

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:03] DC: This is the true story of two printers who agreed to podcast with me and have their opinions recorded. Listen to what happens when printers stop being polite and start getting real.

[0:00:13] JM: Hi, this is Jamie McLennan.

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

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

[EPISODE]

[0:00:25] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. I am here with the two chattiest printers I know, Jamie, the printer, from DMR Graphics, Invoke, and William Crabtree from Tampa Media, the empire. Hello, gentlemen.

[0:00:46] JM: Hello, Deborah. Hello, Will. How are you guys?

[0:00:48] WC: Hello, Deborah. Hello, Jamie. How are you?

[0:00:51] DC: Hello, William. It's been a minute since we've recorded the podcast. How's everybody doing? Let's do our little catch-up. Jamie, let's start with you because Will has some big news.

[0:01:03] JM: Yeah, doing well since that. Last time we chatted, we had purchased our label company in Georgia. They're getting into the fold quite well, learning as much as we can about labels. We have our holiday gathering next week. A couple of them are coming up to the New Jersey plant. They're going to have a little seminar to teach us more about labels than everybody else, so we can all get on the same page, which will be fun. Other news, DMR was

spotlighted in the digital output magazine. We had a write-up about art revival and some of the DMR textured prints that we've been doing and highlighting. It's a whole new industry, not industry, but vertical that we've been going after.

We've been scanning original artworks from artists, giving them 3D texture, printing them on our Swiss cues with different depths. Right now, it's just the beginning, but we were highlighted in two shows in London over the summer, or actually, in October, so we're allowed to talk about that now. They were in the Pace and Thaddeus Ropac's Galleries in London, England. That was pretty cool. It's for Robert Longo Studios. That was neat. We got a little write-up about that. Other than that, we're just trying to keep everything moving for the end of the year. We had a lot of fun meetings, seeing what we can wrap up this year and start next year.

[0:02:14] DC: Excellent. Jamie, anything you want to share, just send me the link, so we'll put them in the show notes, so people can see those articles.

[0:02:19] JM: Okay. Yeah. I have some links for the show.

[0:02:21] DC: I've seen some of the photos. They're incredible. The knee of the black light rooms and stuff like that. We have to share that with everybody.

[0:02:27] JM: We'll catch up with that, and what we're doing soon. Yes. Yeah, the prints are really cool. They were 55 by 88 ACM prints that took eight hours to print on a flatbed each one, so it was pretty cool. I have some stuff for that I can share.

[0:02:40] DC: Excellent. Okay. Links in the show notes, everybody. William Crabtree, last we spoke to you, your building had been flooded. You were dealing with the aftermath of disaster recovery.

[0:02:56] WC: Still am. We have decided to sell the Sign Parrot building. We do have it under contract. I listed it myself and had it under contract in less than 10 days. Still moving things out and filling up big dumpsters, throwing lots of stuff away, still navigating through the insurance and managing that. Haven't quite gotten to the finish line, but we're very close. The adjuster

approved our contents claim a month ago, but we still haven't gotten that check. Then we're doing a little tit-for-tat on the building, but it's not too egregious.

Hopefully, the insurance settles out clean and we get that done sooner than later and just focusing on keeping Tampa Printer moving. We've had lots of layoffs and lots of staffing changes. Oof. There was an incident that happened and I really, really want to bust this guy's name out and just – He's a piece of shit, to be perfectly honest with you, and he was our sign manager. I won't say his name. I will do him that courtesy. He gets more courtesy than I got. But he walked off a job site after throwing a temper tantrum, after I shared with him that we were selling the building, we were still trying to figure out what we were going to do with the company. We didn't really know the path forward for Sign Parrot, right?

He was never hired as a sales rep. He was hired as a manager and took it upon himself to become a sales rep and would only go after shit that he wanted to go after, not what was important, or what was low-hanging fruit, which we had plenty of, but nobody chased. Anyway, on his way out the door, he decided to call all of his points of contact and tell them that we were bankrupt. All of the deposits that we had on the large sign projects, we got chargebacks on. It locked up our merchant account. There were other clients that were calling him and he was telling them the same thing. Luckily, they called me and I'm like, "No, that's not true." I did have to tell some clients a little bit more than I wanted to sooner than I wanted to, but it is what it is. I managed it and navigated it and got it taken care of.

It was just from a negative standpoint, that's really the worst of it. The director of operations, Terry, is no longer with us. He got another job. Our bookkeeper, we actually wound up releasing. She was over retirement and holding on anyway. We've got a really, really solid crew. We use the Voltron reference, right? We took all the best staff from Tampa Printer and all the best staff from Sign Parrot and merged them together, and that's what we've got now. It's a much smaller crew.

My plan is to just chill. Tampa Printers required very little of my attention over the last two years, because my attention has been entirely on Sign Parrot. Tampa Printer has continued to grow with very little –

[0:05:37] DC: That's when you were low riding and your happiest. You were your happiest. Remember, he used to low-ride in his chair, Jamie? He was so happy until he started doing that sign shop. Yeah.

