

[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.

[0:00:14] WC: And this is William Crabtree.

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

[EPISODE]

[0:00:26] DC: Hey, everybody. Welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. We are here with PrinterChat. Hello, gentlemen. Jamie the Printer –

[0:00:35] JM: Hello, Deborah. Hello, Will.

[0:00:35] DC: - from Invoke Print and Marketing. Stepping over me as I'm giving you an introduction. That's Jamie from Invoke Print and Marketing. Go ahead, Jamie. Speak.

[0:00:45] JM: Hello, Deborah. Hello, Will. Nice to see everybody.

[0:00:48] DC: Hello. There is Will from Tampa.Media, printinginabox.com, and everything else.

[0:00:57] WC: Tampaprinter.com.

[0:00:58] DC: Oh, tampaprinter.com.

[0:01:01] WC: We're really not branding the tampa.media anymore. It was like an umbrella. We still have Sign Parrot as a brand. It's not degraded, but it's still there. Gorilla Consultants is definitely degraded. It's basically, I'm the Gorilla Consultant, and that's the extent of it, and whatever podcasts I can come up with from now on. Then tampaprinter.com is obviously the printing company, and it's still running strong. Then, of course, printinginabox.com, which is the web-to-print e-commerce solution that you can run your print shop with.

[0:01:31] DC: Yes.

[0:01:32] WC: Hello, Deborah.

[0:01:33] DC: Yay, that's my favorite part. We did an entire episode on your new, amazing software that everyone can listen to. It's right before this one. As long as you were schooling me on all the dot coms and dot medias and dot, dot, dot, dots, why don't you tell everybody what's been going on with you this past month?

[0:01:52] WC: Things have been pretty chill. I got to do Printing United with you two wonderful people, and we launched Mobi and had some success and had some troubles. But we learned a lot –

[0:02:03] DC: Our portable radio station, by the way.

[0:02:05] WC: Our portable radio station. Our mobile broadcasting system is what it is.

[0:02:08] DC: Correct.

[0:02:09] WC: Overall, it was very successful, very exciting. We're moving forward with PrintFM, printFMradio.com. For those of you out there, make sure you tune in. 24/7 broadcast radio station, dedicated to the print and graphics industry. We've been doing some remodeling around the building. We redid the bathrooms. I think I can stand on this hill and say that I have the nicest bathrooms of any print shop anywhere. I think I could confidently say that.

[0:02:36] DC: I would have to agree with you, William. As somebody –

[0:02:38] WC: Well, you haven't seen them since they got remodeled.

[0:02:40] DC: No, but I –

[0:02:40] WC: You only got the bidet experience. Now they're all nice and fancy, and they look pretty, too.

[0:02:45] DC: The bidet and the heated seat. I mean, it did everything, but tell me stories while I was sitting in there.

[0:02:52] JM: Heated seats in Florida. Shouldn't they cool you down, though?

[0:02:56] WC: Hey, you don't want to sit down on a cold seat. That's not fun.

[0:02:59] DC: William is very particular about his bathroom situation.

[0:03:02] WC: I am. I am.

[0:03:02] DC: Remember, he wanted to get a portable bidet for Christmas, or something. He's a little obsessed with this, but okay. By the way, I don't have one.

[0:03:12] WC: Yeah. The remodel has been going well. We've put some makeup on that pig, lipstick on that pig. It looks much nicer. Not that my building is a pig. It's actually a really nice building.

[0:03:20] DC: No. I'm even surprised you're saying that.

[0:03:22] WC: It looks much better now. We haven't updated anything in five years. That's really, I'm buying some equipment. I did sign the purchase agreement for the Xante X-36 yesterday.

[0:03:31] DC: Congratulations.

[0:03:33] WC: We'll get it before the end of the year.

[0:03:34] DC: Amazing.

[0:03:35] WC: We are also going to be purchasing the, what is it? The Epilog Laser, which I also saw at Printing United. We're diving into that. We'll have both of those before the end of the year, which is exciting.

[0:03:48] DC: Very cool.

[0:03:48] WC: That's been part of the remodel is to play musical chairs, where we're shuffling things around the shop, cleaning out new spaces, getting rid of a lot of stuff, throwing things away for once, which we don't always do. If you own a print shop, you're probably a hoarder in some capacity, or another. Trying to break that habit and get rid of a bunch of stuff. Excited for the new year and what 2026 is going to bring. We still got a month left in this year, but it's going to be over in the blink of an eye.

[0:04:15] DC: Really is. I looked up, and somebody said, December 1st, and I was like, "What?" I looked up, and I was like, what?

