

EPISODE 730

[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:02] 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.

[0:00:14] 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. PrinterChat is back. PrinterChat is back. It's been a little while, gentlemen. Hello, Jamie.

[0:00:39] JM: Hello, Deborah. Hello, Will.

[0:00:41] DC: Hello, William.

[0:00:42] WC: Hello, Deborah. Hello, Jamie.

[0:00:45] DC: I miss my hello, Deborah.

[0:00:47] WC: Hello, Deborah.

[0:00:49] DC: Oh, thank you, William. So you guys just reminded me that we have not recorded a podcast yet in 2025. It's so unbelievable to believe, but yet it is true. We have been busy. Jamie, what have you been doing for the last two months?

[0:01:06] JM: Oh, Happy New Year, everybody. We have been reviewing our wish list and looking at equipment that we've planned at the end of last year and deciding what we're going to do. We purchased a new laminator, which is not a big bells and whistles thing, but something that is needed and will help streamline our finery department because it's got more bells and whistles on it than the laminators that we do have. We're looking at CNCs and stuff like that. So we went out to Cleveland a week ago and went to see our friends at Graphco and went to look at one of their cool CNC presses, Agusta from Italy, which is neat.

Then we're planning on our interns again. We got interviews with interns. We've hired a couple of new salespeople. We have seven salespeople that are all over the country that are kind of like freelance salespeople, which they love print, want to do all kinds of cool things. They came in for a tour, totally turned our place upside down but with so many millions of questions. They're like this team of people that work together, and they're like, "We can sell print." They know one of our lead people down in our Georgia office. She does stuff with them, and she's like, "These would be great people." They all go out, and they just sell stuff, and they love selling, so we're going to give it a try. It's something new and we'll see.

But other than that, it's getting into our busy season, March, April, May. So we're hunkering down and trying to get everything we can, buy all the material we can, and get ready to go. We're pulling our hair out already, so it's been fun.

[0:02:31] DC: Jamie, I meant to ask you. What's going on with the label company that you bought?

[0:02:34] JM: Yes. That's our people down in Georgia. We're moving along. I just sold like, I don't know, \$5,000 of labels last week.

[0:02:40] DC: You did?

[0:02:41] JM: Yeah.

[0:02:42] DC: Congratulations, sir.

[0:02:42] JM: I'm not a label person, but I'm just learning, but yeah. It was crazy. I know. I know. It just seems like a lot of labels. It was thousands and thousands of labels.

[0:02:50] DC: Can I ask what type of customer was it? Like what vertical?

[0:02:54] JM: It was a point-of-purchase display customer. They needed labels for the front of this acrylic thing that had like rack cards in it. They were already pre-molded acrylics, so they didn't want to print to it. So we did these labels on what's some kind of synthetic BOPP material, and they were like one by three by three with round corners, and they were perfect. They fit right on this thing, and they said, "That's what we need." I said, "I can put them on a roll. It's a lot easier for you to assemble and put them on," because they were going to get sheets. Yes, so it all worked out. Yes, now I sell labels.

[0:03:26] DC: Excellent. Well, like I keep telling you, Labelexpo in Barcelona this year.

[0:03:31] JM: Oh, we got some people going.

[0:03:32] WC: Hey.

[0:03:33] JM: You'll see Jane David there if you're going.

[0:03:35] DC: Oh, I'm definitely – well, I'm trying to go. Anybody who's listening who wants me to go with them, I'm available.

[0:03:40] JM: I'll be there.

[0:03:41] DC: It's going to be amazing. William, what is up with you the last two months?

[0:03:47] WC: Well, we sold the building. Easiest transaction I've ever had. The buyer was fantastic. They've actually left up all of our signage because they're like gutting the building and let me put up like a big banner that we moved in front. So we're still getting actual visibility from our old location, which is nice. I cleared our queue. I did most of the installs myself with one guy. We've been calling it a two-man crew. So him and I, we cleared the building. We got everything

sold. We did like a garage sale and sold all of the equipment that I had left and substrates and all that stuff, and filled up like eight 40-yard dumpsters. I mean, we just – I was working sun up to sundown every day and then did that with the building.

Then after that, then I went in to install a world and built this big structure out on the fairgrounds. Then I was up in a 40-foot lift, changing channel letters. I did two days in a row and a scissor lift to the point that I had like vertigo. It's fun to kind of get out and put hands on things and put things together, but I've decided that I'm going to let the installers do what the installers do. I've got one guy on staff. He's awesome. He's actually going on maternity leave next week. His wife is having a baby. So once he gets back, I've got a few things scheduled that we've bid out.