[0:05:44] WC: Trying to get back over there, you know.

[0:05:47] JM: Off them signs. I tried to warn you.

[0:05:49] WC: Yeah. Yeah. Actually, I had planned to completely dissolve the company and just throw the towel 100% on Sign Parrot. But we did land the city of St. Petersburg banner contract. They are going to let me move that over to the other LLC, so I could still dissolve the LLC that was attached to Sign Parrot, but we can create Sign Parrot as a DBA. I'm still going to keep the truck. I'm going to have to keep an installer on staff. We've got a guy that is like a Swiss Army knife. He will deliver. He will help on the production floor in the wide format room. When I need him to go lay vinyl on a window, he'll go lay vinyl on a window. If I need him to go up on a lift and drill something to a wall, he'll do that too. I think him and I can do the banner installs. It's 10 times a year plus. If it becomes too much, then we hire somebody, right?

It's a good position to be in with that contract and keeping that brand and installation at a position where I can be selective. I don't have to chase and try to fill hours and worry about, do I have enough work for my guys, and paying people to do nothing and all of those things that I was doing, because I was taking jobs that I shouldn't take. I was lowballing stuff and price matching on stuff that I shouldn't do, just for the sake of making sure that I had enough work for the people that I was paying. My installation team was my biggest expense. Payroll was my biggest expense and they were my highest-paid employees. Now I'm down to one guy and the payroll is looking thin, which is the goal here. We're down to 18 employees from 41, I think we were at. Our payroll is down by 65%. We'll take it.

Yeah, it's out of the stress and the anxiety and everything that came along with the aftermath of the storms. At the end of it, I think I'm going to be, and actually, I don't think I know I'm going to be in a better position than I was when I started with Sign Parrot. I have the experience of learning what I learned from Sign Parrot and understanding the sign business and the vehicle wrap business and how they operate and the caveats of the client management and all that fun

stuff. I'm going to apply all that shit to software and I'm going to make the best damn piece of software that this industry has ever seen.

[0:07:58] DC: Excellent. Well, clapping for you, William.

[0:08:03] JM: Well, I'm interested in learning more about the software. It's exciting.

[0:08:06] WC: Well, we've talked about Canopy on this podcast. Canopy was a brand that I was launching as a subsidiary of Gorilla Consultants. I've never mentioned the name of the company, but I've mentioned many times of the software company that I used to work for. The software company that I used to work for is Printing In A Box. The software itself is Auto Print. Auto Print is actually what you see on tampaprinter.com and Sign Parrot and all of my websites. The Canopy was a licensor of the Auto Print software. Now, I own half of Printing In A Box and I own half of the intellectual property of Auto Print. That was the company that I worked for, that I started out in the printing industry that I left in 2015.

[0:08:52] DC: That's when I met you.

[0:08:53] WC: That's when we met is a trade show in 2013. I exited the company after selling it into the post-net franchise. All of their franchisees adopted it and I traveled the country, training them all how to use the software. Then, instead of giving me the 10% that they were supposed to, they let me go. The company is maintained and it's continued and it hasn't grown, but it hasn't shrunk. It stayed pretty stagnant at where it was at. I have some plans to grow it and make it bigger and make it better and apply all the things that I've learned over the last couple of years into it and make it a much more versatile piece of software.

It will be rebranded at some point as Canopy. We're going to maintain that brand. We've all agreed that it's the branding of it and how it works makes sense from a broader scope of Printing In A Box, because it's a piece of software that's made for printing companies, which is great, right? I would put it up against anything on the market that's built for printing. I've joked about going to the sign shows and they've got software that's obviously built for offset printing and they're trying to sling it to sign companies. Software is the same. It's built for offset gang-run printing, not built for sign shops, not built for garments. You got to hack it to make it work, which

is what I've done. Now, I'm going to make it so you don't have to hack it and actually works the right way.

[0:10:03] DC: Excellent. It was worth having the fingers in all the pies, right, Jamie?

[0:10:09] JM: Yes. But that's what's needed out there.

[0:10:10] WC: It is. It is.

[0:10:12] DC: It was always confusing to me about the workflow situation until I understood that each part of the workflow has its own workflow, and then all of that has to fit together. Sometimes I speak to the software companies and then like, “We just don't understand. It's such a great product.” I'm like, yeah, but you're not the one who's dealing with the not being an engineer and trying to figure out how to make this whole work and the integration and it gets scary for people. I'm glad that anytime printers build their own things, I think that there's a marketplace advantage, because you have the experience of being there and knowing what happens when you actually use it, which is why I used to bring Jamie to the print shows. He was the bullshit meter.

If the manufacturers and the vendors would say something and I was like, “All right, that sounds a little – that sounds fantastic. Let's see if that's really how it works out in real life.” Jamie, sometimes he'd be like, “Well, sometimes it works out that way. Sometimes it doesn't.” I'm really excited as we get further along, obviously, you'll share more.