[0:04:22] WC: Yeah, December. It's December. It's Christmas time. It's Christmas time.

[0:04:26] DC: Which is even weirder in Florida, because it's hot today. It's like 80 degrees, and there's not a lot of Christmas trees at the moment, but there will be, or Christmas palm trees. People get a lot of these around here. Okay, Jamie McLennan. What is going on over there at Invoke?

[0:04:43] JM: Well, it's not 80 here. It was like 36 here this morning, but snowing about an hour north of here. Getting lots of snow. We're getting rain. Other than that, since we saw each other at Printing United, we've been – this is budget season for 2026. Doing all that fun stuff and putting together our wish list of what we saw at the show. We were talking with HP about Indigo, upgrading our Indigo, which I was hoping was at the show, but wasn't. That's fun stuff. Still talking to a couple other people. We haven't bought anything yet, like Will did, which it's always

fun to have new stuff, which is coming hopefully soon. But looking at a acquisition and hopefully, that might happen in the first quarter of the year.

[0:05:28] DC: Interesting.

[0:05:29] JM: Looking to grow that way. It should be interesting. With that, will come lots of new things. Other than that, we're getting all our holiday stuff together and decorating and getting gift boxes together and cookies and all that fun stuff. It's always a fun time of year, and also trying to

–

[0:05:47] DC: Will, did you get any cookies from Jamie?

[0:05:49] JM: We've got cookies yet. We're working on.

[0:05:51] DC: Just saying. I missed out on –

[0:05:52] WC: No cookies. No pie in July.

[0:05:53] DC: No pie. No cookies.

[0:05:55] JM: You're going to get a pie turducken.

[0:05:57] WC: A pie turducken. What is that? A pumpkin pie inside of an apple pie?

[0:06:01] DC: No. It's called a pie caken. Pie is in a cake. Don't even ask. It's a turducken. It's like a white cake, and inside is a pumpkin pie, a pecan pie. Because why not? By the way, everyone who's listening outside of America, now you understand a little bit more about why we maybe roll off the plane the way that we do, because we invent things like a cake with two pies inside of it.

Okay. My updates, just had the Girls Who Print annual print date conference. It was a success. The theme was fempire, build it, rule it, own it, and how you can command your career. We really focused on engagement in the chat. We had almost 900 interactions in the chat during the

day. Sandy Hubbard did an amazing job hosting the chat as she always does. Of course, Kelly Mallozzi was there to co-host the conference with me. We are having a sponsorship drive. If you happen to be in the United States, we are a nonprofit charitable organization. Whether you become a member or a sponsor, it is a tax deduction. If you're anywhere else in the world, we have regions popping up everywhere and your money will stay in that region and you will be charged in your currency. We will not convert you to our currency and cost you more money.

Print Media Centr is wrapping up the year. Of course, with that, I'm in proposal season, which everybody knows at this point is my worst time of the year. I just hate this time more than anything else. But I've got some interesting things moving forward, including PrintFM, and really excited about where that is going to go. Just as a little information, we really want to produce more live programming throughout the day. When I say we, I'm happy to announce that Will is now, I don't know, what are you, a co-owner of PrintFM, a partner?

[0:08:07] WC: Partner.

[0:08:08] DC: Yeah, a partner.

[0:08:09] WC: Partner, co-owner. Yeah.

[0:08:11] DC: Yeah. Everybody. Then we also have the station manager, who we love to death.

[0:08:15] WC: Who remains nameless.

[0:08:16] DC: Yeah. Remains nameless for now. But we will be definitely having some interesting things starting up in the new year. But you can listen to PrintFM now. You can listen to it whenever you want, because it's on, as Will said, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year at printfmradio.com. Or you could actually get there by printfm.com, because Will made me buy that damn URL, or actually, he bought it, so I'm staying.

[0:08:44] WC: I bought that one. What I did do is I got you to buy Print Media Center, the correct spelling.com.

[0:08:51] DC: Fine. Whatever.

[0:08:54] WC: I got to Dubai. Did you forward it?

[0:08:55] DC: Yes. Okay.

[0:08:57] DC: No. But you know what else I have? The Printerverse. That thing has 600 hits a week. I'm going to point that one to Print Media Centr, too.

[0:09:05] WC: Yeah. You got to point those.

[0:09:05] DC: I'm listening to you. Will, I'm listening to you. When it comes to –

[0:09:07] WC: Good. I'm glad. I'm proud of you.

