[INTRODUCTION]

[0:00:02] NT: Does your printing need some passion?

[0:00:05] DD: Your design some dynamic dimension?

[0:00:08] DC: Are you stuck in a CMYK rut?

[0:00:11] DD: I'm David Drucker, founder and CEO of highresolution printing and packaging.

[0:00:16] NT: I'm Noel Tocci, founder of Tocci Made Bespoke Print Consulting.

[0:00:20] DC: And I'm Deborah Corn, the Intergalactic Ambassador to the Printerverse. Welcome to Making It With Print, the podcast that takes a deep dive into the conception, creation, and production of amazing printed products.

[0:00:35] DD: If you can dream it, you can make it.

[EPISODE]

[0:00:38] DC: Hey everybody, welcome to Podcasts From the Printerverse. This is Deborah Corn, your Intergalactic Ambassador. And I am so excited to say this. I am here with the Making It With Print podcast crew. David Drucker, the guru of printing from High Resolution Print and Packaging. And Noel Tocci, the founder of Tocci Made. Hello, gentlemen. It has been a while.

[0:01:04] NT: Yes.

[0:01:05] DD: Hey, how are you doing? And I have certainly gone through withdrawals, not meeting with you two.

[0:01:12] NT: Same here. Good to see you both.

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[0:01:12] DD: You know, what I learned from each podcast that we do is a little bit more about your perspective at Noel's. And it has me thinking and it has me stop. And I tried to use that inspiration, the pieces of it, in moving forward with what I'm doing as well. And I have to tell you, I thought I knew it all. And I most certainly don't. For you two, I greatly appreciate the opportunity and thank you.

[0:01:40] NT: I feel the same way. Yeah, it's amazing. Because when you do what we do, David, you're like, "Yeah, yeah, I don't want to hear. I know what I'm doing." But then when I stop to listen, I go, "Oh, whoa, yeah, potato, potato, that might work." So it's great. And you're such a good yin to our yang, Deborah, because you've been on the other side, right?

[0:02:00] DC: Yeah.

[0:02:01] NT: And we don't get an honest perspective there all the time.

[0:02:04] DC: Well, I mean – and that goes both ways, by the way. Of course, we can do it. No, we can't do it. But we're just going to say we can. We haven't done a podcast in a minute. And I still share all of our content online. And I've been noticing a lot of new people engaging with it and writing comments and really appreciating that we're sharing under the hood of really how creative and craft of print gets manifested out in the world. And that is the basis of our conversation today, which I'm titling this podcast Now Trending**:** Human Print and Design Craftsmanship. And there is a reason for it.

A few weeks ago was International Print Day, and every year for, I don't know, the last 10 or 11 years, my friend and owner of Designs That Rock, Craig Bower, designed the International Print Day poster that we provide a PDF file for. And anybody in the world, literally, can grab the file and print the posters if they want to give them out or put them up in their print shop.

And this year, for the first time ever, the comments about the poster were all focused on the fact that everyone recognized that a human had designed it. I never really thought about that because he always designs the posters. But seeing the comments from people about they were so happy that a human actually did the International Print Day poster and took the care to communicate what they wanted to communicate through the typography and the colors and the

way that – the trends of big letters and small letters and everything that he did to bring that visual to life was recognized by so many people.

And it was really surprising to me that the reaction that people had, like, "Oh my God, thank God a human did this." And I'm telling you right after that, I started seeing created by human credits on things, on videos, on animations. It would be like this simulation was created by a human. I see it on social media posts where there's art and it'll say this art was created by a human. So it just is becoming a trending topic.

And then of course, I went out to Mr. Google and discovered that human craftsmanship is a 2020 design trend. It's starting now, but certainly as we move into next year, it is becoming more prevalent. And brands are actually embracing this because of the AI slop and they do not want to be associated with anything like that. I don't want to say that we're returning to some sort of analog, antiquated technology, but craftsmanship, the things that have imperfections in them and not creating backgrounds in design tools, but going back to scanning things.

I mean, I worked with an art director who wanted to use bullet holes in art and he didn't know how to make it on Photoshop or whatever it was. Nobody was going to spend the time doing that. So he went to the country with a gun and he shot up a bunch of paper and we scanned in the bullet holes. And today it would take two seconds for AI to do something like that, but would it have the same effect?