This is actually our last podcast of this year, 2024. Let's talk quickly about measuring success. Will, you definitely had some end-of-the-year problems due to the hurricanes and everything else. Overall, how do you think your year was in general?

[0:11:40] WC: It was a crazy year. It was a roller coaster. I achieved a lot of things. I did a lot of things that I set out to do. Those things maybe didn't equate to what I had put value against them, like the trade show that I did. The sequence of the events of the end of the year and the storms really threw a monkey wrench in everything that I had done and all the efforts that I'd put in, even for the last three months leading up to the storm. It was like, all that was coming to a

head. Fluke Talk and the trade show and all that stuff just got stopped, right? We still got to do Fluke Talk, but it was not nearly –

[0:12:14] DC: You did. I saw you on YouTube TV.

[0:12:18] WC: Yeah. I did not kill myself, thankfully.

[0:12:20] DC: Thankfully.

[0:12:21] WC: Yeah. It's hard to look back at this year and be like, “Yeah, it was a great year.” I think when I look back at it in four years, 2024 was a good year, right? Even though it was a shitty year. Even now, so in retrospect, right? I could look back at 2020 and 2020 was 2020, right? That's COVID year. But I bought a building in 2020. My business grew, or I maintained my business, but it grew the next year. I don't look back at COVID and be like, “Oh, God. COVID.” Yeah, it changed a lot. It was really difficult and it impacted the entire planet. Where now I'm going to look back at this and be like, yeah, it changed a lot. I learned a lot and it didn't impact the entire planet, but it impacted my local city, which is just as much of an ecosystem for me as it is the entire planet from my immediate and direct impact. There's a lot to look forward to in 2025, and I'm excited to apply a lot of the things that I have learned over the last year and over the last several years.

[MESSAGE]

[0:13:21] 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.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

[0:14:23] DC: Before the troubles started, you were doing pretty well with sales. You were having some of your best months ever, at least in the beginning of the year. If I recall those conversations. I mean, I understand what you're saying. How do you measure it now when you have this whole black hole of hell from this hurricane messing up your numbers, right?

[0:14:46] WC: I mean, October for Sign Parrot was its best month ever. September was its best month ever before that. We had two consecutive best months ever at Sign Parrot. Tampa Printer, best month ever, October, best month ever, November. The growth is still there. The momentum was still there. I think I talked about it on the podcast maybe briefly, but I had a thing with a CPA about a year and a half ago and got ran through the ringer. Yeah, it was about a year and a half, where they were pushing for me to sell the building for Sign Parrot and file bankruptcy and do all kinds of stuff. I was like, "You know what? No, I don't need a consultant. I hired you to be a CPA," and I let them go.

I look back at that and I don't think that I would have had the strength and such quick decision to be able to say now like, "Okay. Let's just sell the building. Let's throw in the towel. Let's take the reset and regroup." Versus like, "No, no, no. We got to just keep it going. Let's rebuild it." Because that's normally how I run. I thrive in chaos. I'm like, okay, I thrive in chaos, so I'm going to create more chaos. Now I'm old. I don't want to deal with any more chaos. I know that I do well, but I don't necessarily want to create it for myself. Let's take the reset and, you know.

[0:15:58] DC: It's not that you're old. You're experienced.

[0:16:01] WC: Tired.

[0:16:03] DC: I understand what you mean. I go through this reinvention thing every year, where I have to think about what I'm going to do next year that is different than what everybody

else is doing. Yeah, it gets stressful at certain times of the year. I understand what you're going through. I'm never worried about you, Will, because you are a freaking survivor beyond. I mean, if there was an apocalypse, I'd be in your place. In a zombie apocalypse, I'm going to Will's house. That's where I'm going.

Jamie, lots of stuff happened for you this year. Oh, Will, by the way, before we go to Jamie, don't forget to celebrate that you spoke at drupa. That was pretty awesome. I'm just going to give you a little shout-out for being an international speaker now on your resume.

[0:16:48] WC: Again, looking back at 2024, overall, it was a great year. My wife works with us now and her and my relationship is better than it's ever been. I got to go see Europe multiple times in 2024. I spoke at multiple events. Those are the things that I wanted to do. I achieved that. Overall, I'm going to take the licks and I'm going to win more, because of the licks and 2025 is going to be a great year.

[0:17:20] DC: Okay. We're having a little audio issue. I'm not sure, because it's raining outside, but you got a little fuzzy there. I think everybody heard what he said. He went to Europe twice and overall, it was a good year. Okay, Jamie, your turn.

[0:17:35] JM: My 2024 was a good year for the company. I mean, Innvoke bought us out in 2022. 23 was a learning year, a building year, seeing what everything was doing. 24, we started right out of the gate really well. We ended up purchasing an offset company with a 40-inch press in the beginning of 2024. We merged that into our New Jersey plant, which took a little bit of time, but that's finally merged in and moving well. We bought a label company at the end of 2024. Our ownership team is always looking and talking to people. They've had a number of good meetings with people looking at more label companies, looking at a few other things to do this year.