[0:09:08] DC: - anything SEO, digital marketing. I just say, okay, fine. But I have to bite the bullet on it for a second. Because you're a costly –

[0:09:16] WC: I just twist your arm like, 10 times.

[0:09:17] DC: It's a costly situation. I'm sick and tired of you calling me cheap. I'm not cheap. Okay. Here we go. Our conversation today is based upon an article I saw in LinkedIn's news yesterday. It was that AI is driving holiday shopping this year. They were specifically talking about Black Friday and what was predicted for – what was it called? Cyber Monday, which was actually yesterday. I don't have the updated numbers for that, but according to Reuters, a record, one 11.8 billion with a B was spent on Black Friday.

Now, that doesn't mean that there was more shopping. It just means people spent more money, because things are more expensive. They're not saying, did everybody buy the same volume? The volume was down, but the pricing was up, okay? Then AI-driven retail traffic was up 805% according to the Associated Press and Adobe, who's tracking this for some reason. Cyber Monday, which was yesterday, was projected to hit 14.2 billion in online sales alone. What I started thinking about is that this is a great time for printers and marketers to have a real

discussion about how AI-first buying behavior could and is changing the sales funnel and how print can be strategically positioned to add value, especially around the holiday season.

I'm assuming, and please correct me if I'm wrong, that you count on your holiday money every year, right? There's an uptick in it, I'm assuming. You say, "Okay. Maybe I can make this up at the end of the year, if things are not so great in the summer."

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[0:11:19] DC: Print Media Centr provides printspiration and resources to our vast network of global print and marketing professionals. Whether you are an industry supplier, print service provider, print customer, or consultant, we have you covered by providing resources and strategies that enable business marketing and creative success, reporting from global events, these podcasts, Project Peacock TV, and an array of community-lifting initiatives. We also work with OEMs, suppliers, industry organizations, and event producers, helping you connect and engage with our vast audience and achieve success with your sales, marketing, and conference endeavors. Visit Print Media Centr and connect with the Printerverse. Links in the show notes. Print long and prosper.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

[0:12:14] DC: First question is, with AI reshaping how people shop, how can printers and marketers rethink their sales approach for the holidays, shopping, and reposition print based on this new buying behavior? William?

[0:12:36] WC: I think, and this is a great topic, and this is a great conversation to have. I think some of the statistics are a little skewed from the standpoint of up 805%, because you didn't have a chatbot on walmart.com. You didn't have a chatbot on amazon.com last year around this time. AI chatbots have become extremely more prominent on most e-commerce and online ordering platforms.

[0:13:04] DC: I just want to stop you there.

[0:13:04] WC: It worked there last year.

[0:13:06] DC: Wait, you're absolutely right, but that's actually not the right comparison. The right comparison is that 805% represents the increase of people who were using chat tools to find items and then clicking over from there.

[0:13:23] WC: Well, the way I read the statistics is that it's accounting for both the Amazon and the Walmart chatbots. It's not someone using ChatGPT and saying, "Hey, find all my stuff for me." Now these tools are available on these prominent shopping websites. The tool is driving some of these numbers, and the AI is driving some of these numbers. Again, the massive increase isn't that like, everyone now is like, 805% increase. It's like, "Hey, I'm going to now use AI to do my shopping." It's that they stumbled across this thing that's now available on this website that they were already using.

[0:14:00] DC: Okay. But I use –

[0:14:00] WC: That's not to say that it doesn't make a difference. That's not to say that it doesn't make a difference. It makes a huge difference.

[0:14:05] DC: The reason why I thought of it the other way is because I use ChatGPT literally to find some gifts for people.

[0:14:12] WC: I do as well. I use AI in that way. I'm in the process of building a hot rod. I used AI to build the shopping list for the interior of my car, right? Like, oh, you need this product. You need this. You need this. You need this. Oh, I don't like that. I need this. I used it for Mobi. It helped me identify certain things and certain components that we needed for Mobi. When I ran into conflicts or issues, it would help me troubleshoot that, and so forth. Yes, absolutely. That is being used. Again, these massive increases in percentages are coming from these tools now being available through platforms that they were not available from before.

[0:14:52] DC: Yeah, I agree.

[0:14:53] WC: Even if it was the number of people that were using ChatGPT to figure out anything last year was like 12? It wasn't that low, but it was still –

[0:15:04] DC: No, 100%.

[0:15:06] WC: It exponentially exploded. The conversation comes is, how as printers do we get involved? How do we get to participate in this process, right? You said something before we jumped on about how the fear is, is that well, now if everybody's doing these chatbots, direct mail is going to go out the window. If I could spend money on an AI thing, versus spending money on direct mail, I'm going to spend money on my AI. This is the worry. This is the fear, right?