I'm just being real selective on the sign projects that I take on. I've got two really good contracts and letting those just kind of be my – those are enough to justify the insurance and keeping the truck. The guy that I've got on staff, if he's not out installing, he's helping around the shop or helping on the production floor or acting basically just as a Swiss Army knife. So I'm kind of back into chill mode a little bit. Today, we were supposed to launch the new framework for the software, but we delayed it a week. We ran into some CMS issues, and the decision was that we could launch it and then scramble and be in a state of panic to fix these things. Or we could just delay the launch and fix them and launch next week.

My partner has got to be the most risk-averse human that I've ever interacted with, which is a great counterpart to me. His history is he was in the military, and he's actually the developer. He's the one that writes the code. But he was in the military, and his job was to babysit nuclear weapons. So when it comes to taking risks, this guy is like the most meticulous and calculated person on the planet. He's like, "Okay. Well, we could do this or do it this way. Or we could not and wait." I'm like, "You do you, man. This is your rodeo. I don't want to be the clown chasing you. You do what you're doing, and we'll get it done when it gets done."

But once the framework gets launched, which just give you a little insight on that, what that is, the framework is a program called Laravel. So we've rewritten the entire software in this platform, and it makes it really easy for us to hire developers and makes the development time exponentially faster. So once we launch into this new framework, which is built, it's just making sure that once it transitions, it doesn't break anything else. Once we transition into that, we'll be

able to build things and change things, and add new features like lightning-fast. I'm sitting in the wing waiting on that to happen so that we can start actually marketing and advertising the software.

[0:06:53] DC: Just to remind everybody, what is the name of the software? What does it do? Are we telling people yet?

[0:06:58] WC: Yes. It's AutoPrint is what we are branding the software to the printing industry. You can go to autoprint-software.com. Actually, by the time that this airs, you'll be able to go to It is a web-to-print e-commerce, MIS, billing, invoicing, estimating, online design, CRM. It basically does everything from top to bottom for your workflow, customer management, ordering, and it's all online.

One of the new things that we've also launched is an automated billing system. So with autoprint.com or autoprint.software, you'll be able to go to the website, sign up, and launch your storefront for you within a matter of minutes. You'll be able to get in, start making edits, building it out. It comes with a pre-built catalog, but you can update it and change it as you see fit. We have an API with four over. So you can actually have orders placed on your website. Click a button. It goes automatically to four over. It gets fulfilled, and blind drop shipped. It comes back to you wherever you want it to go. It's moving really fast, and it's going to be some gangster shit.

[0:07:57] DC: That's amazing. Very quickly, update for me, Girls Who Print has become a nonprofit organization, 501(c)(3), as we say here in the United States. Thank you so much. Who knew? I am now the executive director of a nonprofit organization, along with Kelly Mallozzi, who's the vice president and program director. We recruited Pat McGrew to be the managing director. She's the one who keeps me out of trouble, William. So that is why we love to have those people around. So us crazy idea people can be reined in by the ones who are like, "Huh, what's the IRS going to say about that? What's the customer going to say about that?" It's been really exciting.

We have a new membership platform and program, and it's open for sponsorships and donations, which are considered charitable if you're in the United States. So if anybody out there is interested, just click the link in the bottom of the show notes and jump over to Girls Who

Print and check out what we have going on. Just to make sure it is clear, membership is open to gentlemen, to gentlemen who want to be part of the solution of how we make the printing industry more welcoming for everybody and support everybody throughout their careers. That is what I have been up to, and I went to Hunkeler Innovationdays in Lucerne, Switzerland. My God, bucket list event, even though I've been there like the last five ones. Every time I go, I'm still like, "Oh, my God. I cannot believe that I'm at this event." It's just incredible.

Okay, we did a relatively quick catch-up considering that we haven't really done a podcast in a few months, as I said. Tonight's topic, we're really going to dive right in. We like to be very topical here at PrinterChat, and there is probably nothing more topical outside of the business that's affecting businesses than the uncertainty that we are facing at the moment between tariffs and possible supply chain disruptions and certainly the post office being privatized, although we'll get to that at some point.

But really, the supply chain is what we're talking about here. When we're talking about tariffs or anything like that, certainly, if you're looking at the countries that are involved in these trade wars, many of them service the printing industry in numerous ways. So I wrote an article about this on Print Media Centr about five ways to save your print business from tariff chaos. That's all I really think it is at the moment. It's like they're on, they're off, they're on, they're off, which is making people make decisions or not make decisions. Either of those two situations seem out of control of us, and we're only reacting to things.

You know me. When those situations arise, I always like to say, okay, what if the worst thing happened? How can we prepare for the worst thing? Then if something less than it happens, we're very much prepared. So here is a question that I posed in this post. What's one area of your supply chain that feels like a single point of failure for your business, and is it possible for you to start building a backup plan? Jamie?