Overall, as a year for the company, we had a very good year, much better than 2023. I know personally, I had a good year. I met my goals for this year and passed them, so I'm happy with that. But as Will said, it's tiring. This last couple of weeks of the year, you're just like, "Oh." You just got to breathe for a couple of minutes and regroup. Yeah, it's been a busy year. For marketing this year, I know we had talked about things that highlight to this year, I think our

highlights of this year were again, our open house. We had an ASI open house in October, where we didn't have as many people as we had the year before for Print Across America, but we had some great high-end people come through this time.

We really pinpointed who we wanted to market to, and definitely get new prospects in. We landed a high-end museum company. We're doing a second job now. It's only small right now, but we're still working together. That's really cool. We had that going on. We had a bunch of other really good tours with that and people that we're still communicating with. That also helped us with a bunch of high-end projects that we're working on next year, just with our relationship with our suppliers with skew. The open house we have and the things that we share, they've been giving us some great leads, introducing this to people.

We've got a couple of things on the burner next year, which for some pretty big companies that some meetings coming up that are really cool for textured prints and a large international restaurant company that it's going to need graphics for all over the place. Fingers crossed that everything goes well in the next couple of weeks with the meetings that we're going to have. That all came from our open house.

[0:19:52] DC: Wow, that's freaking amazing, Jamie.

[0:19:55] JM: And there's more for 2025. I'll recap that came from the open house. That'll be for what we're hoping to expand on in next year. Yeah. I mean, that's it. I mean, we did a couple of other things. Our marketing, we're still trying to get together. Our website, we've talked about that at one of our podcasts. We're still building on it, trying to make it better. Yeah, that was the big thing. We're going to try and keep doing that every year, I think. We kept our neon. We did a neon blacklit room. That's still up. We're still highlighting that with some people and having tours on like, "Hey, you need to come see before we take it down." Now we're like, "Do we really want to take it down?" Because people coming in are like, "Wow, this is really cool. This is like a museum in here." Yeah, it's neat.

So far, that was our best thing of last year was that. I know that people in our shop were a little leery about like, "We're going to do it again." I'm like, but it ran really well. It's always good to be

able to share that with the rest of the company, going, "This is what happened, these are what we see from that, and we're building on that for 2025." Yeah.

[0:20:53] DC: That's amazing. I have always admired the relationships that you establish with your customers and the trust and authenticity. They know they can come, even if you're approaching them, if they're not a customer and you want them to be a customer, they feel comfortable enough to come over and just look at stuff and have conversations with you. Just awesome. Here's something you can plant the seeds. Next year, Labelexpo Europe. That's the big one. It's in Barcelona, sirs.

[0:21:21] JM: That's the work that already –

[0:21:22] WC: Let's go Barcelona. Barcelona.

[0:21:25] DC: That's on my bucket list to get to next year for sure.

[0:21:28] JM: What month is that? Isn't that in the spring?

[0:21:30] DC: It's in the fall, Jamie. It's in September in Barcelona. Everybody needs to get there.

[0:21:38] JM: That's sounds fun.

[0:21:38] DC: That's going to be a good one. That show in general is fantastic, but it has always ever since I've ever gone to it, it was in Brussels and in Belgium. There's always construction. It was not conducive anymore to the size of the show, that it was a growing city with infrastructure issues. I'm glad that they moved it. It would be very exciting. How do I measure success? Because I'm a little different than other people in how would I measure success. I don't measure success by how many people purchased podcasts, or anything like that. Because I consider, like everybody, I work within that way with a partner. I really base my success on what is the people who pay attention, the audience, whatever. All you people out there, to me, that's how I measure success.

I just did a quick little look at some stats. Last year, over 26,000 people listened to the podcast. There's almost 260,000 global downloads in 156 countries, 188 platforms, apps, however people are listening, Apple, Spotify, whatever, they're listening on 188 platforms, have now registered. Somebody listening to me, some of them have tens of thousands, some of them have three or four if they're weird ones. They're very limited stats for podcasts, but one of the things that Apple does is when there's enough traction in a country, it'll register. Podcasts From the Printerverse was recognized. I finally moved up in America, which makes me really happy. We were 188. Now we're 128 for all podcasts registered under business and marketing in the United States. I will take that, people. I will take it.

[0:23:40] WC: That's a good one.

[0:23:42] DC: Yeah, Ireland, we were number one for just a couple of days, but I'll take that, too. Thank you, Ireland.

[0:23:47] WC: Let's go Ireland.