What advice do you have for printers and paper companies looking to become a source of creative inspiration while human print and design craftsmanship is trending now and certainly will be next year. David?

[0:06:18] DD: It's kind of my philosophy of business, of how I want to do business. I mean, we have brochures and the brochures are standard. They took a while to set up and they come in every quarter and it's repeat work. And those are standard and those are not going to really change. But when it comes into somebody who I'm speaking to that's fairly new, I want to understand what their design is about.

To have a design that has emotion to it and meaning to it, you can't do that with AI. And a matter of fact, we're recognizing AI left and right. We're recognizing the written word of AI, how many people are using that, and to decipher through that as to what's real and what's not real. AI is real, but it isn't the art of writing, nor is it the art of printing.

What I will do is I will tell the person, the designer, the agency that I'm working with my idea of what I'd like to do, "Hey, here's a red paper. I think your cover would look a lot better using the red paper and we can use this technique." Now they might say, "No, we can't do that. That isn't in our budget," so on and so forth, which is okay. But they will know that I do have the mind to present to them something different, and therefore they'll call on me the next time and say, "Hey, we're putting together this design. What do you think?"

Now let's go back to a motion of a piece. You get a piece, a single piece. You open it up out of your mail. You take it out and you sit with it, and you look at it, and you read it, and you feel it, and you see how it turns and how the pages turn, and what they use for binding. And that is the human quality of producing something that looks more like a piece of art.

[0:08:13] DC: David, I want to ask you a follow-up to something you mentioned about recommending the red paper to your customer. Would it have had the same results if they printed red on a white paper? Why wasn't that, "Oh, okay, well, we could do it this way if you really wanted to?"

[0:08:30] DD: Well, if you're quoting CMYK or however you quote it, then you can use that. But the little thing is the white edge that's on the paper and seeing it. To me, you fudged it. All right?

[0:08:43] DC: Yeah. What about the backside? You could print the other side, too.

[0:08:46] DD: Right. Well, also, a lot of these uncoated papers have a texture to it, have a feel. I mean, they could be smooth, but to your fingertips when you're holding it, have a different feel to them than printing red or whatever color on top of that. That's part of that emotion I was talking about is that paper tells the beginning of a story. What's on the inside is the story. But let's whet everybody's appetite and get that going. And it isn't that much of a difference in pricing pending on the technique that you're using.

But let's say that you were going to paint it red and then you're going to put a lamination on it, so it does have a tactile feel. Let's back up a little bit and remove and just do the red by itself with some simple printing on it. Maybe it'll balance itself out at that point price-wise. But if you don't know, you don't know.

[0:09:45] NT: Thousand percent.

[BREAK]

[0:09:47] DC: Leadership isn't a title, it's a journey. And Girls Who Print membership supports you at every step, with resources to grow your skills, boost your confidence, and expand your professional network. Through our member-exclusive programs, you'll tap into industry expertise, connect with mentors and peers, and access opportunities that open doors you didn't even know existed. Whether you want to lead a team, launch a business, or explore new possibilities in print, we are here to help you do it with community, not competition. Join Girls Who Print today and take the lead in your career. To learn more about our comprehensive membership program, visit girlswhoprint.org. Empower long and prosper.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

[0:10:38] DC: Noel, what advice do you have for printers and paper companies looking to become a source of creative inspiration while human print and design craftsmanship is trending?

[0:10:51] NT: I'm going to dig deep. And I love and I agree with everything David said. And I loved your question as well, Deborah. But I'm going to say, especially printers and paper companies, focus on being able to and encourage actual art supply to you, not necessarily digital files, right? There might be a piece of art. I'd like that piece of art to shoot old school on a camera with a – you know what I mean? And go back. Because you'll capture some of the shape and the rawness and the analog quality of it. And then you're still going to use all the technology because you're moving to probably a $2 or $3 million press if you're printing a book. But that just allows you to do what Gutenberg did, faster, better, sharper, cleaner. But the assets are what the job is about. And you don't know it's not right until you know, like David just said.