From the standpoint of framing it a different way, is that if Amazon and Walmart – It's Amazon and Walmart, they're going to do what they're going to do, right? Those are the big dogs. When you're talking about your local boutiques, or your my type of client, right, which is generally local business, or even medium to small business, and how does that interact for them? Say, I have a huge veterinary client, right? We do a huge direct mail campaign for them at the end of every year based around dental. I don't think that they've adopted any AI to incorporate within their online ecosystem. Let's say, for example, that they did, right? That they had a chatbot where they could engage and ask questions about dental care for their dog or dental care for their cat. How do you make them aware of that? How do you make your patients, or your patient's parents, because they're dogs and cats, aware of the chatbot, or aware of the AI tool? Signs up in your veterinary office, posters. Again, a direct mail campaign. You can send out direct mail with a QR code that drives people to the tool.

[0:16:45] DC: Okay, but you're getting ahead for a second here. Again, AI-driven retail traffic is sending people to those sites. They don't measure traffic. Retail traffic inside a site, those are page views. That is something different. I agree with what you're saying. What I would say is it's not a fear of direct mail going away. It's a couple of things. A fear of some of that, not even fear. It's a strategy to prevent the bleeding of, we don't need to do print during the holiday, because we're just going to make sure that somehow the miracle we're going to get our website, so that AI recognizes that we have these things, and we're just going to rely on people searching for green shoes to find us.

I'm not saying that that is a great strategy, but I cannot imagine that some of those stores read these statistics, who are already saying to themselves, "What do I need print for? I can send out digital marketing, right?" This is just going to strengthen, in my opinion, the move away from using print, although I agree with what you're saying, and the next question is going to cover how. Jamie, first I want to know, how do you change how you speak to customers that have been doing holiday marketing through print, who might now want to say, "You know what? We're just going to focus on some banner ads, because everybody's shopping online, or we're going to make a page that is so strategically worded for AI to find us that we don't need to spend the money on sending a postcard to a random person in a house, through every door, direct mail."

[0:18:34] JM: I'm going to remind them over the years where people decided they weren't doing catalogs anymore, because people were just going to find them through their website and their sales went down, that their sales went back up when they started doing their catalogs and niche catalogs again and saying, yes, this AI is going to be great for you. But somebody needs to teach the customer about the AI, and the best way to do that is to get in front of them with your catalog, with your postcard, with your other piece, and say, "Hey, we have a new go bot that's going to help you shop. But hey, here's our catalog. You can also scan this QR code." Hopefully, they'll make it a dynamic QR code, which just stays within their business and will show them their store and everything else. You just have to have that conversation. This has happened before, people went away, and then they came back in droves, because it didn't go as well as they planned, or things went south, and they didn't have as much shopping they thought they were going to have, just because they had some pop-up ads.

Because I know for one thing, that my pop-up blocker's on and I'm not looking for pop-up ads, and hey, but that's the conversation to have is just make sure they're aware of, hey, when print goes away, so does some of the sales, and those sales do add up. You might want to be covered on all your bases, even though you've got this cool, shiny new thing that everybody's starting to learn about, not everybody likes it. You're going to lose that part of the market. Let's keep everything coming and keep everything working, and then show it off, but then show it off in a way that people can learn about it in their own speed, and then go from there.

[0:20:05] DC: Yeah, to your point, I got an Amazon catalog in the mail yesterday. Even they are investing in at least getting people over, and then what's he called? Rufus? Their new –

[0:20:16] WC: Rufus. Yeah.

[0:20:17] DC: Rufus. Lovely. Rufus can help you. He did help me the other day. Before we got on the podcast, I tried it, and it found my stepfather a present in three seconds, and I was like, it was perfect. Rufus gets me. Okay, which parts of the customer experience are strengthened by print, especially as AI takes over more of the buying journey in that funnel?

[0:20:44] WC: This goes back to what I was talking about of how you incorporate print into the process of engaging with the AI, right? If you're online and you're being engaged through a pop-up ad, right, then there's no print involved there, right? Again, I don't know about you guys, but I get hit with so many advertisements on everything that I look at on my phone. Every time that I open my phone, it's like ADD on steroids and crack. It's just a constant bombardment of advertisements to the point that it's –

[0:21:21] DC: What are you that steroids and crack are showing up in these ads?