[0:11:39] JM: Yes, that's a great question because I looked at it earlier, and we read your post. The one point I think personally that I would think – I don't know if my team thinks that, but I would think ink supply. Our large format presses run on ink that comes from South Africa. Or I'm pretty sure that's where it comes from or Switzerland, one of those places. So if anything happens to the European market and tariffs over there, that's going to be tariff. Just this week,

we looked at our ink supply and said, "We know we have these many jobs coming up that are already here. Make sure we're covered for this, this, and this. Make sure we get it in. Get it on order, so we beat anything." That's, I think, is our one thing.

Then on our New Jersey plant, it's probably aluminum for plates for offset presses. So that's another point. I mean, we have an image setter. It runs a certain plate. I don't know. Personally, I don't know. I'm sure my team over there does, but I'm going to ask them tomorrow in our leadership meeting, hey, where else do we get plates from? Do we have a backup? I'm pretty sure we do, but I don't know that personally because that's not something I deal with every day, but that's our other plant. So I'll be looking ahead to hearing what they do. But here I think our main thing is ink. I know we have a bunch of different suppliers for other things. That's one thing that the press runs this ink, and that's the only ink you can have, so.

[0:12:54] DC: Really?

[0:12:54] JM: Yes. I mean –

[0:12:55] DC: Okay.

[0:12:56] JM: Yes. Our SwissQ press is like, "This is the ink. I can't just go grab somebody else's ink and put it in there."

[0:13:01] DC: Is that because that's what's in their contracts about like if you put different ink in it, it's not their responsibility? Or is it just because like that's the only ink it could use for some reason?

[0:13:11] JM: I think that's the only ink it can use because we have two SwissQs. When we bought the newer one, it had a newer ink version. So we had to convert our now a three over to the new ink, so we would only be buying one type ink. I know there was a little playing around with that when we did it. But, yes, I mean, I can't just go get XYZ ink off the shelf and use that, and that's going to be a question tomorrow when I have my pressman there and go, "Hey, what else is there besides this?"

[0:13:37] DC: Well, that's the thing. A lot of times, you can use different ink.

[0:13:42] JM: Yes. I know I have people asking us all the time. But, yes, to play with it.

[0:13:46] DC: It nullifies some of your service agreements. But that's what we're talking about. Like, what's the bigger risk? Not keep losing your clients or?

[0:13:52] JM: We know how this thing works on all the material, how it dries. We're building braille, and we're building textured ink, a lot of white ink, textured prints for artists. I'm like I don't know how other people's ink works like that. It'd be a whole new learning curve, so yes.

[0:14:07] DC: Okay. Well, that's why we're having this conversation.

[0:14:09] WC: Now, is the SwissQ – is it ink or does it come like an HP? Like I have HP cartridges or I have Mimaki cartridges. I would imagine SwissQ has their version of a cartridge.

[0:14:17] DC: Is it toner or liquid?

[0:14:19] JM: Groovy ink, it comes in like a gallon jug. It's not like a cartridge.

[0:14:24] DC: Like offset ink, like goopy?

[0:14:26] JM: Nope. No. It's weird. Yes. I don't know. I haven't opened it and poured that thing out but –

[0:14:29] DC: Like inkjet juice boxes?

[0:14:31] JM: It's like ink. It's, yes, not like a toner. Yes.

[0:14:35] DC: All right.

[0:14:36] JM: Yes. It comes in gallon jugs, and we get lots of it. That's my one thing after reading that. I was like, "Huh, there's my question for my team."

[0:14:42] DC: Okay. Well, this is why we're having this discussion because if you have to start building a backup plan, now is the time for it, including reaching out to your vendors and saying, "Hey, I know we have this contract, but this is something that maybe there's some negotiation there about having to use a different ink." Of course, every manufacturer wants you to use the ink that they make.

[0:15:10] JM: Sure. Colorado uses a UV gel ink, so it's a little different. I'm sure there's not too many versions of that out there, but it's definitely to look at as well.

[0:15:17] DC: Okay. But again, if that is your only thing, then there's a potential that you're not going to be able to use that equipment unless you have a backup, which is what was talked to me about.

[BREAK]

[0:15:27] 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]

[0:16:12] DC: William, for you, what is the single point of failure in your supply chain? And can you build a backup plan?

[0:16:19] WC: I haven't really experienced any failures yet. I mean, we've been checking with our paper vendors and they say expect a price hike, which price hikes have just been happening for the last two, three years. That's nothing new. Five to 10 % is what they're talking. We're not talking 25%. I have some concerns for ACM, which I know mostly comes out of China.