I'm a book guy, right? I love to go in all the big bookstores, the TASCHENs, and they're amazing. They have crazy, crazy books and content, right? They'll pay somebody millions of dollars to tell their story and show their art. And then, well, the book's got to sell. It's got to have 30% profit, 40% profit. So everybody's got to make money. So we're going to do it this way. Not that it's bad to do it overseas, but you're dumbing it down. And I always think, why would you do that with all of this beautiful art? Capture it and reproduce it.

People go, "This book's gorgeous." If I did the same book, I'm not doing it better, I'm doing it with the actual art and the story and the intent of the artists who took a brushstroke or built a collage or something, you can capture those things for free. And the irony is technology is so good now that I can even capture them better. That's the irony.

In the 60s, they would try to make these gorgeous books and stuff, and they just didn't – the cameras weren't as good. It was photo mechanical. There was film. It was burning. 1001, 1002, to a metal plate. It's all done with the lasers and everything now. So you've got to go a step back. And I think that's up to somebody, the artist, the design team, a David or myself to say, "This is great. You've shown me these digital images on a screen. Where's the original art? What's the intent?" And then you do – sorry. I never get fired up. I apologize. And then you –

[0:13:21] DC: You always get fired up.

[0:13:23] NT: You can't see my arms. I'm half French and half Italian. I either want to eat or wave my arms. No, you can't. And then what David said, the paper. And I love your question. But that's what's so funny. Client goes, "Oh, well, you're making something." They're thinking in their mind, "Oh, you're going to use red paper on the cover. Oh, that's going to be more expensive." Who said that? You might not be printing it. Everything is a process. If you're only buying paper and instead of printing it, maybe you're foil stamping it. It probably doesn't change things, but it changes things a ton in terms of haptics when your hands grab it, when you see it.

And you know what's beautiful? So many people are still making things like they push the button and now more than ever. And if you do these things with the materials and take a step back to what you've been supplied and try to get to their essence and then marry it to technology, which

will produce it even better, it'll just separate itself. And if the brand is such – then they can just stand there and go, "Yeah, that's us."

You know what I mean? When I see somebody grab a book or something else – I use my family. They don't know anything about what I do. And they might get something they're completely uninterested. They're like, "Well, what's that?" And they start rubbing it and they open it and I go, "Yeah. See? See?" You don't even know why you're enjoying it, partially because you're comparing it to most of what's out there, which is just like every – I don't get it. They go to a certain part and they stop.

And we have a saying we use, right? Start slow to finish fast. You might talk like – I can, and David can too, for an hour or two. Go, yeah, yeah. But wait, but where did this come from? Do you have the pictures? I see red everywhere. We put that in there and it is. It's nothing wrong with it. I can tell David does it. It's more like an interview. Hey, we have a job we want to show you. And they go, "This is what we're going to do." And you go, "Well, if they know what to do, then go somewhere else." But let me ask you some questions. And two hours later, it's like, "We can do that. We can do –" right? That's the same thing. And then you're creating something that is haptic, that is beautiful. But also, I think a novice just reads it as real, old school.

[0:15:35] DC: Absolutely. I mean, I remember in the advertising agencies –

[0:15:39] NT: David is laughing.

[0:15:40] DC: In the agencies, you had to get crafty because they wanted crazy things. And I recall one time we were doing something for a rodeo. There was a new cable channel coming that had all the rodeos on it. And well, there was no font that was distressed enough for this art director. He had to have his own. And how he created it was he started with – I think it was Impact or something like that, printed it out on the regular desktop printer, crumpled it and faxed it to himself. And he just kept doing that until it looked like something that no one had ever seen before.

And then there was actually a program called Fontographer. And you could send this thing to this company that could create a font out of this thing that he made. And that became the brand

font and no one else could use it because it was literally created from him deciding that there was nothing distressed enough and he needed his own font. And people don't do things like that anymore. Or do they?

[0:16:49] NT: Yeah, I have two things to interject. I had clients years ago, and I'll say it because it's so many years ago, Prudential. We're talking the late 80s. And a guy comes to me, they had presses at one time, they had their own print shop in New Jersey. And a guy calls me and an old guy missing a finger goes, "You got to take this job." I go, "Forgive me, but you're standing next to a $2 million press." He hands me the Bainbridge boards. That's how long ago. He goes, "Because this job's too stupid to print."

