SERVING THE PRINTING & GRAPHIC COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY IN THE WESTERN U.S.

Native News

pia Services for Graphic Communications

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When Print Sales Are Down, Who's Really at Fault?

When printing businesses see their sales drop, there are gaping organizational issues that can be the root cause. The printing company itself may be the one at fault, and that's the core reason the sales team struggles to do its best work.

Sometimes print sales teams can hold companies back. Here we're going to talk about how companies can hold salespeople back.

Identifying issues in the printing company

My marketing strategy clients are often referred to me by a provider such as a CPA, M&A (Mergers & Acquisitions) advisor, sales coach, workflow consultant or Agile trainer. Trusted experts like these have an inside view of the strengths and weaknesses of the client's business.

As a marketing provider, I, too, need to understand the depth and breadth of the business — all the issues — so we're not simply putting band-aids on other problems. Yes, we want to get going on the sales and marketing program but, to improve sales, first we must create an environment where teams can be successful and are motivated to do an excellent job.

Here are common places where printing companies get in their own way when it comes to sales:

Customer interface – Your interface is how customers view, interact with and experience your company. It could be your automatic call reception that puts people into "press 1 for sales" purgatory. It could be your CRM that doesn't allow your sales, marketing and customer service teams to pull a name up quickly by incoming phone number. It could be a lack of artificial intelligence-informed data, such as having to scroll through 50 people named "Mary" to find the right one. It could be a no-reply email that doesn't allow your audience to express interest, get more information or give feedback. It could be a disorganized website or an outdated web-to-print portal. These poor first impressions can be deal killers, and your salespeople suffer because of it.

Customer retention – If you're struggling to gain topline sales, but your existing customers are flowing out faster than new ones come in, that's a waste of my time as a marketing strategist. We must stop the bleeding before we work on attracting new customers.

Poor quality printing – Ouch. And yet quality is a factor, isn't it? How can salespeople confidently sell if they have to babysit their print jobs on the shop floor or warn customers not to try something new because "your results may vary." A quality control program is not a one-and-done situation. Quality improvement is an ongoing process, led by people with integrity. We measure the right things – in the right way. We don't hide bad data. We analyze the numbers and apply insight with context. If you want to see a salesperson squirm, ask them if they've ever been embarrassed about a job that was delivered to a customer. See what I mean?

Not listening to the sales reps about what they need – Your salespeople have a well-developed way of winning business. Good salespeople make it happen. However, I often see executives in printing companies get distracted by the newest sales razzle dazzle rather than dealing with existing issues. We need to sit down with individual sales reps to understand what they need at specific points in their sales process. I remember meeting with the sales reps at a software as a service (SaaS) company. They didn't need a new sales trick. They needed a selection of short, fact-filled case studies to be able to address questions and objections powerfully. The salespeople are right there on the front lines seeing what works and where there are blockages.

In addition, listening respectfully to your reps means doing so without punishing them for telling the truth. If they trust you, they will tell you what they need. If they don't trust you or don't believe in you, they will tell you what you want to hear and no more — which does not help anyone.

That brings me to my next gaping area of failure in printing companies.

An unproductive work environment – Bad company culture affects everyone! It can be unhealthy behaviors such as drug use on the job (don't pretend you don't know this is going on), favoritism, backstabbing, cliques, silent treatment, wars between departments and those nasty souls who make life horrible for everyone. Companywide issues that are distracting and unfair sap morale and productivity. If you want your salespeople to go into the world and advocate for your company, you have to pay attention to company culture.

Not convinced? Check out sites like Glassdoor or Indeed, where employees can publish posts on the dirty-dirty of their companies. When I am approached about working with a client, I look up the printing company AND all their major competitors. I cut and paste all those comments into a database. No matter how many comments there are, more than half will be about the same thing: how companies treat their employees. If you're curious to see one of the databases, connect with me on LinkedIn or drop me a line. I've made the comments anonymous and sorted them by category.

For salespeople to be passionate enough to win the deal, the company behind them must be worth fighting for. Your salespeople must believe in their hearts that your printing company is not only suitable for the project but the #1 best one to do business with. If that's not true, build your business from the inside – and make it true.

Next steps to improve your organization so sales can thrive

If you're motivated to take the next step in fixing the gaping issues in your printing company, start by creating an atmosphere where your teams and your management leaders feel comfortable saying the truth without fear of repercussions.

Encouraging honest feedback can be hard for printing companies. It's not a cliche to say that change starts at the top. It takes honesty, integrity and working with a purpose — not just worshipping the almighty dollar. I'm advising two print-related companies right now that are on a short timeline to grow and sell the businesses. It makes a huge difference that they are facing their uncomfortable issues, fostering quality improvement and building from the inside.