[0:21:23] WC: No, not actual – advertisements for steroids and crack. Advertisements on steroids and crack.

[0:21:29] DC: No, I know. But I just thought I'd say that.

[0:21:31] WC: It was funny, though. It works. No, you're just completely inundated in any screen that you turn on, whether it's even your TV, but your phone, the thing that we're attached to now, or your device is a constant just a constant beratement of advertisements. That's where things lead down, right? You search a certain thing, and then you looked up that thing, and now you just see ads everywhere for that thing. Everybody's hip to it now. It's almost mind-numbing, to the point that it turns you off. Like, ugh.

Where if the journey begins in the real world that takes you into that, and you can create some an experience, or engagement in reality that takes you into something that you're engaging with on your device, or your computer, or your television, or whatever it is that's AI related, it's still happened in the tangible world, right? That can be done, again with signage, with catalogs, with

direct mail, with, I mean, gorilla stickers that you put on trash cans, around big events. Whatever tickles your fancy.

[0:22:36] WC: Allegedly.

[0:22:39] WC: It's still part of the same conversation of, "Oh, no. We've got email now. Now there's email. What's going to happen to printing?" We're in the same sky as falling Chicken Little situation, where if you look at it from the right perspective, it's an opportunity, it's not something to be afraid of.

[0:22:59] DC: I don't disagree with that. Jamie, I have my thoughts. What are your thoughts?

[0:23:04] JM: Yes, it's all taken in little chunks. Yes, this guy's not following all that. Kind of what I said in the first question is that you've got to prove that, hey, print is part of this whole process. It's better if we're there to help you along. It's better if you get your word out and show people what you're going to do and describe it and say, this is not something to be afraid of. This is our new, cool thing. Print helps you be more in front of that and helps you lead the way and makes you more of an expert saying, "Hey, this is cool. Our Rufus bot will take you anywhere you want and get your dad this cool techno thing for in three seconds." Don't worry about shopping for people that you're not sure of.

Add some information in there, like how old they are, what they like, and you'll get 10 things to choose from in under a minute. I don't know, but print can definitely show you that. I still think it's the way to go. It's the conversations you have with your customers. I know some of the conversations I'm going to have with my customers, because a lot of things we do are in-store. People want to touch it, feel it. The things that we make are actually there, that people aren't going online. These big companies still want you to go into the store, and they're still – that sooner or later is going to go to AI. It's like, how do we still get people to go to actually try the headphones out, or try this? That's the part that worries me later down the road.

[0:24:22] DC: That's a perfect point, because this is where this was leading to as well. But okay, even if it was just Walmart, nobody was in there. They were home buying things from their house.

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[0:24:36] 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.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

[0:25:22] DC: Okay. I think that if we look at it as that AI is definitely not human, and everybody knows it's not human, and that is fine. We know that it's not. Print is going to bring that humanness back into things. It's trust. I say this all the time. I'm not clicking on random links. I'm not clicking on banner ads, but if I got a lovely postcard from Walmart telling me that, "Hey, we have this new way, a shopping bot that can help you find things, or let you know which location this thing you're looking for is at." If it's not somewhere that you need it to be, or whatever else it might be.

I also think that storytelling is going to take place through print, about this item that was made by some village in Chile, and buying this candle supports people, whatever it might be. AI is not going to give you that background, unless it is specifically built for that product, like the digital link QR codes that I will include a link to that webinar in here, because everybody should know what that is.

The other thing is that there's opportunities for print after things are purchased. Okay, I'm ordering on a screen, but the thing is coming to my house. What's in that box? There is a way to customer loyalty, provide something for customer loyalty, or repeat ordering somehow, making it simple, putting the message about Pat McGrew got me coffee of the month. That's what she gets me every year for Christmas, and my bag of coffee comes with a postcard from the country that it's from about the beans and how they grow and how to make it, and what it pairs with, and

the notes that you can – and it's a lovely experience in there. AI is not going to give any human that experience.

Then the last thing is that if I think about the way I used the tool, I had a specific thing in mind, and I searched it and I found it and I got it in two seconds, versus scrolling through a million different items to find something. I'm not saying I wasn't lucky with my search, but whatever it was, it literally took me two minutes or less. What the opportunity now is, is for whatever company I bought that for, to put a catalog in the bag, to help me, people who bought this have also bought these five different things. Now scan the QR code, and here's a discount to go right to the page and purchase it. I think that print can strengthen this.