And I looked at it. The designers, they're out of their minds. I went up there. This is true. They were standing there. They're in the art gallery or whatever. They had a white seamless against the wall, like you'd put behind someone to photograph. They had buckets of plaster of Paris. They had rubber gloves on out of the hospital. They were squirting dye into the buckets, different colors. Then they were throwing the plaster of Paris at the white seamless. They shot it. Then they had the department, the mechanical department, make the rock from Prudential out of copper. And one of them almost got fired because they put it on a brand-new color copier. This is in the late 80s, copper on glass. And they were doing it. Then they put it into the file. Then they took the color. And that's what I mean. And I'm not saying you have to do that anymore. But it was the only way to do something like that.

And the other one really fast. I did something for the biggest law firms in the world are called White Shoe. It's a White Shoe law firm. And I deal with a lot of them. And they were doing something to recruit. But it's White Shoe. And we're sitting there thinking about it, talking about it. And well, wouldn't it be cool? Well, the cover's white. So we come up with a white – the old soft touch, not laminate, like the actual paper. I forget the name of it now. You know what I mean?

[0:18:35] DD: White touché.

[0:18:35] NT: That's it. White touché. And the guy goes, "Well, it'd be nice to have shoelaces." I go, "Where am I getting a shoelace," right? Guy goes, "Wait here." I'm talking to the woman.

The guy comes back 10 minutes later. He took his shoelaces off. He went to a printer and he scanned them. He gave me the scan. I had a $500 copper dye register embossed dye made. I took all blank – what do you call it? Blind register embossed on the front cover of the touché. I have it to this day. People look at it and the shoelaces are like a half inch wide. We blew it up. That's what I mean. And not that you have to do that. I mean, if you could find a good shot of shoelaces or something.

[0:19:19] DC: But that's the point, Noel.

[0:19:20] NT: You wanted to make something different. They said, "This has to be tactile."

[0:19:24] DC: Yes.

[0:19:25] NT: It needs to be cool. We want to send the message without saying white shoe. You don't have to.

[0:19:31] DC: The point is that do people even realize that you can do things like that anymore?

[0:19:35] NT: No.

[0:19:36] DC: It's just like, "Oh, well, I'll either go to Adobe Stock or Shutterfly and I'll buy a photo of shoelaces, or I'll have AI make me some shoelaces." I really doubt that anybody's really investigating still photography these days, although I would hope that maybe they were. But that's the whole point here, that being just crafty and figuring out how to do things in a creative way that's authentic, because those shoelaces can never be duplicated because that was a specific moment in time. Those were his shoelaces on that machine. It's not a stock art.

I mean, if you look at printers' websites, you see the same two pictures of these two people looking at a proof. Exactly. David's doing the mannequin face. I see them all over the place. Just the fact of that, that I can recognize that, and that's not even AI. That's just stock art. But I was really excited to have this conversation with you guys because you understand where the actual craft and craftiness of being creative is there. But I don't think that people are scrappy like that anymore.

[0:20:56] NT: They have to push each other. In that conversation, there were three people.

[0:20:59] DC: Yeah, I want to remind them.

[0:21:01] NT: It was the shoelace guy that was the woman who goes, "It's got to be something. Maybe it's you." And I'm going, "Well, wait, I got this paper." You drive each other. It's no different than four people deciding where they're going to eat dinner. I don't know. They're all looking at their phones. Just pick one. I'll eat it. No, it's, "Wait a minute. I feel like French. I feel like Chinese." And now you're all going to end up where you want to be.

People don't talk. They text each other and they don't talk. And something will strike someone's ears. You'll hear something. Like the guy heard shoelaces. I'm like, "Where the hell am I going to get those?" He goes, "I know where." That's what I mean. And that's part of it. With this going to just what's available, they stop communicating. It's like, well, just go ahead.