[0:16:44] DC: I'm sorry, what is that?

[0:16:44] WC: Aluminum composite, right? Maxmetal, Dibond. Aluminum composite, right? And we do a lot of that. We use a lot of that. I have some concerns and some worries, but I've kind of been trying to not panic about it too much because there's not really much I can do, right? I have such a diverse catalog that it doesn't make sense for me to try to buy an entire container of ACM or for me to buy 20 pallets of 14-point cardstock. I don't have anywhere to put it, right?

Where the difference is, is when we were in post-COVID, supply chain issues, it was inaccessible, right? It just wasn't there. And not being there created the desperation of, "Okay. Well, I will do whatever I've got to do. I'll drive across the country. I'll buy a container. I'll get a storage unit."

[0:17:35] DC: Remember when you set up the email, you're like, "I'll fly anywhere and rent a car and drive it back."

[0:17:38] WC: I'll do whatever. Where now, I have inventory. I can get inventory. It's readily available. The hurdle becomes the price, right? The price becomes the hurdle, at least for the majority of the materials that I use. I don't see there being a lack of inventory or a lack of availability anytime in the next 12 months, right? Now, if the tariff wars continue and it does evolve into the shit show that it looks like that it could, the availability may be shorter, right? But investing in not knowing what's happening yet is you're making a panic move, right? I'm kind of holding fast, paying attention, making sure that my employees are paying attention, and I will make moves when and if I feel it's necessary.

What I think is important is to keep an eye on your costs and to ensure that if your pricing is going up or your costing is going up, that your pricing is going up, which I know is a challenge, right? I know it's really hard to update and change pricing across the board for products in pretty much any platform out there that exists. Mine not excluded, but that's one thing that we plan on changing.

[0:18:55] DC: I mean, can I just interject for a second?

[0:18:58] WC: Absolutely.

[0:18:58] DC: In this case, it's actually interesting because we always compare your business model to Jamie's business model. And in this case, he's actually better off because he doesn't have pricing on his website. Right, Jamie? You don't have pricing.

[0:19:11] JM: Well, when you go into our portal, if you are a customer and we have your portal set up, you can order a stationary or –

[0:19:16] DC: If you're a customer, but it's not like Wills. You just go on as a storefront. I'm just saying –

[0:19:20] WC: But even for him, right? Taking pricing being displayed to the customers. Even for you, Jamie, you're estimating tool to be able to go in. It doesn't pull anything from real-time. Your vendors aren't like feeding into your system that say, "Okay. Well, this material went up by this much." You have to maintain and manage that. And it's not an easy thing to do.

[0:19:38] DC: No, no, no, no, no. But I was just thinking about it, you have to constantly make sure that your website is accurate because you could end up selling things for the wrong price, where Jamie almost has an advantage of like call us for pricing. Remember during COVID, there was no menu prices. It was like whatever cheese costs us this week is how much your pizza is going to be, you know?

[0:20:01] JM: Right now, we're estimating things. Estimates are good for 30 days. But at certain times, we had estimates that are good for five because things change that much. Is it at that point? No. But you never know what could happen. I've already gotten emails from customers saying, "Hey, we just got this announcement. This could go up anywhere from 5% to 20%. Just giving you a heads up. We'll let you know as soon as we can, but just to warn you." I've gotten a few of those emails from suppliers.

[0:20:25] DC: Well, that's good. William, did you want to finish your thought that I interrupted?

[0:20:29] WC: No. I mean, I think the general message is don't panic. And on the other side of this, if you have a material that's all you use and it comes from China or it comes from somewhere that's going to get slapped with tariffs and you can get a deal on it, you can get it

now, you've got a place to store it, then go ahead, man. All-in, right? But if you're going to jump through a bunch of hoops and take a bunch of risks and do a bunch of stuff to have this thing, you're taking a big gamble and it may pay off and it may not. Be more strategic in what you do. Don't make panic moves. And think about what you're going to do before you do it.

[0:21:02] DC: Yeah, great advice.

[0:21:04] JM: I think we learned from COVID too. Because I know we're buying a lot of stuff. I bought a bunch of – I don't know what it was. Acrylic, or PETG, or something for shields and for stands. And then we had extra. Now, all of a sudden, the price was so high and then the price went down. We're like we got to sell it for a bleak cheaper than we bought it for because we got to use it. Yeah, I don't think we're going to panic buy.

[0:21:26] DC: That's when, remember, Will had a little paper distribution, envelope distribution. Every time he got a delivery, he called for another delivery. I'm just surprised you're not hedging your bets on that board that you're saying because you really had a problem in COVID with paper. I don't want to remind you.