[0:23:48] DC: Portugal, three. Netherlands, four. Slovakia, six. Hong Kong, eight. New Zealand, eight. We moved up the ranks in the medium to small size countries and United Kingdom, 69. We did pretty well. Thank you everybody out there who's listening to podcasts. As far as LinkedIn goes, that's where I spend most of my time on social media. I just did a quick little stat check. Up till today from, I guess January 1st, I have amassed 1,792,749 impressions for my posts, which reached about 235,000 LinkedIn members. That's pretty good, I think. If people want to know why people recognize me at trade shows and things like that, it's because of numbers like that.

Again, I want to just thank everybody for engaging and paying attention. As my content is scrolling through your feeds every time you stop and engage with it, or click on something, you're part of my success. I really appreciate it. Thank you so much. Okay, you guys, how do you identify areas that need improvement before you move into next year? How are you measuring anything like that? William?

[0:25:17] WC: Well, I'm a rough one to ask this, right, because I'm looking at everything as a reset. I'm looking at all of the problems that I've had, up until two months ago, and how I'm not going to do those same things again. From a very broad stroke, what I would say is really look at your problems. Are your problems from a client? Are your problems from an employee? Are your problems from a workflow? Yes, I'm sure that there is the question that could be answered yes to all of those plus others, right? Really assess your problems and don't continue to do the same things and perpetuate the same problems.

One of my biggest lessons that I've taken out of this is I had put a lot of stock into some people. I felt that I was reliant on those people. I felt like if I lost those people that I would be not helpless, but it would put me in a position of desperation, or not knowing what to do. As soon as those people were gone, I was fine. I haven't had to contact any of those people. I haven't had to ask any of those people for help. People, again, clients, as well as employees can create problems. There's also things that you can do that you know you shouldn't do, but you do them anyway because it's a means to an end right now. Assessing those things and making changes associated with that as well.

An example for me is through the Sign Parrot journey and having high-paid employees that had to have very specific work that couldn't do much else than that work, or wouldn't do much else than that work, I guess I should say, led to me taking jobs that I shouldn't, led to me price matching when I didn't want to price match. Just to keep the machine going, just to have enough work to keep those people working. I will never do that again. I will never be in a position where I have to trade dollars. That's what I've always called it, trading dollars, right? If you're trading dollars, that means I potentially am going to pay you to do this job, because if one mistake happens in this process, my margin is shot, but I'm still going to take it because even if I lose money on this job, it's still better than losing money on paying guys for a day to do nothing.

Looking back, knowing the mistakes, don't make the same mistakes again, understand your position. Really, it's hard sometimes to see it yourself when you're in it. Ask people around you. Hey, really, really, tell me what you think about so and so. Tell me what you think about this situation. Because if your friends that know you, or know your business are close to you and they're really your friends, they'll tell you what's up. They'll tell you what you don't know or what you can't see because you're too deep in it.

[MESSAGE]

[0:28:32] 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 CONTINUED]

[0:29:07] DC: It's always just good to find out from people, because like we said before, how you're in it building this software, they're in it. They're standing for that machine all day. It might just be a matter of moving the paper closer or changing something in kitchens and kitchens and restaurants, they do these studies all the time to see how they can save time and keep the lines moving by where the green peppers are.

[0:29:32] JM: Yeah. I have a book, *Lean Process*. We look at that. How do you take less steps between a job and moving the process line closer? The CNC machine should be closer to the printing department, so you don't have to go across the shop to get it done. Yeah, stuff like that. We don't always look at it that way, and then somebody else can be going, "Why are we doing this?" Why don't you move three feet closer, it'll save half – so much time. Yeah, we look at that a lot of different ways and trying to ask our teammates like, what do you think?

[0:30:00] WC: Software, less clicks less.

[0:30:02] DC: Less clicks. Exactly.

[0:30:02] WC: Less clicks to do the same thing. Do the same thing in less places.

[0:30:08] DC: Jamie, improvements, how are you assessing that?

[0:30:11] JM: Improvements, we look at where our bottlenecks were this year and what can we do to make that better next year? One of our biggest bottlenecks is in the CNC department cutting. Things take a lot of time to cut. This year, one of our machines has been acting up and it's just like, is it time to get rid of it? Is it time to get new ones? We've had lots of detailed conversations with a new CNC company, just because they were really cool to us when we were at the show. The one that we have now has not been. We've asked them to come out. They've come out every week for the last three weeks to fix the same problem. It's like, all right, well, what's wrong? Why does it keep breaking? We look at that. Bottlenecks there. We look at bottlenecks, we're having our laminator, a couple of the laminating department, there's a couple of newer laminators out there. We looked at the shows that'll speed things up tremendously.

We're like, that'll help the company and not takes so much time. Why do I need two people running a laminator when one can, and stuff like that. We look at the where the bottlenecks are, what can we do to minimize that? If there's new equipment, let's put it, we do it like a forecast for next year. We have a wish list, and we've put together a list of things that we'd like to get next year to help things streamline things, make it quicker, so it will save us money. We have some meetings about that and put some stuff together. That's what we look at for 2024. What were the things that slowed us down? What will help us do things quicker?