When print sales are down, we must step back and figure out what's really going on. When you commit to building the kind of company salespeople are proud to sell for, that's true progress.

Source: Sandy Hubbard, CSM, Marketing Strategist and CMO Advisor for the Printing Industry, sandyhubbard.start.page.

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Bill's Short Attention Span Sales Tips: Voicemail is Back!

Let's talk voicemail.

Now, before you roll your eyes, call me "old," and move on, have you heard the news about the return of voicemail?

Apple is releasing a new operating software for iPhone users which will allow them to see a message being left and pick up mid call, just like how us old people remember.

That's right, voicemail is back!

Here's how it works: Your iPhone rings. You don't recognize the number, so you let it go to voicemail. Next, you are reading a text message being typed in real time as the caller leaves a message. The phone gives you the choice of picking up at any time.

What does this mean for salespeople?

First, it means you better brush up on your voicemail skills.

Second, you better come up with something valuable to say. Here's my idea…

Not everyone you're calling is going to have an iPhone, of course. And not everyone is going to upgrade their phone. So, let me give you this suggestion:

"Hello, Allison. My name is Bill Farquharson and my telephone number is 781-934-7036. The purpose of my call is […]. I will try you again before the week is out. When your phone rings, and you see a phone number that ends in "7036," pick up! It's me!"

It's that last part, the "…phone number that ends in 7036…" line I want you to remember. It works!

One final thought: Voicemail is an audition. You get to demonstrate your message, your professionalism, and even your personality. You might not get a call back, but I want you to assume your message is heard…or, starting this fall, read!

Source: Bill Farquharson, The Sales Vault, https://SalesVault.Pro

UPCOMING EVENTS

PAPER & SUBSTRATE SHOW

PAPER AEROBICS

Pre-Register by 9/15
Members $35, Non-Members $45, Students/Designers $20

Register after 9/15
Members $45, Non-Members $55, Students/Designers $30

Register now
piasc.org/papershow/

Contact
Karissa Melara at
(323) 728-9500 Ext. 210,
karissa@piasc.org

WHEN:
Tuesday 10.03.2023
5:30 PM - 9:00 PM

Andrei's Conscious Cuisine Event Center
2607 Main Street,
Irvine, CA 92614

Fees Include: Food Valet

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What is COBRA?

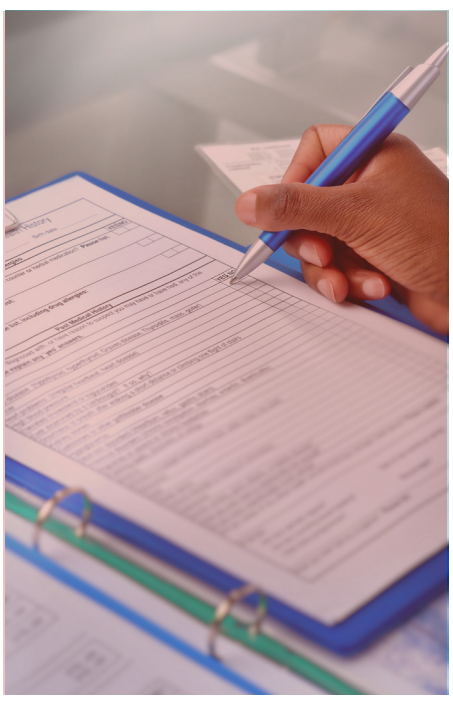
COBRA is short for the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985. It's a federal law that allows certain employees and covered dependents to elect to continue their same group health coverage, at their own cost, when it would otherwise be discontinued because of a qualifying event. These qualifying events include termination or reduction in hours, death of a covered employee, divorce or legal separation, Medicare entitlement and loss of dependent status. Generally, COBRA can be used for up to 18 months, and in some circumstances, up to 36 months.

COBRA applies to most group health plans that are sponsored by employers with 20 or more employees on more than 50% of their typical business days in the previous calendar year. COBRA doesn't apply to plans sponsored by the federal government, churches or church-related organizations.

For COBRA purposes, group health plans include things like medical coverage, dental and vision plans, health flexible spending arrangements, health reimbursement arrangements and other programs related to health benefits. COBRA does not cover plans that provide only life insurance or disability benefits because these are not considered medical care. Additionally, certain voluntary benefit plans may be exempt from COBRA.

Any qualified beneficiary who experiences a qualifying event must be offered the opportunity to elect COBRA. A qualified beneficiary is an individual covered by a group health plan on the day before a qualifying event occurs and who is an employee, the employee's spouse or former spouse, or the employee's dependent child. A child who is born to or placed for adoption with a COBRA participant is also automatically considered a qualified beneficiary.

Source: HR|BIZZ



CLASSIFIED

For Sale: Industrial Building, 8,000 sq ft building in the heart of Azusa, CA. Please contact Lui Salazar for more information. (626) 818-0444 or lsalazar@daumcre.com.