[BREAK]

[0:21:44] NT: Hi, I'm Noel Tocci, founder of Tocci Made. The printing industry has changed quite a bit, and I've learned a lot since I joined my brother's small but mighty printing company in Newark, New Jersey, back in 1980. Over the years, while focusing primarily in the design and creative communities, I've come to understand and believe wholeheartedly that powerful, effective, and impactful print communication always lives at the intersection of great design, appropriate materials, and thoughtfully curated execution. Making beautiful work is a journey from concept, or idea, to desired result. Tocci Made is here to help you find your way and create work that is not only effective but something you can be proud of. Head to toccimade.com and find out how we can help.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

[0:22:30] DC: I think people stop thinking creatively in a lot of ways.

[0:22:35] NT: They did. They don't push.

[0:22:37] DC: Well, that's exactly right. And I have to say that the printing industry has played a role in that. Meaning that if you look at the talk tracks for the last – going back 10 years, but let's just focus on the post pandemic years, less human touches, less human touches, more automation. You don't need to talk to us. And I'm not saying anything is wrong with that, but now it is – I don't want to say that it's a detriment, but now it is something that the world is looking at as go slow to go fast.

I actually don't want to have AI create those plaster textures and shadows because it can't, because it can't randomly do something like that the same way taking a photo in a conference room. And I've been there. We put an 800-pound rock on a conference room table. So I know exactly.

[0:23:39] NT: That's what you had to do.

[0:23:40] DC: Yeah. I mean, we also had someone who carves gravestones, carve a saying into the rock. That was a whole other thing. But there's something that is now valuable in the fact that people have spent time on it.

Now, on the printing side, that's a detriment. More time is not as lucrative for the printing side. But other end of it, I don't want to say cutting quarters, but using things that are already created and implementing them into your work is different than going on that photo shoot or having something still photography or throwing things – shooting bullets in paper or throwing plaster on a wall.

What I'm wondering is that is there a value to showing how you're going to do the work? I want to compare it to like when you're in school and you had a math test. If you got the answer right, fantastic. But if you got there the wrong way, you were still dinged for it, which is why the teachers wanted to see the work. How did you get there? And I'm thinking in this new trend situation that going back to conversations about how we're going to do this might be a good idea. Noel?

[0:25:10] NT: Memorializing it is good too. I have done a number of books where we have done photo shoots of the whole thing. And then at the end, it's eight minutes long with music. It's

beautiful. You see the guys on press. And it really brings people into it because they're holding this beautiful thing in their hands and they're not thinking about anything. But she generally starts with the author or the photographer who's talking about, "I had a dream," and this and that. And then you see the press going. I just think that that's after the fact or during the fact. But memorializing and celebrating the process I think is really important or a really good step. Now, you can't do that with everything.

But I think, too, if you introduce people to what's possible, it's like when you bring designers through any shop, they look and they go, "Whoa, oh, that machine does that? Oh." Now their brains start moving. "I could do that. Why wouldn't I? No one told me that. If this machine will do that, and I don't care if the machine does it. Let's go for it." I think introducing them to process and letting them know what's possible, not going wild.

But I want to say something too. You're still taking advantage of the speed and the technology once you go to press. Some people think, "Oh yeah, Tocci is like Van Gogh. He just spends all day with people standing there and three presses and charges." No, we do all of this nonsense waving my arms up front. But when it gets time to buy paper, make plates and put ink on paper, we use the technology and we run that press. I'll do a press proof so I know what I have. But once I print, I print as fast as not faster than anyone.

It doesn't mean it has to be expensive. Well, it's not free. It's the time, right? But what's wrong with communicating? You just might make that guy or woman understand really what's there. And I see David does that all the time. He wants to know, "Why are you doing that? What about this? What about –" that's great, because they don't have the answers. That's why they hired you, right? They know what they have to do. They know I got to make 1,500 brochures by this date and these are there. That's their logo. What's wrong with digging it out a little bit, right?

[0:27:23] DD: I'm going to take a step back. I was working with a nonprofit. They do a mailer for their gala. They do a thousand mailers, envelopes and reply cards and all that. And her budget is $2,000. And when I saw – which is nothing, right?

[0:27:39] DC: Yeah, I'm surprised you could do it for $2,000.