In 23 to 24, we ended up getting the Colorado in 24, because we can run magnet on it. Oh, my God, it saved so much time this year. It was great. It didn't hold up on the flatbeds. It ran so much quicker. It helped us in a lot of ways. that's one of the processes we look at, which really helps plan the whole next year. That'll come together pretty quickly in the next two months or so. That's what we do for next year. That's my main thought anyway.

[0:31:56] DC: Do you guys look at how many deadlines you might have missed and what was the reasons for them and how?

[0:32:03] JM: Yeah. A lot of it is — not maybe deadlines missed. We're always communicating with the customers. But if there was a bottleneck in cutting like, "Hey, we're going to give you half of this today when you needed it, the rest of it will be the next day, or the day after." They're like, "No, that's fine. Because it's going to take us three days to go through what you gave us. We didn't need it all on the first, but we needed all of it on the first, second, third." Yeah, a lot of

it like that. That's a big help with having good customers that will work with you on that stuff. Yeah, that's where I always see it.

Going back to Will was talking about, like the sign shop and stuff like that, I felt his pain. It brought me back to 2022 when we had the same thing with these sign guys that is “I only do this and I only do that.” Having that — we were relieved of that stress because of Invoke coming and purchasing us and not taking that part of the company because they were like, they didn't see it. They didn't have the vision for that. They're like, this is parts killing you. We don't want that. I feel it in your voice and everything that you're going through. I'm like, I went through that through 2022.

[0:33:02] DC: I remember –

[0:33:02] JM: It was painful.

[0:33:03] DC: You used to tell us the stories about getting there and the measurements were wrong and there was electricity still there. I mean, you're right. You haven't spoken about that a long time ago, Jamie.

[0:33:14] JM: I found out like, after the fact like, then a guy, you pay a guy to go do a site inspection and he's Google mapping it and counting the bricks. This window is eight bricks wide by five bricks high. I'm like, “You know exactly the measurement of that brick? No.” That's why the –

[0:33:29] DC: Or the cement in between.

[0:33:31] WC: Those surveys can be done for estimating purposes, but you have to do a site visit and take true measurements to the 16th of an inch, 32nd of an inch on site before production. You have to. You have to.

[0:33:43] DC: And make sure the electricity, the old wires, not the sign when you discover it in a cherry picker, or behind the cabin, or whatever you just –

[0:33:51] JM: He used to tell me like, “Yeah, I measured it.” I’m like, “Why is it an inch off then?”

[0:33:55] WC: You know what? Okay, hold on. I got two of them. Wraps, vehicle wraps and sign install. Both of them are like a hornet’s nest. Vehicle wraps, like a client will change the vehicle three times, drag you through for design for six months, then bitch that you’re going to charge them another fee to design another wrap because they’ve changed the vehicle three times. Literally happened. Then signs, it’s like, anything and everything from an installation standpoint that could go wrong is going to go wrong. If any measurement is off by a twitch, there’s so many variables, so many things that can go wrong. It’s so expensive. So much money, right?

Risk versus reward, it’s big dollar tickets, wraps, and signs. When you’re talking 25 grand, you hope that enough doesn’t go wrong, that you still make enough money. It’s literally how these businesses are run. That was how the business that I bought was ran and I tried to take it away and move it into a different way of doing it and it was near impossible. You couldn’t do it.

[0:34:58] DC: Yeah, the vehicle wraps. It’s a good section. It’s a good vertical.

[0:35:03] WC: I will never do. I’m out. I’m out. Nope. We’re going to put it to rest. Ever again.

[0:35:04] DC: I know you’re out, but I’m just saying, there’s a demand for it, and there’s a demand for the people who install the graphics. I mean, they –

[0:35:11] WC: Yup. They’re primadonnas. They’re primadonnas. They will not do what they’re supposed to do.

[0:35:15] DC: Calm yourself down.

[0:35:16] WC: They will take longer than they’re supposed to, unless they’re working by cost per square foot.

[0:35:20] DC: Okay, they’re artists.

[0:35:22] JM: Unless, they're at the car at the print show and they're doing those hoods in 30 seconds. I'm like, this thing looks beautiful.

[0:35:28] DC: It's a competition.

[0:35:28] WC: There are two types of installers.

[0:35:30] DC: Oh, my God. I can't take you guys anywhere. Okay, for next year, what is your strategy, plans for, let's just call it doing better than this year. Jamie, we'll start with you.

[0:35:47] JM: Well, as I said, when we were doing the recap of 2024, we're going back to that open house we had. We had the director of mentors in for our open house for AIGA Philly up then.

[0:35:57] DC: How cool is that?

[0:36:00] JM: He came in with one of the other people from the AIGA. She wants to start having meetings at DMR for the mentorship. She can bring the people in for a tour, have the mentors here, have meetings with the person they're mentoring, and show it around. We're excited about that. We're supposed to have more conversations at the beginning of January to kick off 2025. That could be people coming in once a month, every couple of months and having a new stream of new people that we've never met before, learning about us and their mentors, and the companies that they're working for get to learn about us. We're really excited about that. That's going to be cool.