[0:21:44] WC: No. But I have good inventory. I have a storage that I've got two pallets of 14-point, which is our primary. And I threw away not just stuff that was damaged in the storm, not just stuff that was damaged and stuff that was perfectly good that I just couldn't move and I couldn't get rid of and I had nowhere to store it. It wasn't worth transporting and storing it. I threw away all much stuff. And I still have paper in my shop that I bought during COVID that I'll probably still never use. It's like I'm not going to make the same mistake twice or thrice, you know?

[0:22:15] DC: Right. All right. Well, I trust you for that. I'm just poking at the bear because I will never forget that LinkedIn post. If you have paper, I don't care where you are in the United States, I will fly to you, rent a car, rent a truck and drive it back to Florida. I was like, "What is going on at Will's print shop today?"

Okay, speaking about paper, right? Because this is going to be one of the things for sure that is affected in numerous ways. There is an argument for switching to brands and other things that

are domestically produced. One of those things is also synthetic paper, which a lot of people don't consider. If they can't get paper-paper, that there are other options that they might not go to normally, but they are still out there. If, let's just say, your paper merchant went out of business or the prices you couldn't afford the paper or anything like that, do you have alternative suppliers? And I don't know this because I'm not a printer. Are you allowed to buy paper from merchants out of your area? Is that allowed? Or they defer you back to like, "Well, that area is covered by another company."

[0:23:42] WC: Not by companies, by any means, right? Mac is primary here. Used to have Xpedx here. But I think Xpedx isn't even around anymore. There's another company that just opened up here that we've actually been going through the application process, and I can't remember the name of it.

[0:23:57] DC: A new paper merchant in the Southeast?

[0:23:59] WC: Yeah, a new paper distributor in Tampa specifically. They have a distribution center here. And then we've got a guy that's got like a little side hustle paper thing. I don't know. He just buys a bunch of stuff in bulk. I get it from all over the place. Anyway, you can't have any organization or company that says, "Oh, well, we won't sell to you because you have to deal with this company." Unless they specifically don't deal with the public like a Mimaki who you have to go through a distributor. But if Mac Papers is here and another company that we can get shipped to from North Carolina isn't Mac, they're going to be like, "No, no, no. Mac's in Tampa. We can't sell to you." That's not how things work at all.

What you have to look at is, again, your cost, right? To drive down the road or to have it delivered by somebody that's down the road versus having it freighted in from North Carolina, or Georgia, or whatever you can go, is that worth it? And sometimes you can leverage these things and negotiate. Where if it is only a little bit more at a ship, just say, "Well, do you want to match what I'm paying here?" Because if they want to sell stuff, then they'll bring the price down. Just we get beat up every time we quote somebody something, they want to negotiate the price. We have the ability to do that with our vendors too.

[0:25:09] DC: Jamie?

[0:25:10] JM: I know what helped us during COVID is that we bought a lot of paper from one of our top suppliers and they were like, "We will have paper for you no matter what. We'll make sure you're one of our better customers." But we do have a couple of other sources. You got to make sure you keep other avenues open. And that was tougher then, but now we make sure we keep our main suppliers. They still supply our main stuff. But for paper and stuff like that, you have to have at least a backup. You got to have one or two for –

[0:25:37] WC: At least one or two.

[0:25:38] JM: We have three or four because it depends. Everyone specializes in something a little different, but they all kind of sell the same thing. Some might be better at acrylic and not PVC, and some guys are better at PVC than acrylic, but they still both sell it. We have various supplies to do that. And they're all in the same tri-state area, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York. They all stop in once every other week to make sure we're still here and we're okay because they're just waiting to make sure that we're available to order from them. Yeah, that's been actually pretty good since COVID. We've got a number of sources.

[BREAK]

[0:26:14] 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.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:26:50] DC: The effects of COVID weren't just on the built things, it was on the components. Nobody could get a wash. There was tons of washing machines, but there was no chips for them, right? Sometimes one little thing stops everything. And if that becomes the case for equipment, then we can assume that the manufacturers are going to start letting people go again. And in COVID, they let the service people go. First of all, has the service returned to pre-

COVID levels? And is there any way to prepare now in case that is disrupted again? They're both thinking. Jamie?