[0:27:42] DD: And when I saw it, I said, "This is an opportunity for me." I said, "I don't see this being done this way. I see it completely different, and it's going to cost more money." She said, "Well, we're kind of fixed. And we don't want other people to think that we're spending a lot more money because it's their money from the donations that come in." And I said, "All right. So anything that's over the two thousand dollars, I'll pay for. I'm going to donate that. That's my donation to your organization. But what I want to know is the response rate. Did you make more money? Because if you made more money, you got more in donations. Then next year, you might consider the next run for next year and what you're going to do." And you just put in their minds that creative edge, "What more can we do?" Their last question was people are going to be really upset that we spent this money. And I just said right on the back, "Printing donated by blah, blah, blah." Release yourself of that. So they got something. I'm still waiting for the stats to come back in, but I'm really hoping that it took them to the next level. And that's giving of ourselves financially, but we can give of ourselves through education. So let's go out and educate.

[0:28:58] DC: I mean, I understand it's a nonprofit, but I still say it's not what it costs. It's what it's worth. But I totally get that conversation. But you actually bring up something that I want to speak about because you ask them to put – I thought that was a brilliant solution, by the way. Just put that I donated it and everyone can stop talking about why you – did you spend an extra 20 cents on each of these, or two dollars, or whatever it might have been.

And as I mentioned in the beginning, I am seeing more created by humans on art and video and design. And I haven't seen it yet in a printed piece coming to my house. But we know that people pay more for things that say ‘Made in America’. We know that people pay more for things that say ‘100% cotton’. We know that people pay more for things that say ‘organically grown’. If it is designed by a human, if it is creatively steered through the process by a human, if it is printed by a craftsperson, pieces? And is it worth not only differentiating those printers and those designers, but the brand that might be using it? And is it worth more money? David?

[0:30:21] DD: It's in the eye of the beholder, really, and their wallet to have somebody understand the value of that. When you're working with accounting and accounting says, "You have to bring it back. And we can't afford it," that's the direction we have to go.

[0:30:36] DC: That's true, David, but I just want to say one other thing. The brands are doing it. The brands are out there saying we want to work with real designers, with real models, with real – these are real scenes. These are real photo shoots. This is someone actually who bought this car and is telling you something about this car. I, in my life, notice where the brands go, "So do I." I can't see how this is not going to trickle into everyday life.

I'm just saying, how do you differentiate then if you don't put more value on the human time? I know that there's value there because the industry has spent the last 10 years saying, "Humans cost too much money. Let's get the humans out of this process so we can keep the costs down."

[0:31:27] DD: Yeah. Well, there has to be a difference in pricing and doing this. And there is definitely a difference in reception, of receiving it, of reveal, of opening it, of understanding it. What's the story? What do I feel? What do I see? The model, the model standing there with the earring in her ear. Well, what kind of paper are we going to put that on? What is that difference in there? And is that difference noted?

And with everybody onboard, I have a client that I do very limited pieces for. 50 pieces, 40 pieces. We just did 15 pieces for her. She owns a fashion company. Okay? When I first sat down with her, I said, "Hey, listen, your printing's all over the place. You have nothing that's consistent." And our consistency can be. That could be the consistency, that your colors are correct. Not that your shopping bag doesn't match your tissue paper and things like that. But somebody here is not making the right decisions. And what we're going to do is going to cost more. But there's a lot more thought, human thought, that went into producing this.

We did, I don't know, 20, 25 pieces. And she handed them, handed one to an editor. And the editor got into Vogue. What do you think that did for her business? Right? And that is 100% human touch. Everything you just spoke about, the photography, the paper, the technique, the marketing, everything in that is a human touch. There isn't anything that is in there that is generated.

[0:33:13] NT: But it sets it apart from all the other collateral that's trying to do the same thing. Right. That's why the editor did that. Whoa. Right. It doesn't look like everything else. And it's more genuine. And maybe the editor understood their fashion line more and goes, "Wow, if their

collateral looks like this," whatever they're making, dresses, whatever it is, "they're really setting themselves apart." It's a way to differentiate yourself.