[0:36:33] DC: That's amazing.

[0:36:35] JM: I think mini open house a number of times throughout the year. That's one of the things I'm really looking forward to. That'll be cool. Will it increase sales right away? No. But it'll increase our people who know who we are. Then that always comes down to, "Hey, I saw this company. They do this. You need to call them." It'll increase sales eventually, but not right away. Just a fun, the cool fact of having people here, showing what can be done. I always love doing

that. The best thing is having new people in your shop and showing them what's available. They just get –

[0:37:05] DC: Well, these aren't just new people. These are designers coming to your shop.

[0:37:08] JM: Designers. Yeah.

[0:37:10] DC: I mean, I'm sure that you're going to give them samples to take home. I definitely suggest you give them or create them a branded blank page notebook, because designers love to doodle. And give them a cool little doodling pencil, or pen, or something. They're always doodling. It's something to keep it topical with them.

[0:37:33] JM: It's a great idea. We'll definitely have that. We'll have a bag, a goodie bag, and they'll be here. So, yeah. So, cool. That's what I'm really looking forward to. We'll have our kickoff sales meeting in January with all the new things that are going on and the vertical markets. We want to do and all that, but this is the part I'm excited about.

[0:37:49] DC: Yeah, that is amazing. I'd love to talk to you and see how maybe — send some Girls Who Print buttons your way.

[0:37:54] JM: Oh, that'll be great. I keep wanting to order them. Because I want to get them to all our Girls Who Print down in Georgia.

[0:38:01] DC: Okay. We will make that happen through my Busy Beaver Button Company, which is owned by women. Yay. You did mention you're going to go to try to – I mean, you have the label business now, so you've entered the label/packaging vertical.

[0:38:16] JM: Yes.

[0:38:17] DC: Anything else you want to disclose, or you want to keep it to yourself for the moment?

[0:38:21] JM: Nothing yet. I mean, we're still expanding on – I mean, yeah, our ownership group is looking to expand in a couple of new states throughout this year. They've been very hot on it. West, South, North, they've got a couple of things. Every time we learn a little bit about it, it doesn't always happen. Like you say, it takes a long time to go through the NDA and finding all that and going back and forth and seeing if it's a fit and if it'll work. But I'm sure there'll be at least two things going on in 2025 that'll help us grow.

Then, I mean, just being able to have our label company has 12 people in it down in Georgia. Just being able to have two other companies that now can sell labels that never had that opportunity before. We're looking forward to being able to, I mean, we did rolls of labels for the holidays, to and from gift stickers that have our company name that just says, "Hey, this is from us." They're going out to everybody that we can give them to. Then just being able to learn more about that. We're doing a big catalog. They get a catalog. It goes out in the mail to everybody. It'll go to their customers and our customers now. That'll be cool. That'll get us some more footprint, and more traffic on the label side.

Then, there also, when I was down there, we went with customers learning about the large format side. We're doing some quotes for some hang tags that are large runs for up to 400,000 pieces of a couple of different projects that are going to be for one customer and then signage for another customer, which that's not the great word, but they have – it's acrylic letters, printed acrylic letters that can go on a wall. I can do that all day. It's not like going outside and going up on a lift. They're actually sending us quotes for things that we can help them with. We're hoping that's going to go both ways.

[MESSAGE]

[0:40:04] 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.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

[0:40:39] DC: Okay, guys, last question, kind of a hot topic. I received an email the other day that gave me at least seven or eight paper companies who have already announced pricing increases for next year. We have impending trade wars and tariffs oncoming that will affect everything, including that cutter machine you want to buy. You should get in the pipeline and sign that contract now, so the price is locked in. Are you having tough discussions with your customers yet, at least about the paper? Or, I mean, there are some people out there who are really trying to lock everything down as much as they can and have already announced price increases for next year. What are you thinking about that? Jamie?

[0:41:36] JM: Well, yeah, some of the paper prices, we were just getting information on that. Aluminum's going up, because it always goes up. Right now, everything we're holding steady right now to start the year off. Then we're going to go from there and see how it goes.

[0:41:48] DC: You're not going to preorder anything before this stuff goes –

[0:41:52] JM: Well, we always preorder 100-pound gloss, 100-pound dull, that stuff for under Jersey side. With the materials, the flat sheet materials, there's just not enough room to preorder that much of it. We keep what we need. We order as we need it. Yeah, that part's hard. We keep a stock of the main three or four things we use every day. We'll have stock of that. Yeah, that's a conversation for we're going to be having that seriously in the next week. What we need to do, how we're going to talk to everybody about that. We have had plenty of conversations happen in the last two weeks about impending tariffs if that's going to happen. People trying to lock down how to do things here, instead of sending it overseas. That's five years ago when this happened before, six years ago.