[0:27:33] JM: Well, I think the pre-COVID levels of service are definitely there, yeah. Everybody's kind of stepped it up and doing it. You have multiple contacts to touch at each company in case somebody's not there, or out, or whatever. I don't think that's a problem. Like you said, if something that the material is made from is hard to get, then that's going to be a problem. I remember that with COVID. Magnets got scarce for a while because they couldn't get the ore or whatever for the magnet. That was kind of saying that's another thing I put on my list while we're sitting here talking because we do a lot of magnets. I'm like, "All right, we need to check and make sure we're going to have a good supply of that." I know recently we just checked with them for a large job that we're working on. But now I'm going to see what their three and six-month goal is to make sure everything's going to be fine. Yeah. And I remember there was something in the plastics that wasn't available, like something they weren't making certain –

[0:28:22] DC: What about your presses though? What if a press goes down?

[0:28:24] JM: What if a press goes down and you need a part? That could be interesting.

[0:28:27] DC: A part, or a person, or anything. I'm just saying, we've lived through this. We've lived through this.

[0:28:34] WC: I'd like to throw this in there. And I think it's an easy comparison, right? Because it's the closest thing that we can remember of things going sideways, right? But the supply chain issues that we had during that time was because no one was working. Everything was shut down. And this was a global thing, right? This is a global economy thing, right? It's not like things aren't being made. It's not like they don't exist. The supply chain issues that we are going to run into is going to be a cost. How much is it going to cost you? You can get it. I don't care. You can get it. You're just going to have to pay for it. You're going to have to pay more for it. And how that translates into what you charge, how much margin you make, how much money you have to put back into things that you want to invest in your company or your personal life, or what have you. That's how these things trickle down. It's similar, right? Because it's like an, "Oh my God, the

market's going to be disrupted." But it's not the same exact thing. Looking at it the same way, I think we need to change the viewpoint and understand that this is an economic thing, not a supply chain thing.

[0:29:36] DC: I don't disagree with you. I completely agree with you. I just want to give you another scenario in this that fits along the lines of where I'm coming from. You're absolutely right, money talks, bullshit walks, as they say. Right? If you had the money, you could get the paper in COVID. You could get what you need in COVID if you had the right connections and the right amount of cash, you could get what you need, whether that was toilet paper. I will never get over it paying \$89 for freaking six rolls of toilet paper. But I had to do it, right?

[0:30:06] WC: You still have a collection of toilet paper, don't you, Deb?

[0:30:09] DC: Don't even ask. I've opened up a little convenience store in my closet. By the way, aluminum foil is the thing I'm currently stocking up on. I'm going for at least a two-year supply of everything. But I completely agree with what you're saying. But here's the scenario, now I can only afford to bring two cargo containers over instead of six that I usually do. Now you have no parts, you have no – it's not about people. It's about availability and what everybody can afford. I agree with you, which is just going to make the things in that cargo container 90 times more expensive because now it's supply and demand with a limited amount of supply because a company might not be able to bring things over at the same price that there have been. Do you think that that is a fair point? I'm not arguing your point. I agree with it. I'm just expanding it into why we're having this conversation.

[0:31:13] WC: I think yes. I think you can have a result of shortages, right? But again, I don't think that it's going to be the degree that it was before, right? Cottonelle isn't going to not have toilet paper on the shelves because it costs more to get it from China. It'll be on the shelves, it's just going to cost you more. Now, I know that's not the same example that you're using but talk about toilet paper.

[0:31:34] DC: Well, Procter & Gamble has a little more cash than –

[0:31:39] WC: But even like a Ricoh, or a SwissQ, or any of these large companies that are in other countries, right? They're manufactured in other countries that are going or are likely going to experience tariffs in some capacity because of either their country specifically or the gateway that it goes through to get to our country. Now, in some of these places, in some of these instances, that could be circumvented, right? If they're shipping through Mexico or they're shipping through Canada and those places have tariffs, but the country that's shipping it to us doesn't, then they can circumvent Mexico or Canada and ship it directly into the United States for probably a little bit more, but less because it doesn't have a tariff, right?

I don't think SwissQ, or Ricoh, or Canon, or HP is real. They don't have any tariffs, right? Unless they're shipping through Mexico, it's the only reason they're gonna have tariffs, right? These organizations are not going to let you as the consumer be without. They're not going to let your SwissQ sit on the floor and be unoperational. It may cost you more to operate it, but it's not going to go stagnant. That's my opinion. I could be wrong, but that's my viewpoint.

[0:32:45] DC: Okay. Okay. That's why we're having a conversation.

[0:32:48] JM: They have locations here. Hopefully, they're stocking up on ink and whatever else we need here because they have headquarters here.

[0:32:56] DC: Okay. Well, there you go.

[0:32:57] JM: Most of these companies do or something, they're going to have somewhere here, a warehouse here, that they're shipping something. Not everything comes directly from overseas, right to you. It comes here to a point and then gets to you.

[0:33:07] WC: Right. It goes through distribution channels.

[0:33:08] JM: Yeah.