If you are a printer, or a marketer and your customers are coming to you and saying, “We want to take some of that upfront holiday marketing money to try to drive people to the store, or tell them about sales, or anything like that,” we're going to cut some of that, because we want to spend it on, again, making our websites friendlier to AI search engines to find the products that we sell in there. That's when I would say, hold on a second, before you invest a lot in that, let's talk about, are you just looking for someone to purchase something once from you, or are you looking to create a relationship with this customer? If you are, let me tell you why print is the way to go. Discuss.

[0:28:54] WC: No, I completely agree. It's the same conversation, the same beat that we're on, of AI isn't going to take the place of certain elements of the shopping experience. It's going to take the place of some, but it's not going to take the place of all. Printing is still very much going to be important in that process and in that relationship. Again, the question: do you want to do a sale and be done, or do you want to build a relationship with this consumer and continue to do business with them and have them continue to order? AI probably isn't going to do that for you. At least not yet. There might be a reach out and touch someone AI that comes along in the not-so-distant future. Even if that were the case, it still couldn't take the place of print.

I think that this is all still very new, and it's not a simple answer. I think that we are going to continue to learn and evolve in this industry on where we fit in with the AI dynamic and the AI process. Again, it's going to continue to evolve as this industry always does. I'm excited for it,

and I use it myself as a consumer, and I've used it as part of my business. I haven't really used it, and how I interact with my customers, because I don't interact with customers anymore.

[0:30:17] DC: We lost him, Jamie. We had him for a year, and now he's gone again.

[0:30:21] JM: We had him on somewhere.

[0:30:24] WC: No more customers for me.

[0:30:25] DC: We're going to have to get him back.

[0:30:27] JM: Will has got his own bot. Will bot.

[0:30:29] DC: Will bot.

[0:30:30] JM: Will guide you through his –

[0:30:32] WC: That's what I need. I need a Will bot. I need to make an AI version of me and interact with the customers.

[0:30:37] DC: I want a Will bot. It would be very handy, just saying. Jamie, I'm assuming you agree with everything I just said, because we have a hive mind.

[0:30:46] JM: I have a story to sell, just from a one, my shopping experience recently. Like I said, print is definitely going to help with me returning as a customer. Everybody knows how to shop on Amazon, or whatever. You get a box, sometimes it's way too big. It's got one piece in there. It's in some bubble wrap, and you're like, "Okay, great. This is awesome." It did what I did. I needed to get it right away. I needed a new phone protector, or whatever. It came over. But I was looking for shocks for my wife's truck, and she needed them a couple of weeks ago. We're like, we need to get them done. We need this. I went through all the Amazon sites and I'm going through it, and then I went, why don't I just go to the Summit Racing? Will probably just heard of them. He's working on his car.

I'm like, I used them all the time. I haven't used them forever. Found them. They were there. They had them at good price. They sent them to me. They came in the box. It came with a catalog with stuff that I would never even think of before. Some of it was toys, but more to adult full stuff like, why don't I have one of these? It made it so much better. There were stickers in there. There was other stuff. I'm like, I will use them again because of that, and I will go look through the catalog and find out what else I need. Probably be this week or next week, but I will have it. I know the catalog had toys in it. My kids were looking at it. You know they're older. They're like, "Hey, can we get this race car set, like slot cars?" I'm like, "No, that's what I want. You're not getting that." No, but stuff like that.

It definitely helps the experience. Print is definitely going to help you make you come back to that person. Like you said, it's definitely – it wasn't a thank you card, which would even be better. Like, "Thanks for buying from us. We hope you return. Here's a QR code for 10% off your next thing, or 5% or whatever." It would definitely help. I think I'd rather get that than just an empty box with something in it, and there's no – I could have gone anywhere and got it.

[0:32:24] DC: Yeah. Totally.

[0:32:26] JM: I think that definitely helps. If customers are looking for that, like, hey, make it an experience. Don't just make it, just fill that need and whatever. Have them come back. I guess I'm agreeing with you, Deborah, with my short little story, but –

[0:32:37] DC: Of course, you are.

[0:32:38] JM: – I believe that's what's going to happen. That's where I would stop.

[0:32:41] WC: I got to say that we've gotten catalogs from Target, toy catalogs from Target, and Amazon. My children go through the roof when those things arrive. Because then, they start flipping through and circling everything that they want, which is basically everything in the entire book. Again, it's that engagement with that piece of mail and that excitement of like, they go on target.com. Both of them do. They're on the websites.

[0:33:07] DC: Really?

[0:33:08] WC: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. They have iPads, and they shop. One of Jackson's favorite activities is to send us text messages to links to Amazon pages of things that he wants. His Christmas list is a million times long.

