

The Annual Surplus Drive Made a Big Impact

On Saturday, September 16, teachers and students from over 30 Southern California high schools and colleges arrived bright and early at Advantage Inc. in Anaheim to participate in a treasure hunt: the Annual Surplus Drive! Advantage's parking lot was filled with boxes and pallets of surplus paper that had been donated by PIA members. As Lou Caron, PIA's President and CEO, observed, "Because the schools don't have the funding to purchase the paper they need, teachers are extremely eager to get substrates they can use with their students."

A great way to make a difference

"I always love this event," Lou shares, "because it's a way for the industry to physically do something for students and educators that is not just writing a check. Most of the time this paper was left over from what was purchased for a customer's order. Rather than letting surplus continue to just take up space, the Annual Surplus Drive enables our members to 'recycle' their excess inventory to promote education. It doesn't get much better than that!"

As an extra bonus, donations are tax deductible because they are made through the R.A.I.S.E. Foundation. R.A.I.S.E. is a non-profit organization dedicated to fostering graphic communications careers in primary, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions.

Schools use this surplus paper primarily for their graphic arts programs. Although only a handful of Southern California schools have traditional printing programs, many have digital printers or some type of graphic arts classes. Student activities committees also benefit from the Surplus Drive. This year about 60 butt



rolls (i.e., the remnants left on large paper rolls) were distributed for these groups to use to make hand-lettered signs and banners.

Victor Valley High School's story is an excellent illustration of how great the need for these supplies is. The contingent from this school left Victor Valley at 5:30 am and drove over 70 miles in a panel truck to ensure they wouldn't miss the opportunity to get a truck load of paper to support their programs!

The day started with a tour

Tom Ling, President and CEO of Advantage, and his team were extremely gracious hosts. From 7:30 to 8:30 am they ran plant tours every 15 to 20 minutes, giving the participating teachers and students an opportunity to see the company's machinery and operations up close.

The event was conducted in "rounds"

Before the give-away started, participants had a chance to walk through the parking lot to see what was available. The Advantage team was on hand to provide advice regarding how different substrates could be used.



Then, during each round each school had approximately five minutes to fill a pushcart with items of their choice. After two rounds it was simply a free-for-all for the remaining materials. In a number of instances, when the available paper was too big for a particular school to use, Tom generously offered to have his staff cut it down for them.

R.A.I.S.E.
FOUNDATION
RAISING THE STANDARDS OF
GRAPHIC ARTS EDUCATION

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Why Creating a Search-Optimized Print Website Feels So Good

Search Engine Optimization (SEO) feels so good. Why? Because a search-optimized print website can help you meet strangers: qualified print buyers you have never heard of and who possibly have never heard of your printing business. They are "qualified" because they likely have the intent to purchase and will proactively contact you to learn more. It's such a beautiful thing when these website visits turn into a profitable order for you. It's the first step in what could possibly be a long-term mutually beneficial relationship.

One reason this experience feels so good for a print business owner is how much work is needed for you over months (and years) to make it happen. SEO is not super hard or expensive. But in a highly crowded and commoditized market, it takes effort and it takes time, especially when you are competing with larger, older or more active competitors.

A weak metaphor for SEO is diet and exercise. If you eat right, work out and take care of yourself, maybe you look more attractive to strangers. SEO is sort of like that. Prospective print buyers see your brand and say to themselves, "I'd like to get to know you a little better."

Once your web page gets found by a stranger, SEO can greatly help to improve your customers' experience as they navigate through your site. A pleasant experience ensures that they will stay longer on your site, take the desired action and return again. When visitors spend more time there without leaving, Google and other search engines track this user behavior and reward your page with higher search rankings.

To achieve a higher ranking in search results, you must work on your website content and SEO strategy on a consistent

basis. A few tips from a non-exhaustive list of to-dos include the following:

Design your URLs for search. Search-friendly URLs contain keywords that help describe the content of the page. For example, these URLs contain popular keywords that print buyers are searching for:

