

The Graphic Communication Industry: A Quick Overview

Definition

What has traditionally been referred to as the printing business encompasses many segments: general commercial printing, quick printing, digital imaging, magazine, newspaper and book printing, financial and legal printing, screen printing, thermography, business forms printing, label and tag printing, packaging, greeting cards, and trade and finishing services.

(These are encompassed by SIC codes 2711 through 2790 or NAICS code group 323).

Due to the rapid technological changes and broadening of the scope of services provided by many of the companies in the field today, it is more commonly referred to as the graphic communication industry. Companies in the business have expanded services to include creative design, e-commerce, web page design and hosting, mailing, fulfillment, and a host of services that provide horizontal marketing well beyond the core printing model. This is a description that more accurately represents the broader range of what “printers” do today.

What We Do and Who We Are

We help the world communicate across a wide range of platforms. Ideas are created on the computer and carried through to a variety of platforms that can include the Internet as well as printed forms of many types and variations, from personalized digital imaging to long-run conventional to the side of a bus.

Many graphic communication jobs are high-tech, highly skilled, high paying, creative, and innovative. They cover a wide range of positions from professional and managerial, to administrative, sales, and job planning through production positions operating machines.

Graphic communication companies are entrepreneurial and innovative. They range from small companies with a few employees to large plants with several hundred people on multiple shifts. Nearly all have modern computerized equipment and stay current with technology changes taking place in the field.

Overview

Graphic communication is America’s most geographically dispersed manufacturing industry and is a major force in the economy of every state. Every state has *at least* 60 printing plants, over 1000 employees, and over \$190 million in production. The average state has over 700 printing plants with 20,000 employees and over \$3 billion in shipments.

(Source: PIA/GATF, 2007)

You can go virtually anywhere in the country and get a job working in the graphic communication profession. There are more people employed nationwide in the industry than there are working at the top three fast food restaurants combined!

The top ten leading states in total number of graphic communication employees are California, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Ohio, Wisconsin, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Michigan.

Graphic communication and imaging is one of the few industries that runs an annual trade surplus. *(Source: International Trade Administration)* Almost all printing that is consumed in the United States is produced in the U.S. and the industry exports billions of dollars of products to other countries. In fact, the U.S. printing industry is projected to remain a strong domestic-based manufacturing industry for the foreseeable future.

National figures:

Number of establishments: 36,870

Printing is the second largest manufacturing industry in the United States with regard to number of establishments.

Number of people in the industry: over 1,000,000

Printing and related occupations employ the third largest number of people in manufacturing in the United States. The first being motor vehicle parts and second being plastic product manufacturing. *(U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007)*

Overall almost 80 percent of graphics companies employ less than 20 people. However, the industry also has many multinational corporations and publicly traded companies. *(Source: PIA/GATF, 2007)*

Annual shipments: \$174.4 billion

Contrary to popular belief, 46% of all advertising dollars are spent on printed media, while less than 5% are spent on the Internet. *(Robert Coen Insider's Report, 2007)*

Job Outlook

We anticipate that 60,000 additional people will be needed each year through 2016, due to baby boomers retiring, along with changes in workflow, production, and new technologies.

The Bureau of Labor statistics projects the following through 2014:

5.6% growth in production jobs

9.6% growth in supervisors and managers

8.1% growth in job printers

14.2% growth in bindery workers

The industry will need drivers, bindery workers, sales and customer service people, computer operators, graphic artists, chemists, machinists, warehouse operators, mechanics, production supervisors, and all forms of management.

Our occupation is stable and there is ample opportunity for career growth. Individuals who have a high school education can start out as trainees and learn on the job for many positions. With time they can advance to lead positions and into supervisory positions. Graphic communication jobs are located in every state, and in every type of community, from rural areas to the largest cities.

Educational Opportunities

Post-secondary opportunities are available in many forms. Technical colleges offer one- and two-year programs in production and management. There are four-year degrees at several colleges to pursue an education in printing management. Continuing education is an important part of the industry as new processes and methods are introduced. Industry associations, manufacturers, technical colleges, and in-house training are among the many ways that workers continue to gain knowledge.

There are also scholarships available for students who want to pursue higher education and a career in graphic communication. These are offered for all levels of post-secondary education.

Compensation Opportunities

Companies in the graphic communication industry offer competitive starting wages and salary packages compared to other fields. Nearly all companies offer comprehensive insurance and benefit packages to their employees with 97% having health plans, and a majority offering 401k or other retirement savings plans.

Hourly wages: The average wage per hour for production/non-supervisory personnel was \$16.65. Wages averaged \$18.08 in the industry's core lithographic offset segment. In comparison, wages averaged \$15.15 in automotive repair and maintenance, \$12.64 per hour in retailing, and \$10.79 in leisure and hospitality. *(Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007)*

For other specific job titles, some recent median and maximum wage survey results give the following information:

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Maximum</u>
Desktop digital operator	\$18.14	\$31.30
Electronic prepress technician	\$19.20	\$37.20
Proofer technician	\$17.88	\$29.39
Color copier/printer operator	\$18.14	\$25.00
40" 6-color press helper	\$15.00	\$28.79
40" 6-color press operator	\$23.15	\$32.00
Web press 6-unit operator	\$22.50	\$30.00
Folder operator	\$16.30	\$28.46
Saddle stitcher operator	\$17.25	\$26.63

(Source: PIA/GATF Compensation Report 2008)

Administrative salaries: Average annual base salaries (not including incentive pay) for department heads/supervisors:

Prepress: \$52,881

Press (Conventional): \$55,194

Bindery/Finishing: \$48,709

Production Manager: \$58,872

Human Resources: \$55,646

Purchasing: \$53,429

Plant Manager: \$71,575

(Source: NAPL Organization Development & Compensation Study 2007)

From another source we have the median salaries of the following positions:

General Manager: \$80,000

Plant Manager: \$73,875

Production Manager: \$60,000	Plant Superintendent: \$63,216
Office Manager: \$52,000	Scheduler: \$52,000
Estimator: \$44,544	Art Director: \$55,296
Chief Technology Officer: \$90,206	Computer Operations Mgr: \$60,183
Webmaster/Designer: \$52,500	Database Manager: 53,000
EDP Supervisor: 52,000	CSR: \$41,050
Traffic Manager: \$46,500	Quality Control Supervisor: \$45,000

(Source: PIA/GATF Compensation Report 2008)

What We're Looking For

Regardless of the area of a company that a person may consider going into, today's mix of technology, craft, and communication skills require bright talented people. We have customers with ever rising expectations and our jobs continue to increase in their complexity. This requires individuals with a high level of skill sets, including verbal and written communication, math skills, computer literacy, critical thinking, and problem solving. Naturally a good work ethic is always important.

Many secondary schools offer graphic communication and imaging courses through their career and technical education centers. Approximately 230 colleges and community colleges offer graphic communication programs. Our industry is interested in all individuals who are interested in a good occupation, having a solid career path, and in making a good living in the graphic communication field.

Compiled by the Education Summit for the Graphic Arts and updated in April, 2008.