

**[INTRODUCTION]**

**[0:00:05] DC:** It takes the right skills and the right innovation to design and manage meaningful print marketing solutions. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse, where we explore all facets of print and marketing that create stellar communications and sales opportunities for business success. I'm your host, Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. Thanks for tuning in. Listen long and prosper.

**[INTERVIEW]**

**[0:00:31] DC:** Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. Today, I'm coming to you from the Swiss Alps. I mean, there are few places that really take your breath away, and I have to say, Lucerne, Switzerland is one of them. I am sitting here with the CEO of Hunkeler, Daniel Erni. Hello, sir.

**[0:00:55] DE:** Deborah, hello. It's a great pleasure to be in your universe for a moment.

**[0:01:01] DC:** Thank you so much. We are actually sitting here in one of the final hours of the show. We have been here for four days, making connections of all different types. I want to know, what have you learned at this show?

**[0:01:17] DE:** First of all, it was great to connect with people. It was just fabulous. It was so easy to go around in the show and see, talk, and learn from and with people that was just outstanding. I definitely learned that the industry is ready to connect with each other. If I say connect to each other, I think we all know we can't do just everything on our own. We do need the others, too. We do need the other partners. We do need to have a connection to other customers. Even though if we sometimes compete with each other, or let's say, if we do compete with each other, there's still a reason to talk to each other. I think we have seen that really coming through here at Innovationdays.

**[0:02:07] DC:** I will agree with you, and I will tell you that the exhibitors here have said the same exact thing, that they've met with lovely people who have come to their booth and are interested

in their products and services, and are figuring out which technology to connect their businesses to, which partners to connect with. Then the exhibitors were saying that when they have time, they're splitting up the booth duty and they're going around to learn what the other people are doing here, so they can see who they can work with to move their business forward as well.

**[0:02:41] DE:** Deborah, I just was talking to a gentleman a couple of minutes ago and he said to me, "You know, that's the only show on the planet where you can walk around and you don't have to hide your badge."

**[0:02:51] DC:** Yes.

**[0:02:51] DE:** You just walk into a booth and talk to him, even you know he is your competitor in real life.

**[0:02:57] DC:** Yes. I always tell the story, the first time I came to the show, I was with HP and they had the Inkjet Press and they had the door open. Someone from another manufacturer came and they were in the press with the video camera. I was freaking out. I was like, "They've got a camera in the press." They were like, "Don't worry. We've got a camera in there. Everything's fine."

**[0:03:17] DE:** Obviously, we are not going to encourage to do that all over, but we do have that spirit of the actual printing family.

**[0:03:27] DC:** Right. This year, you expanded the space and you also changed the model a bit. For as long as I have been coming, everybody had the same amount of space, the same amount of signage, and it was very neutral, like Switzerland. This year you have branched out into occupying both of the halls and moving the lovely catering and lunch to another place. How has that worked out, letting more exhibitors come to the show?

**[0:03:58] DE:** Let me start in a different way. We're still not a sing-and-dance show, not smoke and mirrors. We are all about equipment. Even though we have changed the layout and yes, we do have different space areas, it is still an equipment show and that's very important for us. Then our customers, they want to see how it actually works. Now, to answer your question

straight, I was somewhat nervous going in this year. Then, if you are changing something which worked great and you are changing that, there are good reasons to be nervous. It has worked out perfectly fine for everybody. I hear just very good comments about the concept. With that, I think we have a great base for Hunkeler Innovationdays 2027 to refine that even more and go on in that way.

**[0:04:57] DC:** Yeah. I mean, the truth of the matter is the last Hunkeler Innovationdays, you could not get into the booths. It was very difficult. Because of the layout here, if you went into one booth, you were trapped in there. You had to walk back out through all those people and you really couldn't see the equipment. You couldn't get close enough. It was crazy. I love that there's more space now. That doesn't mean that the booths aren't crazy. I have been walking around the show quite a lot, and there has been a lot of activity in hall two, especially. There was a couple of times I walked through there and I was like, "How are they all fitting in this one space? It's crazy."

There's somebody over there, I have to figure out what they do. Every time I walk by, they're next to the KER booth. I have to figure out what they do. Every time I walk by, there's people spilling in their aisles over there.

**[0:05:51] DE:** I think it has worked out for everybody in the different halls to represent them in a way as they want to do it. I think, also, the smaller vendors, the guys with the smaller booths had a great platform to present themselves. Then I think the flow of the people, as they didn't have to go just up and down, as they had the chance to float around and do the circle. They came by. If that one guy was occupied under a booth, you came by the second time and had a chance then to talk to him. From that standpoint, I think, yes, the change is quite right on it.

