical Matthew coming out here.

But have you got an emission reduction plan or a carbon reduction plan that doesn't just rely on offsetting in place and have you made reductions this year? What are those reductions like? Are they in line with your plan? What's stopping you from making more reductions?

Remember two important things. Firstly, it's not just what's in your factory. So, one of the things that can be measured is the carbon footprint of your staff coming to work. Can you have more local staff? Can you encourage staff to cycle to work? Can you encourage lift sharing? All good things which actually help people with cost as well, and that brings me on to my second point because a lot of people look at emissions reduction as something that they really don't want to have to get involved with. It's a bit more paperwork.

The cost savings you can make from some of these emissions reductions are huge. So, if you can reduce your factory waste, if you can reduce your heating and lighting bill, yes, energy prices have been rocketing over the past year or more. Your emissions reductions are not only good for the planet, they're good for your figures, they're good for your financial review.

So, I've come to an end of the things that I would like to add to Deborah's excellent list.

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[0:36:06] DC: News from the Printerverse delivers topical sales and marketing insight along with plenty of printspiration one time a month to inboxes everywhere. Our contributors cover the industry and the future of print media and marketing with strategy for strengthening your customer relationships, better targeting of your prospects, and practical advice for helping your business grow. Printspiration is just a click away. Subscribe to News from the Printerverse at printmediacentr.com. Print long and prosper.

[EPISODE CONTINUES]

[0:36:42] DC: Okay. So, I wanted to hear what you had to say before I chimed in on anything. So, thank you for laying it out. I agree with you 1,000% that the depth and breadth of the sustainability situation in Europe has not reached our shores yet, but it is coming and it is coming in a massive way. Anything you can do now to be a leader, so you're there when the needs are requested, instead of trying to catch up at that point will be beneficial to you in the years moving forward.

Going back to productivity, I actually, in my thinking of it, I wanted to avoid that only because printers are bombarded with, "You have to optimize. You have to automate." I'm not saying it's wrong. It's just like, I think at this point, they're like, "We know." If they haven't done it, there's probably a reason for it. It might not be the best reason. It might just be that they don't know how it might be that they don't feel that they have the right people in place. It might be something they can't afford, but we look at it and say, "What does it cost versus what is it worth ultimately at the end?"

But you have to assess everything back in the year and see if this is a technology solution then start looking for them. And I will say that at least the people I speak to, they have realized that every business can't afford the full suite of automation tools and workflow management and all of that, and a lot of them are compartmentalizing and allowing you to grow your business through automation using their technology. So, you can, for example, just implement a storefront if you don't have one, start there. You could just implement customer portals.

One thing, start there. Then, as you have success, if you feel that you do, if you can look and see that this has made a difference in our business, start saying, "What else can we do?" And that's going to be a different conversation for every printer.

The last thing I want to say is bottlenecks in the process are really interesting to look at as well when you're assessing the business for the year. I'm bringing this up because if you ask printers, most of them will say the bottleneck is in the pre-press, right? That's where it first gets stuck. Quite frankly, Matthew, printers are still fixing files without kicking them back to customers, without letting them know that there was any problems. So, I'm putting that on the printer's problem list because that's the reality of the situation.

If you ask print customers where the bottleneck is, they're not going to say pre-press because they don't have any problems in pre-press as far as they know. They're told their file is fine. It doesn't matter that the printer spent 20 minutes or 20 hours on that file, according to them, they're going to give it a very happy review. "Oh, everything's great with my files and everything prints." But if you ask them, they're going to say the bottleneck is why do I have to wait three to five days to get a freaking estimate from people?

So, I would say when you're looking at productivity, don't just look at it through your own lens. Also, ask the customers how the process could improve for them. You might be surprised, it might be things that you're not even thinking of. Final words, Matthew?

[0:40:35] MP: Final words, I think we've covered a lot in this podcast. I also think or I hope that we've given some inspiration for people to look back, assess their year, and see what they should be doing. But we have given a lot. So, the last words I want to say is I'd love it if people listened to this podcast and made a list of action points. Hopefully, it'll be a long list. You don't

have to do everything tomorrow. It's like you said, one step at a time. If you can assess one of these areas every two months over the coming year, and if you can put into place three or four small steps that make them slightly better, you will be in a hugely better place than many of your competitors.

The British cycling team, when it went from zero to Olympic gold success, wasn't because they changed everything dramatically. It was because they made lots of small incremental changes. It's been now developed as *The 1% Change Plan*. For every 1%, you start compounding that and you get a massive change. So, if you can make a small number of 1% changes from the advice from what we've gone through today, then you may be making a lot bigger change than you realize.

[0:41:54] DC: Thank you, Matthew Parker, for your time. Thank you for everybody who listened to this podcast. We will share them on social media. When you see the post out there, please make comments, chime in, and pass them along. We really appreciate it.

Speaking of reviews, if you're listening on Apple or Spotify, we would really appreciate a review, leave some stars. It really does help the podcast get discovered in the podcast app channels and especially on Apple and Spotify. So, thank you, everybody, so much for your time and attention. Until next time, assess long, print long, and prosper.

[OUTRO]

[0:42:36] 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:

How To Stop Print Buyers Choosing On Price: <https://profitableprintrelationships.com/how-to-stop-print-buyers-choosing-on-price-us/>

How to Succeed at Print Sales: <https://profitableprintrelationships.com/online-training-resources/how-to-succeed-at-print-sales/>

The 1% Change Plan: How to Increase Your Print Sales in 23 Minutes a Week: <https://profitableprintrelationships.com/online-training-resources/how-to-improve-your-print-sales-the-1-change-plan-us/>

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