[0:33:08] DC: Yes. Okay. Well, this is a perfect segue to the final question. If tariffs doubled your material costs tomorrow, what steps could you immediately take to protect your margins?

[0:33:25] WC: I'm raising prices straight up. I'm not working for free. Not. I would rather double my price and lose half my business because I can scale my costs down versus spinning my wheels, keeping pricing the same, keeping my costs from an overhead standpoint the same, but paying double in material cost.

[0:33:45] JM: Yeah, we have to raise prices. Yeah. I mean, you're going to honor some that have been there and you've already started working on, but you're going to raise prices. Plastic or whatever doubles tomorrow, you're going to have to raise the price. We're going to understand that because they're going to be paying more.

I know the last time we dealt with tariffs. What was that seven years ago or more? We started to get a little of this. Back in 2018-ish, 17, there was talk of tariffs. I do remember getting some work that was supposed to go overseas came here because they didn't want to deal with it. They were just, "We're going to keep this in the country. We're going to have it done here." And that gave us a little bump back then. But will that happen this time? I don't know. You still got to get materials that are – some of them are local, but a lot of them are overseas.

[0:34:30] DC: I mean, that's actually a great point. And a month ago, somebody contacted me who was printing this gigantic job in China. They're a broker for the Chinese printer, but they live in San Francisco. They called me to see if I could find book printers to print this book for them.

[0:34:49] WC: Is that that weird coloring book thing?

[0:34:51] JM: No, I had a coloring book thing.

[0:34:53] DC: No, it wasn't my weird coloring book thing. It was something that had so much hand work that it would have cost them \$4,000 a book. It was insane. The conversation I tried to have with the woman was, "You can't recreate this job in the United States, but you can retool it for the lowest price possible based upon not having people put stickers on book – make book tabs." It was ridiculous.

When they first contacted me, she told me that she reached out to 10 printers and nobody would do the job. And I was like, "What?" I reached out to a couple of people who I trust and

they're like, "This is the craziest thing I have ever seen in my entire life. There's no way it could be done in the United States. You need a team of 30 people just sticking stickers in this book." And they're like, "Nobody, but nobody can afford that." It would be five times whatever they're paying now, plus all of that." Yeah. That is actually a strategy though, to see if there are jobs that you can retool in some manner to supplies or materials that you feel more comfortable about, then, "Huh, I hope we can get that in three months when this file is going to come through." Jamie?

[0:36:20] JM: I've had a number of people reach out about that just the same way. Like, "Hey, we're taking precautions now. We want to find out what it's going to cost to do here in the State just in case we can't get it through our normal channels." And they're reaching out and I had at least three or four customers ask for that. We usually get this from China, we get this from there. I know it's going to cost more, but how much? We need to at least have a backup? And yeah, we've had a couple of those.

[0:36:43] DC: And what are you privy to the discrepancy and the price there between – do you know how much higher your price was and what they're paying in China now?

[0:36:53] JM: One of them was, one of them was not even.

[0:36:55] DC: Approximately?

[0:36:56] JM: It was like there was no way. And we were going to ever compete close to it. But some of the smaller things, they're like, "We might do that because it's more, but it's not drastically –"

[0:37:06] DC: Can you just give me a percentage, a range, a guesstimate? I'm just curious.

[0:37:10] JM: It was probably 40% more. Yeah.

[0:37:14] DC: All right.

[0:37:13] JM: And they were like, "Okay, now we know what we're looking at."

[0:37:17] DC: Yeah. And that was including the shipping from China or no?

[0:37:22] JM: I think just on the part. They didn't give me the full details. I was trying to get that out.

[0:37:26] WC: They always do that when you're trying to price match. Like, "Match this price. We're going to leave the shipping out of it." Like, "No, that's part of it."

[0:37:32] JM: Part of the job.

[0:37:34] DC: It is from China, for sure.

[0:37:35] WC: Container costs coming over here.

[0:37:37] DC: Yeah, which are going to go up.

[0:37:39] JM: Before he was having problems getting stuff from China. And we did a lot of work with him in 2019. And after COVID, he started getting more stuff from China again. Because after that cleared up a little bit, he's gone. But now he's starting to come back again, like, "I need work." And you're like, "Hey, where'd you go for a year or two?" Yeah, now it's coming back.

[0:37:57] DC: Right. Now, is it worth it to you to try to figure out how to use materials or something to get the cost down, or if he's willing to pay the –

[0:38:08] JM: Yeah, I like to try and get a sample of it and dissect it. What's the best way? Can we substitute something in here? But yeah, if I can get an actual piece and kind of dissect it. Can I take this apart? Can I look how it's made? Most of the time it's something that's heaped in or done something and they're just doing it like for pennies and you're charging dollars a piece and they're charging 25 cents. Usually, if it's a manual thing that has to be bent or put together where they don't charge anything for and I'm like, "We have to have –"

[0:38:35] WC: There's no labor cost.