**[0:06:28] DC:** Have you seen any shifts in technology this year?

**[0:06:32] DE:** Let me start there. I mean, traditionally, Hunkeler Innovationdays was a continuous print show. We have for the very first time embraced also the catchy portion officially with all the print vendors. That changed already quite a bit. I was actually surprised that everybody took that up right from the beginning. I think we had already had already a pretty good platform on sheet-fed printers in the show this year.

**[0:07:06] DC:** I know that DOXNET is a very important part of this conference. It is a German organization. Every time I say, I want to go to DOXNET, they're like, "Do you speak German, Deborah?" I'm like, "No." They're like, "Well, probably not going to be the best learning experience for you." But there are so many people from DOXNET here. Can you speak about the conference that you had here for them? What are they doing at the show?

**[0:07:31] DE:** There's a long-standing history between the Hunkeler and the DOXNET organization. I mean, the DOXNET organization came, basically, out of the transactional area. But they are developing quite heavily. They are trying to embrace different other areas of the print industry. That both fits together with Hunkeler. We are not just standing still. It is also an organization, which it's moving on and tries to do things differently.

We have also seen that this year as they have changed their venue as well. We are glad that they are participating with us. Then this is then also specifically for the German customers and the additional value to be here, seeing the show and attending DOXNET as well.

**[0:08:16] DC:** I know that Stefan Hunkeler was here and he was part of DOXNET. Certainly, Michelle was not here and Hans Gut was not here. We all miss them very much that they are not at the show. How is that for Hunkeler to not have those people who have been here for so many years be here? Not that you haven't done a fantastic job, sir. But you know what I mean? It's like a family event.

**[0:08:39] DE:** It's a family event and I do have to correct you. Michelle was actually here for a moment.

**[0:08:44] DC:** My apologies. I did not see her.

**[0:08:46] DE:** Definitely wanted to see what we are building up here. We are still so much connected to each other, also in private life, so we know exactly what's going on on both sides. I think on the other hand, and that's really important as we're going forward, the Hunkeler company family has shown how much we are sticking together and how much fun we have on that business and working with the team. I also have to express on that the past couple of

weeks, I mostly left the office somewhere around 10-10.30pm, there was still a light in the office. There was still a product manager working on this presentation for Innovationdays. That's just shows the spirit of the Hunkeler company family, which keeps that spirit and is working hard for that great event, the Hunkeler Innovationdays.

**[0:09:41] DC:** One of my favorite things about this event is that you honor everybody who participated in helping everybody in the back office, from the shipping people, to people who install presses. I mean, everybody comes to – and the sense of pride on their faces, like, look what I contributed to. Then you have a party for them. It is so important when that atmosphere, that everybody really does feel part of the family. I believe the exhibitors and the visitors feel that authentic caring for each other, that you all care for each other, to make sure everybody is okay and you're always smiling. I know it's an event, but it's real. People can tell when it's not real, believe me. How do you all keep up this energy for so many days, and leading up to the show? I know you're lunatics.

**[0:10:36] DE:** I think the right answer on that is it is just fun to be here. That has nothing to do with work, or we have to. It is just fun being here and being with everybody in the print industry. I'll tell you a little bit of a story on it. As you know, we are owned by Müller Martini and we are going to the process to get closer to Müller Martini over the past couple of months. The Müller Martini employees were also invited to that family evening just yesterday, and they felt welcome, too. They really felt welcome to the Hunkeler family, too.

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**[0:11:14] DC:** Girls Who Print provides women in print and graphic communications with information resources, events, and mentorship to help them navigate their careers and the industry. As the largest independent network of women in print and a nonprofit organization, our global mission to provide resources, skill-building, education, and support for women to lead, inspire, and empower has never been stronger or more accessible. Through our member platform and program, as well as regional groups forming around the world, your access to Girls Who Print is just a click away. Gentlemen, you are most welcome to join us as allies. Get involved and get empowered today. Link in the show notes.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

**[0:11:59] DC:** I mean, I think that there has been some fear in the industry that perhaps this event would change or stop. But from what I'm hearing you saying, we're going ahead together, yeah?

**[0:12:12] DE:** Absolutely. I mean, Hunkeler is going to stay an independent company. I'm going to head that company up. We are obviously making changes to the internal organization, on the financial side, on the logistics end. I mean, that makes all totally, totally sense. We are going to make all those changes to our distribution network within this year. We certainly have to be very careful on that, and there will be some hurdle on the roads, but I think we have a pretty good plan. Most important, we do want to be fair to the industry and we want to stay as that part as we were in the past. I think in many cases, we have proven that already. Going forward in this year, we definitely will do so forward.