[0:33:19] JM: Just like my kids.

[0:33:20] WC: But he gets nowhere near as excited by that as he does by that catalog when it comes in the mail.

[0:33:26] DC: It's incredible. I will add a story to this. Every year, around the beginning of November, I buy Girls Who Print awards. I get them every year from Crown Awards. They do not bother me at all during the year. About the middle of October, I got a Crown Awards catalog. They know exactly when I buy awards, so they hit me right when it was the time I was about to do it. Now, I will say that I knew I had to get them, but I was really impressed by the timing of this mark. I have not gotten one catalog from them at all during the year. It came at the perfect time.

Of course, I went on, and I placed my orders online. That was the whole point. It is a trigger. Everybody knows they have holiday shopping, but maybe something comes in the mail. It's like, that's actually a perfect gift for this person. I never would have even thought. That's the part that print delivers is the discovery portion. Because like I said, if you're searching for something specific, you're just weeding the other items, or noise at that point. Instead of being related to what, like the best bike, other people have bought this, or have bought this. Okay, I'm going to go on to the next question, unless anybody wants to add anything on that. Jamie?

[0:34:50] JM: Adding on to that, if these companies with their AI bots, or whatever are finding out that things are working well and whatever, that people didn't buy certain things this year, that hopefully, they'll be the one sending print next year going, "Hey, by the way, you were looking last year, we're still here. Here's a couple of ideas for you for this year." If it was in print, people might be like, "Yeah, I'm going to go back and look at that, because I didn't get it fulfilled last year."

[0:35:14] DC: That's a great idea.

[0:35:15] WC: Only thing that I want to add is that next year, I'm going to steal the business from Crown, because I want to make your awards.

[SPONSOR MESSAGE]

[0:35:24] 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]

[0:35:58] DC: It's so funny, because I said to Pat McGrew, I was like, I think Will can make awards. Next year, you 100%.

[0:36:05] WC: Well, we will be able to. I can't now. But with the new laser and the new flatbed, then we can.

[0:36:08] DC: The new laser. Okay, I'm in a thousand percent. I just need acrylic and I'm sure you could do that.

[0:36:12] JM: A new Xante thing. That was really cool. That's the one you got, right?

[0:36:15] WC: Yeah. A Xante. Yeah.

[0:36:16] DC: Very, very cool. Okay. How can printers show the world, their customers that they understand, or at least start talking about this new AI-first sales funnel, and are there products, or packages that they can develop that support the stores, or the brands in this AI-driven world? Now this is a very big question, so I don't even know where to start, but we'll start with Will. Oh, actually, Jamie, put his hand up. Let him go.

[0:36:53] WC: Go. You go, Jamie.

[0:36:55] JM: Okay. Kind of what I just let off with. Like, we can talk to the brands and say, “Hey, you experimented with this in 2025. Hey, and where did it go? You had a success with this. This year, you should reach out to those people that shop with you and send them something, and make that so much better this year.” In 2026, all those people that you have their information, they bought from you, now send them something. Send them a coupon, send them a small catalog. Say, “Hey, our bot is still here to help you. Here's the things that we can help you with, and we look forward to just shopping with you in 2026,” and something like that. I think we can tell our customers, like, this is what you should be looking to do to strengthen that bond between you and the customer, and print will help you do that. I think that'll help.

[0:37:37] WC: Well, I think giving names to AI, like Rufus, is part of making people feel more comfortable. We shouldn't call them bots. I feel like it's going to become offensive at one point. Like, “Oh, don't call me a bot.” Actually, I don't know. I don't know the answer to this one from a product or package standpoint. You've got a POS display. It really depends on the environment. I don't think that there's an out-of-the-box package that you can say, “Hey, this is great for every business, and this is how you're going to use these products to enhance AI.”

I think having that as part of the conversation when you are talking to high-level clients is going to make you stand out, right? Because we all know that most of the bigger clients are, you're not exclusive, right? And you shouldn't get mad if you're not. You're not exclusive with the big clients that you're interacting with. If you can incorporate AI into your plan, or your idea, or your package in some way, or enhance AI, or just being knowledgeable about it, I think that's going to be the most important thing.

[0:38:44] DC: Yeah. Jamie, I think you're really on to something about the data that you can extrapolate from the search results, people coming from search. Which one are they coming from? Are they coming from Gemini? Are they coming from perplexity? Where are they coming from? If it's even possible to track something like that. What are they buying, obviously? Then look at it like anything else. Traffic on a website. Okay, all these people bought a lamp, but they didn't buy the table. Maybe there's a way to now circle back to those people and say, “Hey, all of

these tables go with the lamp you bought. Next year, get the table.” Or do something, like pick a pair. So, don't just get one. Get the two things that you need. Something like that.