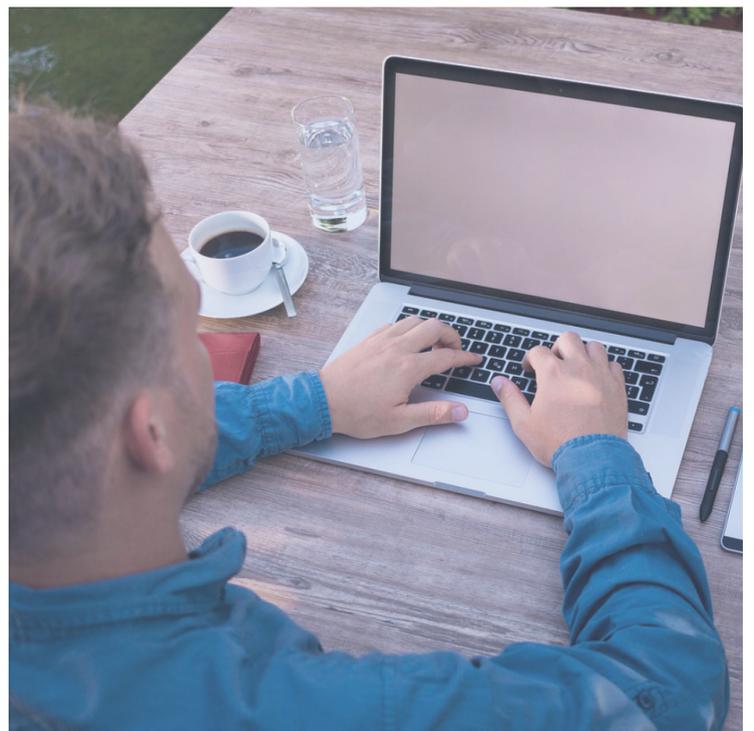
- **.com/products/books/**
- **.com/products/direct-mail/**
- **.com/products/signs/**

Each month in the U.S. there are approximately 600 searches on Google for "book printer." The average Google pay-per-click (PPC) cost for this term is \$4.50. There are 2,200 monthly searches for "direct mail services" and Google's PPC costs about \$25 for this term. The monthly search volume for "signs" is 22,000, while "sign printer" is 250. Using free and paid SEO tools, you can better understand what your competitors and your target customers are doing online.

Write content that search engines can read. When designing your website, make sure you start with a solid structure for your content. This structure includes your headings, paragraphs and links. Each page should have at least 350 words.

Block pages you don't want search engines to index. There may be pages on your site that you don't want search engines to index. These could be pages that add no value to your content. Don't expose these web pages to web crawlers. For example, duplicate content issues will demote your ranking potential with search engines while also diluting your real content's density.

Update your product and blog pages with fresh content. If your website has a blog, consider making room for some



excerpts of the latest posts to be placed on all of your web pages. Search engines love to see the content of web pages changing from time to time as it indicates that the site is still active and current. With changing content comes greater crawling frequency by search engines as well.

SEO requires time and effort

SEO requires optimizing your website for a great user experience and producing high-value content in your product pages and blog posts.

It requires a current and accurate understanding of your print buyer personas (how they think, how they learn, how they buy and how they use your product). It also further requires continuous effort to watch, learn from and position your brand against your competitors.

Source: Nvent Marketing, a marketing agency specializing in digital marketing for the print industry, <https://nventmarketing.com/>.

On Our Radar

Proposed regulations and other issues that we're following:

- **EEOC guidance on handling harassment issues** – The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has issued a proposed updated “Enforcement Guidance on Harassment in the Workplace” that reflects notable changes in law. This includes the Supreme Court’s decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, the #MeToo movement and emerging issues such as virtual or online harassment. The proposed guidance, which includes fact-specific examples of harassment, is available for review at bit.ly/WorkHarassment2023.

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

- **Arbitration is waived if your payment is late** – The California Court of Appeal recently ruled that if an employer’s arbitration fee is late, even by one day past the 30-day payment grace period, that employer loses the right to proceed in arbitration. Note that for payments sent via mail, what matters is the date the payment was received, not the date of the postmark.
- **Employee Retention Credit (ERC) claims processing** – The IRS issued a moratorium on processing amended returns received between September 14 and December 31, 2023 (and possibly longer) that claim Employee Retention Credits. This halt is in response to an onslaught of potentially improper

ERC claims driven by aggressive promoters of this program.

Bills recently signed into law by Governor Newsom:

- **Workplace violence prevention (SB 533)** – By July 1, 2024, nearly all California employers must create and implement comprehensive workplace violence prevention programs, including training, recordkeeping, etc. For a detailed discussion of what this will entail, see the article at bit.ly/WVP2023.
- **Additional paid sick leave days (SB 616)** – Effective January 1, 2024, the number of paid sick days that employers must provide to eligible employees will increase from three to five days. The cap that employers can place on paid sick days will increase from six to 10 days and 48 to 80 hours. And the number of paid sick days an employee can roll over to the next year will increase from three to five days.
- **Prohibition against non-competes expanded (SB 699)** – California law already bans post-employment non-compete agreements, with limited exceptions. As of January 1, 2024, this will expand to also prohibit California employers from entering into or attempting to enforce post-employment non-compete agreements regardless of where and when the contract was signed, even if the contract was signed and the employment was maintained outside of California.