[0:33:44] DD: You're also telling a very different story. I mean, the story that's in the collateral is a story that's in the collateral. But you're also being white-gloved with what you're doing. Your tuxedo, the people who are receiving this stop at what they're doing.

[0:34:01] NT: They're interacting with it.

[0:34:03] DC: Yeah.

[BREAK]

[0:34:05] DD: Are you a frustrated creative and want a print partner that takes an artisan approach? Do you want to be inspired with techniques that will enhance your next printed or packaging production? Or are you a printer that has unique abilities and need a liaison to enhance your exposure? I'm David Drucker, owner of highresolution printing. I am an independent creative consultant with access to every printing technology out there.

I work hand in hand with creatives and printers, creating projects that are complex, and require meticulous detail and precision, from concept to completion. Want to see what I mean? Go to guruofprinting.com and get inspired.

[EPISODE CONTINUED]

[0:34:49] DC: In the simplest terms, working with you gentlemen could technically cost a client a little more money than if they went directly to a printer, but they're hiring you for all of that humanness and experience that you bring to the table. And that becomes a differentiator.

[0:35:08] NT: Well, the other part of it is printers want to make money, and I get it. They've got tens of thousands, $100,000 worth of notes. They got salary. They got a building. They got overhead. They want to run their machines. They don't want to talk to somebody for a month and figure it out.

Now, if you come there with something you've dreamt up and figured out that fits their equipment, they'll love you. You know what I mean? But that's not what they do. So somewhere it went away because the printer's like, "Forget about it." You know what I mean? Just give me perfect files. I'll print it. I'll make it beautiful. Whatever paper you want.

[0:35:42] DC: Sellable print.

[0:35:43] NT: Goodbye. They don't mind if they print something beautiful or something boring. And you can do both. But poop in, poop out, right? Excuse me.

[0:35:52] DC: He's saying excuse me for saying poop. There's a new one.

[0:35:55] NT: I'm trying to change.

[0:35:57] DD: It's a visual. It's a visual.

[0:35:58] DC: You said poop instead of shit. So there you go.

[0:36:01] NT: Yeah, it's 2026. I'm trying to be – I don't want to offend anybody.

[0:36:05] DC: I'm very proud of you. Okay, gentlemen, how will this human print and design craftsmanship trend influence the conversations you will have with customers now and next year? David?

[0:36:22] DD: Well, my 43rd year in this business, and I've never been able to take the business away from the large printers who are running large metal. I never wanted to. I wound up doing the business that they didn't want to do. And it was always low numbers, very intricate, using metals and whatever, all different aspects. Some trends that other people just haven't used or didn't know how to produce.

So I've always done the smaller, most intricate runs. And this machinery has come up around me, and it says, "Well, now we have this machinery that you don't have to do a dye for hot stamping anymore. And we can do variable hot stamping, so every piece has somebody's name

on it," or something like that. And it's very different. Well, once people begin to realize that they can use this new equipment or any equipment in a different way, like designing for press, that Noel said, everything fits on there. Well, how do they know that? Well, they know that through other people telling them, education. This is the size that you should do. Presentation, show and tell. Throw that inspiration out there, and it does come back. It does come back.

Some people feel that it's a waste of their time to do it because that isn't necessarily who they are. But until you get into the trend and you start doing it, you don't even know what your abilities are. You might completely change the way that you sell because it's enlightened you. You see people are responding to it. What a high that is. I mean, what a high to walk out of a thing saying, "I just taught somebody something. And we're going to be taking whatever it is to the next level." And you're just really cheating yourself, you're cheating your client if you don't open yourself up to those opportunities.

[0:38:18] DC: Noel, you know that the agencies are going to be calling and saying, "We want to be authentic. We want to look authentic." What are you going to speak with them? How are you going to work with the printers that you work with to help them manifest this authenticity and humanness in their design and output of it?

[0:38:41] NT: Well, I'm going to go two things backwards, right? I don't want the clients to be thinking about technology or innovation or anything else. Technology is a tool. It's a screwdriver. It's an amazing tool. You can't build a whole house with it, but everybody's thinking for replacement. They shouldn't be thinking about that. I want the client focused on their brand, what they're trying to do, what it looks like, feels like, smells like. What were they inspired by? What are their assets? And on the other end of it, I'm going to go, "Yeah, this is what we're going to do."