**[0:13:02] DC:** I was very fortunate to be invited to the standard party where we had a lovely cocktail hour and a lovely dinner, and the retirement of Mark Hunt, a legend. Please, what do you say?

**[0:13:14] DE:** That is a lot, Deborah. That is a lot, Deborah. I mean, Mark was such a great person in that industry. I was always a pleasure to listen to him, his wording, how he said the things. He was a great asset. It feels strange going to the next event without Mark. I mean, Mark was always a part. Mark was obviously always staying late at night. We will definitely miss him.

**[0:13:40] DC:** You gave him a bell, this crazy bell. What was that thing?

**[0:13:46] DE:** That's also one of the Hunkeler things, that's for the big celebrations, for the people which have done something great for Hunkeler. The cowbell, it's the biggest award, which you can receive from Hunkeler. Mark definitely has achieved that and done for us, that it was definitely worth that he received that cowbell. I hope he takes him home and brings him from time to time.

**[0:14:12] DC:** Yeah. I mean, it looked it weighed about 50 pounds. It was the biggest bell I ever saw.

**[0:14:16] DE:** It is heavy. It is heavy.

**[0:14:18] DC:** Yeah. I'm like, I hope you're shipping that. I don't think they're going to let you through the airport with that thing around your neck.

**[0:14:23] DE:** I have to check on that, Deborah. But I'm sure you don't want to go to the airport with that bell.

**[0:14:28] DC:** No, no you do not. The other thing that has been evident since I've been here and also in working with you is that Hunkeler really is invested in the future of the industry. One of the things that you have done is you invited Girls Who Print to come here, me. As Girls Who Print, usually, I'm here as Print Media Centr, but you made a special effort to not only give me a space here, but to promote Girls Who Print. Girls Who Print was on your Hunkeler tour. Every time Julian walked by with the tour, he stopped and we waved to everybody and also, I know that Matthias has been speaking about bringing young people into the industry and he's just been promoted. He got his MBA. We're also proud of him and now he's been promoted to the marketing manager. Why do you actually care about this and help other people care about it, too, in your position, sir?

**[0:15:26] DE:** Deborah, equipment is important for the industry, but people are even more. I think we see that we do need new talent in the industry, and we do need the girls in the industry. That goes alongside with each other. I think, also here, if you see the Hunkeler staff, there is quite a bit of young talent already on the shop floor and they are having their head up and they are proud about their product. From that standpoint, yes, we are mainly in equipment. What we do need to work, on our surroundings and on our environment, on the people that want to work for us, with us, and with our customers.

**[0:16:14] DC:** Your interns who have been running the photo booth outside are some of my favorite people at this show. They are just absolutely incredibly enthused about working in this industry.

**[0:16:28] DE:** They have so much to be here. And also, practice their language skills, getting into the English, and to the French, and all that. It is quite an experience for them to be here and exposed to that industry and to just everybody here.

**[0:16:45] DC:** Yeah. Well, listen, you said it the best when we were on the boat, we're all in the same boat. The interns are here and they're here to connect with people. They're here to connect to their careers, to understand where it's going. I actually shared a post and I was like, everybody here needs to go over there and welcome them to the industry and take a photo with them and talk to them and make them feel they're welcome and that they matter, as opposed to – that's what I love about how you're working with them. Yes, some of them are walking around and doing things, like helping move paper, or things like that, but for the most part, they are participating in the show as Hunkeler employees. I think that's just amazing.

**[0:17:31] DE:** That's also how we treat them back in the factory. They are not just doing the small stuff. We try to bring them in also to help us on the real stuff. Then, I think, that the young ones, they have a different way of thinking. They are bringing new creative ideas to it. It's a big part of what we want to do.

**[0:17:51] DC:** Do you think that Hunkeler delivered on its connection promise this year?

**[0:17:56] DE:** Wow, that's a question, Deborah. As CEO, I clearly have to say yes, I do believe. However, I do see also, forward, many other things that we still can do. But specifically, with the Generation 8 Evo, which we have these for the very first time. We have laid ground for something new. Then, if you're starting off on a certain level of technology, there's just so much what you can do. With the Generation 8 Evo, we have now got to a level, respectfully, we have got to a software stage that can bring so much more over the next two, four, six years.