For Sale: 30" Tec Lighting TRS30 UV Coater. Automated feeder and delivery. In excellent condition. Under 100 hrs. operating time. Coater is in Phoenix, AZ. For more information, please contact Dean Toth at (602) 258-7789 or dtoth@oneilprint.com.

For Sale: Seal 62 Laminator Model #63600, Serial #600m039. In working order. Measures 80" L, 51" H, 31" D. For more information, please contact Lane Weatherly at (503) 232-0373 or lweatherly@portlandpuzzle.com

Want to buy or sell equipment, office furniture or a business, or rent or lease a building? **Place a free classified ad today!**

For more information contact Nadine Mora at 323-728-9500 ext. 262 or nadine@piasc.org.

CONTACT US

Address

5800 S. Eastern Avenue,
Suite 400
Los Angeles, CA 90040
P.O. Box 910936
Los Angeles, CA 90091
Phone: 323.728.9500
www.piasc.org

Key Contacts

LOU CARON,
PRESIDENT
Ext. 274, lou@piasc.org

JUSTIN BOURG,
COMMERCIAL INSURANCE
Ext. 284, justin@piascins.com

EVIE BAÑAGA,
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
Ext. 224, evie@pibt.org

KRISTY VILLANUEVA,
MEMBER SERVICES
Ext. 215, kristy@piasc.org

RODNEY BOLTON,
HUMAN RESOURCES
Ext. 218, piasc@hrbizz.com

GOVERNMENT AND LEGISTATIVE

On our Radar

Proposed regulations and other issues that we're following:

- **Caste-based discrimination** – SB 403 would define "ancestry" to include "caste," thereby making caste, as defined, a protected characteristic under California's anti-discrimination laws.
- **Pregnant Workers Fairness Act** – The EEOC has issued draft rules regarding this new Act. See bit.ly/Fairness-act for the proposed regulations, and bit.ly/New-EEOC for a detailed discussion of these regulations. Of note is that the draft regulations explicitly allow the "temporary" (up to 40 weeks!) suspension of essential job functions to be used as a reasonable accommodation. Your opportunity to comment on these draft rules ends on October 10.

Approved regulations and other issues that we've been following:

- **Criminal background checks** – Regulations under the Fair Chance Act pertaining to criminal background checks for job applicants are being modified effective October 1, 2023. For more information, see a helpful article at bit.ly/Bck-Checks.
- **PAGA debt** – According to a recent bankruptcy court opinion, Private Attorneys General Act (PAGA) debt that is payable to the Labor and Workforce Development Agency (i.e., 75% of any recovery of civil penalties for labor code violations) is not dischargeable in bankruptcy.
- **ADA guidance on visual disabilities** – The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has released new Americans with Disabilities Act guidance on visual disabilities in the workplace, at bit.ly/Visual-ADA. This document provides helpful insight into how to handle situations that may arise with job applicants and employees that have visual disabilities.
- **Form I-9 changes** – A new, streamlined Form I-9, which is used to verify the employment eligibility of new hires, is now available at www.uscis.gov/i-9. You can begin using this new form immediately, and must use it as of November 1, 2023. In addition, as of August 1, 2023, certain employers who are enrolled in E-Verify may conduct verification of Form I-9 documents electrically and with a live video call interaction.
- **OSHA National Emphasis Program** – OSHA has announced a new National Emphasis Program targeting heat and ergonomic enforcement in warehousing and distribution center operations.
- **Workplace rules** – The National Labor Relations Board recently adopted a strict new legal standard for evaluating whether workplace rules interfere with employees' rights to engage in concerted workplace activity under Section 7 of the National Labor Relations Act. For details, including a discussion of how this might impact your Employee Handbook, see bit.ly/WP-Rules.

Events CALENDAR

09 September

SU	MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

FOR FULL LIST OF EVENTS, PLEASE VISIT WWW.PIASC.ORG/EVENTS

Printing United Expo
WEDNESDAY-FRIDAY, OCTOBER 18-20
Atlanta, GA
bit.ly/PrintingUnitedExpo

Los Angeles Printers Fair
SATURDAY-SUNDAY, OCTOBER 21-22
bit.ly/PrinterFair2023

Annual Surplus Drive
THURSDAY-FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14-15
To sign up contact Kristy at Kristy@piasc.org

31st Arizona Par-Tee on the Green
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 29
Raven Golf Club
Phoenix, AZ
conta.cc/3XUuxSy

Paper and Substrate Show
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 3
Irvine, CA
piasc.org/events

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Human Resources — WHAT IS COBRA?
Government and Legistative — ON OUR RADAR

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5800 S. Eastern Ave., #400
Los Angeles, CA 90040