[0:38:36] JM: – put this together, it's going to cost more.

[0:38:38] DC: Right.

[BREAK]

[0:38:41] DC: Like what you hear? Leave us a comment, click a few stars, share this episode, and please subscribe to the show. Are you interested in being the guest and sharing your information with our active and growing global audience? Podcasts are trending as a potent direct marketing and educational channel for brands and businesses who want to provide portable content for customers and consumers. Visit printmediacentr.com, click on podcasts, and request a partner package today. Share long and prosper.

[INTERVIEW CONTINUED]

[0:39:15] DC: All right. I thought this was a really interesting conversation. William, do you have any final words?

[0:39:21] WC: Yeah, I mean, just kind of on this last topic, and you know how I roll even going back to the days of name brand papers, right? And I'm not going to quote the brand of paper that you want me to quote. It's no different.

[0:39:31] DC: Jamie and I are fully aware.

[0:39:33] WC: I'm always going to look at a way to get the cost down or the price down and then be able to make it easier to make. And not to toot my own horn here, but I'm actually good at kind of finding those solutions and circumventing some of those things. Fortunately, I don't deal with very many customers anymore. I'm not on the front lines of seeing a lot of that stuff. But most of the stuff, if it's got any kind of big, crazy moving parts, it's still going to come across my plate in some capacity. But most of the stuff that we're making outside of the sign world is pretty straightforward.

But the message in the point being is that look at it from a standpoint of, yes, what can I sub in? What material can I do different? What machine could do this that's being done manual? Vice versa. How can we tweak this so that it can be done in my facility instead of in China and still yield a similar result? May not be exactly the same, but a similar result. And that is actually going to be some low-hanging fruit going into the climate that we are most likely going to be in.

[0:40:33] DC: Thank you, William. Jamie, final words?

[0:40:35] JM: Following off what Will said is, yeah, just make sure you're staying on top of everything. Make sure you're reaching out to your suppliers. I mean, we talk to them weekly. And just make sure you're having that conversation like, "Hey, if you see something coming down the pike, you know what we buy a lot, you've got to give us a heads-up. We need to kind of know ahead of time." That's kind of what I'm going to be talking to my team about tomorrow, is when we're checking on pricing for materials, if it's a lot, if it's a couple of sheets, we have that price. But if it's hundreds of sheets or 50 sheets or more, just double-check. Is it in stock? How long is it going to take?

I had that question today for a material, like an Eaglecell Falconboard type of material. I'm like, "I need 300 sheets of this. How long is it gonna take? If that runs out, what's the backup?" Because they don't need it. I need it in a couple of weeks from now. You're telling me it takes seven days to get and it's available in seven days. But what happens if they drag their feet for eight days or 10 days? Is there more of that or is that done?" I had those conversations today.

That's what I'm going to be doing, is just double-checking that. Double-checking my plate supplier and my ink supplier and just – I know I've gotten I'd say three emails from suppliers already saying, "Hey, just a heads up. This is on the horizon. If it happens, we will let you know right away but expect increases from this to this." I just want to make sure their supply line is good because that'll affect us.

[0:41:58] DC: Yeah, totally. My final words are going to be something I included in the post, which was I was speaking to a very well-respected industry analyst. And we were talking about the current situation, and I was like, "How are you talking about this with people?" And I'm paraphrasing the response, but it was along the lines of, "I can't tell everybody the whole truth

about the situation, because if I did that, I wouldn't have a job and nobody would buy equipment."

With that being said, my best advice is to echo what Jamie just said, do your own research. Pay attention to unbiased sources, whatever those are. I find them in Europe these days if I want to know what's going on unbiased. But there are neutral sources out there who are just giving information without any spin or a side. And so just pay attention to that. And anything you can do to mitigate a potential supply chain crisis moving forward, pull out your COVID disaster plan and see if there's anything which everybody – remember, we had a conversation about that. Now that we've had COVID, there is no excuse for people not having a disaster plan. Well, as William said, don't panic, but be prepared. And that is our advice.

Thank you for having a great conversation, gentlemen. Everything you need to connect with William, and Jamie, and me and learn more about Girls Who Print is in the show notes. Until next time, everybody. Print long and prosper.

[OUTRO]

[0:43:49] 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]

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Labelexpo: <https://www.labelexpo-europe.com/>

Laravel: <https://laravel.com/>

AutoPrint: <https://autoprint-software.com/>

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/>

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