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[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

**[0:19:17] DC:** Publishing is still, I believe, a very big opportunity for the printing industry, especially the digital printing side of it. That's really where you have an opportunity to chip away at some of those offset pages. We could argue about packaging, but I really truly believe that there's a tremendous opportunity here. The people who have come to the show this year, have you seen more publishers coming, more people who, printers who print that type of material, and how has your star book been received?

**[0:19:52] DE:** The star book is received just fabulous. I mean, have you seen that crowd around that star book?

**[0:19:58] DC:** Yes. Yours was one of the boots I couldn't get into, but I didn't want to just say that and have people think that I was just saying it because you were sitting with me.

**[0:20:07] DE:** I don't know the statistics yet, but I'm pretty sure we did see quite some people out of the publishing spot. I think from a technical standpoint, I can say, that moves forward, too. Then, if you have seen the publishing equipment four years ago, it was limited to a certain degree on the paper substrate. It has done already a great job back then, but there was some limitation on the paper substrate. Now, the equipment what you are seeing today, it's so far open in what you can do and to which kind of substrates you can introduce to it, so that opens new ways. There is a big way forward that the publishing industry can even grow further and embrace other products to those lines.

**[0:20:55] DC:** In America, we're used to standard finishing being where we can get Hunkeler stuff, right?

**[0:21:00] DE:** Yes.

**[0:21:01] DC:** What is the plan moving forward, and will you still be going to trade shows and everything like that in the United States?

**[0:21:08] DE:** Absolutely. I'm looking already forward for the next event in the US. Just on Sunday, I'm jumping on a plane to come over to the United States for another great industry event. Standard is such a professional organization for us. They are doing a great job for us in that industry. Also, going forward, we are staying very much attached to a standard finishing, as again, in the connection with the Horizon equipment, this is going to play a big role in our industry.

Müller Martini is going to represent us from the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2025. We are working quite heavily with them already to bring the know-how up to do training. Yeah, I probably just was missing. I was going to say, the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2026, certainly. Just to make that clear on that here. It is quite a task to bring everything up, but we definitely will make sure we are in the position to serve, to cause them appropriately in the way as it's necessary.

**[0:22:14] DC:** What you're saying is anyone looking for Hunkeler should still go to standard finishing, at least for the end of the year. Then everybody will be aware of how they can connect with you from that point on.

**[0:22:26] DE:** Exactly. Exactly. That's the right thing what you are saying here. All the companies are involved.

**[0:22:32] DC:** Of course.

**[0:22:33] DE:** Are customer focus, and we will make sure the customer is served the right way.

**[0:22:39] DC:** If you could impart what you hope everybody leaving Hunkeler is feeling about this event, what would it be?

**[0:22:52] DE:** I used the word sparkling over the past couple of days, and that's exactly how it felt. There is a spark in those halls, and I personally got the feeling, that most of the people which walked out of the hall, they took that spark with them.

**[0:23:11] DC:** I agree. It touched everything. It was a spark. I made a new relationship, and how can we work together, it was a spark. Here's a new piece of equipment, how can I use it to serve my customers better? That's actually a fantastic word. Sir, I just want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for everything you've done for Girls Who Print, women in the industry, from the students, to the interns, to the exhibitors, to the attendees. I mean, I'm friends with the security guard. I mean, I know the people in the catering hall. They are just the most wonderful, enthusiastic. Everybody feels welcome here and that is because of the leadership of you, of the Hunkeler family, of the legacy of this event. Everybody says the same thing, it's on their bucket list to get here, and it's one of their top two events of the entire industry. It's my favorite.

Then, you have drupa which is the only thing that's comparable, because it's on those cycles. But, sir, I just want to thank you so much for really making an impact on the industry and bringing all of these people together to really connect with each other in a deep, meaningful way, because as you said so poetically, we are all in the same boat.

**[0:24:34] DE:** Deborah, thank you so much for that compliment. Trust me, I'm to take that compliment back into the factory. I'm going to have that word out to my employees. Then in the end, it were my employees which made that happen, it were my employees which have spread that sparkling into the halls, we're smiling, we're talking to the people. Thank you very much for that, and I will take that back to Wikon.

**[0:25:05] DC:** Until next time, everybody, and until two years from now, Hunkeler long and prosper.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

**[0:25:13] 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](http://printmediacentr.com), we'd love to hear your feedback on our shows and topics that are of interest for future broadcasts. Until next time, thanks for joining us. Print long and prosper.

[END]

**Mentioned in This Episode:**

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

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

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

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

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

Standard Finishing Systems: <https://www.sdmc.com/>

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

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