We got a lot more work because people were not waiting. Things took a lot longer. We're hoping that this could increase workflow in the US. We're hoping that's going to keep some of the things that didn't go that are going away will come back. We'll see. Because I've got a couple of customers right now that are like, "I need you to be able to learn how to do this. I need you to do it now."

[0:43:00] DC: Okay. That's an optimistic view.

[0:43:01] JM: Absolutely. Yes.

[0:43:03] WC: I mean, no, we've not announced any pricing changes, nor will I. We've talked about this. My stance is I might have four clients that I need to have conversations with like, "Hey, we got to increase in prices because of this." Outside of that, I'm not doing any public announcements.

[0:43:16] DC: You just put it on the website and that's the price.

[0:43:19] WC: Yes. The price is the price, right? But I have a different model, which is interesting, I find this more and more as I communicate with other printing companies and other people in the industry is that most people in the industry have a bank of lots of, and lots being hundreds of big, or bigger clients, right? That you have to have conversations with. They were acquired by sales reps and so forth, where on a volume, I have the same model as an online printer, but I'm local and I mass market and I have no salespeople. Just because you ordered something last week, doesn't mean it's going to be the same price today. Some people will bitch and complain and most people probably don't know that it's \$5 dollars more, \$8 more, whatever it is.

I'm very much taking things day-to-day and have been for the last two months. I'm aware of this is happening and I'm not completely deluded that what's going on in our ecosystem here in the US. But I'm also just, I don't have the brain capacity to worry about, or look to what's going to happen with tariffs. I might buy a couple extra pallets of 14-point and 100-pound gloss just to buy myself a little bit of time. I think a lot of it is posturing. We don't talk politics on this thing, but I'm hoping, I'm hoping, right? That's my hope is that a lot of this is posturing and that it won't actually happen.

[0:44:41] DC: Okay, that's very optimistic, William.

[0:44:43] WC: Yeah, I know. We're all being optimistic over here.

[0:44:45] DC: It's okay. I'm not going to be Debbie Doom on the podcast. All I'm going to say is this, we all lived through a pandemic. We know what a supply chain disruption is like. There are no excuses. We've lived through it. We know how to prepare now for such things, including toilet paper and paper towels, which I was just listening to a podcast today about. The advice is when you go to the grocery store, just buy a few extra things that you might have run out of during the pandemic. It's coming from the same supply chain.

[0:45:21] JM: Paper towels are made here, aren't they? They should hopefully have –

[0:45:24] DC: Ah, you know. These components. This component. If anything comes from –

[0:45:31] JM: A plastic wrap and choose in.

[0:45:32] DC: Whatever it is. Something in the machine, it doesn't matter.

[0:45:36] WC: It's something like 82% of our consumables come from China.

[0:45:40] DC: All I'm saying is no matter what it is, the consumers, the people of the United States are the ones who pay the price here.

[0:45:49] JM: It's going to disrupt everything.

[0:45:50] DC: There's a potential for small businesses to be as concerned as everybody else. They might not want to spend money in the first quarter, just to see what is going on. Or maybe they'll spend all their money in the first quarter and then wait until other things work out. I'm just saying, better to keep your pulse on everything that's going on. With the paper pricing in January, a lot of this stuff is changing. To Will's point, I'm sure if people have very big customers, they have had those discussions with them to let them know. Postage goes up next year with all this stuff.

[0:46:28] WC: It goes up multiple times a year, every year now.

[0:46:30] JM: Yeah.

[0:46:31] DC: Yeah. It's getting a little more challenging for things out there, which means that it is super important that everyone is operating as lean and mean and effective and efficient as possible. Do all you can to make that happen. Thank you so much for listening to this podcast. We'll be back next year. Yay. Happy New Year, everybody. You guys want to say Happy New Year to everyone before I –

[0:46:58] WC: Happy New Year.

[0:47:00] JM: Thank you for listening all year.

[0:47:02] DC: Yay. Okay, guys. Thanks, everybody, out there and print long and prosper.

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:47:10] 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:

DMR - Digital Output magazine: <https://digitaloutput.net/art-revival/>

DMR - Robert Longo London Shows: <https://ropac.net/online-exhibitions/176-robert-longo-searchers/>

DMR - Pace Gallery: <https://www.pacegallery.com/exhibitions/robert-longo-searchers/>

Printing In A Box: <https://printinginabox.com/>

Labelexpo Europe 2025: <https://labelexpo-europe.com/>

Lean Process: <https://amazon.com/Lean-Process-Customer-Keep-Book/dp/0987581392>

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

DMR Graphics: www.dmr-graphics.com/

Innvoke: <https://innvoke.com/>

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

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

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

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

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

Print Media Centr: <https://printmediacentr.com>

Partner with Print Media Centr: <https://printmediacentr.com/partnerships/>

Subscribe to News From The Printerverse: <https://printmediacentr.com/subscribe-2>

Project Peacock: <https://ProjectPeacock.TV>

Girls Who Print: <https://girlswhoprint.net>