I think that what you said, Will, is also really important, because there still has to be a way that people are able to understand that if they're looking for a personal shopping experience and they want a Rufus, or a whatever to help them, there's still a moment to educate people about that through print. Also, on websites and stuff, it's a great time for a content strategy. Because now, don't you want to be found as someone who understands how to market in an AI environment? Maybe just give some tips for, hey, if you're a store, more people are searching for things through AI. Here are some tips on how to strengthen your chance of getting organic results, depending upon what it is. You're probably not going to get it for an Apple computer, but you might get it for something very specific in a very specific neighborhood, right, Will?

[0:40:39] WC: Apple computer is actually a great example, because I was about to spring for we had old iMacs for all the designers, and they were so old to the point that we couldn't update the software on them. Adobe was to the point that we couldn't run the most recent version of Adobe, so I had to buy new Macs. I put it into ChatGPT, and I said, look, this is what we need and I specked out all the computers on apple.com, but then I found refurbished ones, so they were only two-years-old, but they were refurbished on Amazon. Then I put that, and I was like, look, so this is what we're looking at from apple.com. This is what we're looking at buying from Amazon. This is the amount of savings. What are the pros and the cons here, right?

Really, the life expectancy we were only losing maybe two years, but we saved 60% in the actual overall cost. It's more than just, “Hey, help me buy this thing.” It actually helps you with critical thinking, and it can go beyond what your brain capacity can do, at least in a short amount of time, and help you make buying decisions, and hey, help you save money and help you make a more effective buy. It's not just about Christmas shopping. It's about being strategic and how you spend your dollars and making your dollars go further in various different ways.

[0:42:00] DC: Yeah, definitely. Jamie?

[0:42:02] JM: Yeah, that's a perfect example, Will. I don't even have anything to add to that. I was like, that's perfect. Because I mean, I don't use it for shopping that much. I'm going to look

at it more now. Yeah. I mean, there's other things I use it to help with. But yeah, I have not – like you said, when we're online or whatever, I see something pop, I'm like, “No, I don't need that.” I know what I'm looking for already. I don't need your help. But yeah, maybe I do.

[0:42:22] DC: Yeah. I mean, it's also, sometimes I'll go in there and say, “This is what I'm looking for, but I don't want to buy it online. Tell me if there's anybody, like a local store that has this.”

[0:42:31] JM: That will be perfect.

[0:42:32] DC: And I'll go and get it. I have to say most of the time, it's not something you could just go get somewhere. But look, there is no doubt that AI is here to stay and that it's going to disrupt things. I think it's all positive, but anything that takes money out of the marketing budget for print, it's not necessarily a bad thing, as long as you can stay in the game by saying, “Okay, if these are the new rules, no problem.” I'm not going to fight with people about, “Well, they just shouldn't use AI, and they should use print instead, and they shouldn't use SEO.” All those people. Instead, just say, okay, if this is the world that it is, how can I be the person that positions print in the most valuable way that people understand that if you want a human experience, if you want to create a relationship, a long-term relationship, if you want to create loyalty and referrals, the best way in my opinion is to do that through print.

Thank you guys so much for an awesome conversation. I'm actually going to put the links to the articles that I read for this podcast in the show notes, so everybody can see what we were all talking about. I hope that at least this conversation is making people just pause and say, maybe this is something we should discuss at our next team meeting and see if we can come up with something spectacular. If you do, please share it with us. Until next time, everybody, print long and prosper.

[END OF EPISODE]

[0:44:11] 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:

AP News – AI-assisted shopping is the talk of the holiday shopping season: <https://apnews.com/article/artificial-intelligence-holiday-shopping-chatgpt-0722dce44b4a479ec4ce476bbd15dfa9>

Reuters – AI helps drive record \$11.8 billion in Black Friday online spending: <https://www.reuters.com/business/retail-consumer/us-consumers-spent-118-billion-black-friday-says-adobe-analytics-2025-11-29/>

LinkedIn News – AI likely to drive record Cyber Monday sales: <https://www.linkedin.com/news/story/ai-likely-to-drive-record-cyber-monday-sales-6781852/>

Girls Who Print Conference Replays: <https://www.youtube.com/@GirlsWhoPrintGlobal>

PrintFM: <https://printfmradio.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/>

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

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

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

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

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

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