- **Inquiries about applicant cannabis use (SB 700)** – Effective January 1, 2024, it will be unlawful under the Fair Employment and Housing Act (FEHA) to discriminate against a job applicant based on information regarding the person’s prior use of cannabis that is learned from their criminal history. This piggybacks onto 2022’s AB 2188, which also takes effect on January 1, 2024. AB 2188 prohibits employment discrimination based on cannabis that is used off the job and away from the workplace.
- **Leave for reproductive loss (SB 848)** – Effective January 1, 2024, employees who have worked for the employer for at least 30 days are eligible to take up to five days of leave following a reproductive loss event, including a failed adoption, failed surrogacy, miscarriage, stillbirth or an unsuccessful assisted reproduction. Unless the employer has a policy requiring paid leave, this leave can be unpaid. This new law, which acts as a subset of California’s existing Bereavement Leave law, applies to employers with five or more employees.

Bills recently vetoed by Governor Newsom:

- **Employment discrimination against family caregivers (AB 524)** – This bill would have expanded the list of protected characteristics under the Fair Employment and Housing Act

(FEHA) to prohibit employment discrimination due to family caregiver status.

- **Caste-based discrimination (SB 403)** – This bill would have defined “ancestry” to include “caste,” thereby making caste, as defined, a protected characteristic under California’s anti-discrimination laws.
- **Unemployment insurance for striking workers (SB 799)** – This bill would have allowed workers involved in a trade dispute to collect unemployment insurance benefits, after a two-week wait period, while they are on strike.



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HUMAN RESOURCES

HR Questions Roundup

Can/should you ask employees about food allergies?

Say you’d like to cater lunch for your employees. Do you need to ask them about food allergies?

No. However, employees who do have food allergies or restrictions would likely appreciate it if you made sure that they also get to partake of the free food. You can manage this by asking employees about food preferences or prohibitions ahead of time, ordering a variety of items so that everyone has at least one option and listing the ingredients of the items that are brought in. Most restaurants should be able to accommodate a request for ingredient lists.

We would caution against asking specifically about food allergies since this could potentially rise to the level of a disability inquiry under the Americans with Disabilities Act, which could be unlawful in this instance. By asking generally about food preferences and prohibitions, you can accommodate not only employees who may have food allergies and sensitivities, but also employees who are vegetarian, vegan or have religious restrictions on what they can eat.

Are you required to have an introductory period for new employees?

No. Some employers call the first few weeks or months of an employee’s time with the company an “introductory period,” but this designation has no

bearing on the rights employers or employees have. An introductory period doesn’t reduce the risks of termination (you should still have a good business reason and documentation) or mean that an employee let go during that time won’t get unemployment insurance.

That said, the first few weeks and months are incredibly important for ensuring a long tenure. Multiple studies show that a good number of new hires quit within the first 90 days because their experience wasn’t what they wanted or expected. Turnover is costly, so investing time and resources in onboarding, orientation and training for new hires helps set them up for long-term success and saves you money.

In short, while there’s no legal requirement to having an introductory period, there is a huge financial benefit to delivering a great employee experience during these first weeks and months.

What can you do when exempt employees take long lunches?

If you have an exempt employee who has been taking a lot of long lunches, can you dock her paid time off (PTO) bank for this?

You can deduct hours from this exempt employee’s PTO bank for time she was scheduled to work but didn’t work, but if it wasn’t made clear that you expected her to follow a set schedule, you’d only want to do this going forward. However, we’d suggest considering a different approach.

First, speak to her about the long lunches. It’s possible she simply misunderstands how long her lunch breaks are supposed to be and is taking what she believes to be the correct amount of time. Ensure she understands what the consequences will be if she continues to take long lunch breaks. This discussion alone might solve the problem.

Second, if the long lunch breaks persist, follow your standard disciplinary process. While PTO deductions are an option, they may not actually discourage the behavior you want to stop. If the employee is willing to use PTO to take long lunches, she may just continue taking them. Additionally, as this employee’s position is classified as exempt, if her PTO bank is exhausted, a deduction from her salary for missed time would not be permissible.

Source: [HR|BIZZ](https://hrbizz.com)



5800 S. Eastern Ave., #400
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PIA Events CALENDAR

- **Krazy Kratts Day for Kids**
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2023
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM PT
International Printing Museum
Carson, CA
printmuseum.org/krattsday
- **O.S.T.S. Free Webinar: Planning Your 2024 Safety Program**
MONDAY, DECEMBER 11
10:00 AM PT
confa.cc/451vKPH
- **Ben Franklin’s Birthday Celebration**
SATURDAY, JANUARY 20
10:00 AM – 4:00 PM PT
International Printing Museum
Carson, CA
bit.ly/FranklinsBirthday2024

12 December

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10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

NEW DATE: MARCH 28
Paper and Substrate Show
THURSDAY, MARCH 28
www.piasc.org/papershow/

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

THE ANNUAL SURPLUS DRIVE
MADE A BIG IMPACT

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HR QUESTIONS ROUNDUP

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