You're going to run your press the same way you always do. You're going to have CMYK, maybe another color. You're going to perfect. We get all that down. We're going to figure out what we make. You don't care what the dots do on your press, but we're going to optimize the results by dictating the paper, the finish, the shade. Ink is translucent. Let's get involved in the shade of the paper. All of these things come from the information I get, what they're trying to do, the client, what they were inspired by, what – hey, I really like that from that piece.

And I want them focused on what this needs to do and elicit in people. And I want the printer focused on getting the thing to fit the ink on the press correctly, doing what the – because I'm planning the rest of it. And I'm counting on the press doing what it's supposed to do. I'm counting on the client throwing up more than I want to hear so that we can then formulate a plan. And it's my job, and like David's job, to make sure that it's printable, right?

Because really, when you think about it, it's a million years ago, I used to do big-time ones, car brochures in the 80s and stuff. Well, you don't do car brochures. I'm like, "They're effing dots. Put a loop on it." They could be swimsuits. They could be gardens. It's dots. You know what I mean? It's about what you see in the end, is this gorgeous car.

But my point is, and I think I made my point, I want everybody in their lane. I'm in my lane touching both. I'm getting an earful till they're bleeding of stuff. I go, "What am I going to do with that?" And then the binary part, there are people – and a lot of what I do is the printer, and then it might be a finisher. There's several, sometimes, shops involved, and it's just breaking it down into a plan.

And I think that helps printers as well, because then they start to maybe trust direct clients a little more that, "Oh, we can do this." Right? They're just so scared about getting something and disappointing people. It's like the paper rep goes in and specifies, "Oh, that's gorgeous. Cotton paper and everything." And they go, "Oh, I love the feel." And then the printer's quoting and he goes, "What?" You know what I mean? It's a question of if he doesn't do that. Now the printer's thinking, "Oh, they specified this paper and it's more money." And the client's thinking, "Oh, the paper's not going to print itself."

[0:41:40] DC: I agree with that. I would like to throw some advice out there, which is I'm a big fan of good, better, best as options for people. Now I think you should add another bucket to that. Good, better, best, authentic. And what does authentic mean, Deborah? I'm glad you asked, customer. You know how you're creating backgrounds in Illustrator? We can take some paint with paintbrushes and flick it on a piece of paper and scan that in and create something completely unique that cannot be reproduced in a computer program, so to speak. We can help you create your own font for this, that you can consistently use it over and over again. So that brand owns that font, and it becomes part of the way that they're communicating that brand.

Let's look at craft paper. I'm telling you, I'm predicting that craft paper is about to make the biggest comeback ever because what is more authentic than nothing on paper? Nothing. I mean, I'm actually a big fan of – I don't know if you ever received like an interoffice envelope as a mailer. I love those things. But that is authentic. That is part of people's human experiences. And whether it is texture or taste or smell, anything that takes people into a real human experience and out of something AI that is in front of them that was created by a computer I think will be interesting conversations for printers to have with customers. And the most important follow-up to that is, make sure you have samples that you have printed – or you can give them – start sending emails and newsletters with articles in your newsletters about how things are trending to be more crafty and feel different.

It's really not about embellishments. A lot of times people think, "Well, it's got to feel different.' Feeling different could just be textured paper, as you said, or scanning in textured paper. So, it looks like that, and it's not a computer-generated background.

Gentlemen, thank you so much for your time. We'll do this again, and very soon, I hope, because we already have a topic that we pre-showed with, which will be very interesting. And until next time, everybody, don't forget to look in the show notes to connect with Noel and David and find out how to keep it real and authentic. Until next time, make it with print long and prosper.

[OUTRO]

[0:44:21] 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:

David Drucker on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/david-drucker-b1b5946/

highresolution printing and packaging: https://high-res.com

Noel Tocci on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/noeltocci/

Tocci Made: https://toccimade.com/

Deborah Corn on LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/deborahcorn/

Craig Bower: https://www.designthatrocks.com/

Design That Rocks: https://www.designthatrocks.com/design-that-rocks

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