

## BRANDING YOUR FIRM AS A GREAT WORKPLACE



Many printing company leaders say hiring new employees is their toughest challenge. I recently visited a printing company with about 100 employees. Almost everybody in the building was in their late 50s or early 60s. Multiple workers mentioned to me that they were considering retiring. As we were hearing those retirement comments, the firm's leader said, "And we are not getting any applications for our open positions."

From a big-picture view, at least two factors prompt today's challenging employee retention and hiring environment. First, the labor force participation rate has continuously declined since 2000. Why is labor participation going down? As baby boomers retire, a growing proportion of our population has withdrawn from work.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, one of our recent surveys suggests that 18% of printing industry employees are 60 or older. Second, birth rates have not increased in recent decades. Therefore, we don't have a growing "inventory" of workers to fill the openings baby boomer retirements cause. Indeed, there are indicators of lower birth rates in our country over recent years.<sup>2</sup>

We must see this environment as a labor market where supply is not keeping pace with demand. These are labor market challenges that we are also seeing in other industries, not just printing. This environment prompted us to explore effective ways to address hiring needs. Here are some of our findings...

### You need an Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

An EVP is a written document that states the value, rewards, benefits and gains employees receive from their commitment to serve the company...both monetary and non-monetary items. An EVP may include many different elements. Here are a few possibilities:

- Compensation/reward system
- Benefits that promote employee (and family) well-being
- Career development through training and opportunities
- An organizational culture that quality employees can relate to, which may include values reflected in the firm's history

Printing company leaders must choose what EVP elements to include. "What value do we provide our employees?" However, this is not a one-time event. Leaders should continue to evaluate and adjust their EVP regularly, perhaps annually. They might ask, "How do we differentiate our firm from other companies seeking to poach our employees or hire the same ones we seek?" We propose that brainstorming – considering multiple EVP possibilities – may prompt strategic thinking, innovation and commitment among a leadership team.

A company's leadership team must communicate their EVP to both current employees and potential applicants. More importantly, they must stand behind their EVP and "practice what they preach!" If an EVP is not actually reflected in a firm, that EVP may do more harm than good.

**CURRENT AND POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES ARE VERY MUCH LIKE INTERNAL "CUSTOMERS."**

How does a firm communicate its EVP? That happens through employer branding.

### You also need employer branding

Employer branding is communicating the value your firm provides current and potential employees, which is reinforced through your firm's reputation. It's branding your company as a good employer.

Which outlets (media) might you use for employer branding? Websites, social media and career fairs at high schools or colleges, to name just a few. Through various media outlets, firms may post videos of employees, managers or company leaders highlighting what the firm provides its employees.

Like branding your company's products and services, employer branding requires strategic thinking. Employer branding demands more than choosing the easiest option, "picking the low-hanging fruit." It includes selecting the best communication methods to reach current and prospective employees with the firm's message, its EVP.

Doesn't this sound like branding your company to potential customers? Yes. Again, today's hiring and retention environment is more of a "market" than in the past. Current and potential employees are very much like internal "customers."

What topics might a firm include in its employer branding? See a few possibilities below.

GOOD COMPENSATION	CONTINUOUS TRAINING EVENTS	ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES	WORK-LIFE BALANCE
COMPANY EVENTS, SUCH AS LUNCH MEETINGS OR PICNICS	COMPANY COMMUNITY SERVICE	EMPLOYEE SUCCESS STORIES	DIVERSITY
INTERESTING PRODUCTS AND SERVICES	COMPANY PHILANTHROPY	MISSION/VISION	THE FIRM'S UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES
NEW TECHNOLOGY ACQUIRED AND APPLIED	COMPANY AWARDS, SUCH AS REGIONAL PRINT COMPETITIONS	COMPANY HISTORY	COMPANY ACHIEVEMENTS
COMPANY REPUTATION	WHAT EMPLOYEES LOVE ABOUT THE COMPANY	CULTURE/VALUES	AND, OF COURSE, YOUR EVP!

However, be aware of this: We learned that without an EVP, employer branding has little or no effect on employer recruiting satisfaction. A firm must have an EVP for its employer branding to positively affect this! As one of our coauthors said, "Without an EVP, in employer branding, you are just doing stuff!"

### Key takeaways

- Developing an employee value proposition is vital today.
  - What value does your firm provide existing and potential employees?
  - How is that value different from other firms competing to hire those employees?
- Branding your firm as an excellent workplace is vital in today's tight labor market.
  - These points might prompt printing firm leaders to reconsider how effectively their firm is branding its products and services to customers.
  - Develop your firm's branding and marketing competencies and apply them to both the customer and labor markets.
- Remember that efforts to brand your company as an excellent workplace are a waste of time if you don't have an EVP (Employee Value Proposition).

Please help us build actionable knowledge for printing company leaders by participating in our future surveys. If you have any questions or thoughts, please email Ralph at [ralph.williams@mtsu.edu](mailto:ralph.williams@mtsu.edu).

Source: Dr. Ralph Williams, Dr. Tim Moake and Dr. Kristie Abston, Associate Professors, and Dan Morrell, Professor, Jones College of Business, Middle Tennessee State University, and Dr. Scott Manley, Professor, J. Whitney Bunting College of Business & Technology, Georgia College & State University.

<sup>1</sup> [bit.ly/falling-labor-force-participation](https://bit.ly/falling-labor-force-participation)

<sup>2</sup> [bit.ly/fertility-rate-drop](https://bit.ly/fertility-rate-drop)

## BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

### EVERYDAY MEMBER QUESTIONS



#### Needs an Employee Handbook

Q: Do you have a sample Employee Handbook that our company can use?

A: Yes! Every year PIA contracts with an attorney to help update the sample Employee Handbook for our members. You can choose to download either the complete Handbook for a given year, or a file that just has the sections that changed since the prior year's version. Both can be found in the Member Resources portal at [piasc.org](http://piasc.org), under Human Resources.

#### Implementing a credit card transaction fee

Q: We are about to start charging a 2.5% fee on all ATM & Credit Card Transactions. Do we call this a "Convenience Fee" or a "Credit Card/ATM Fee"? I'm not sure how to list it on our invoices.

A: Technically, it would be neither. A convenience fee is generally a flat fee that stays the same no matter the dollar amount of the invoice. For example, you buy a ticket online for an event, and you have to pay a \$14.99 convenience fee. In your company's case, the fee would be called a "surcharge fee."

Note: In some states this type of surcharge is illegal. For example, as of July 1, 2024, it is illegal in California to surcharge credit card transactions. Instead, the total price for goods and services must be disclosed upfront – including any surcharges or fees.

# FROM THREATS TO COMPLIANCE: HOW 2024 RESHAPED CYBERSECURITY



2024 was a pivotal year in data security, marked by the enforcement of stricter compliance regulations and some of the most significant breaches to date. Industries across the board faced mounting challenges as cyber threats grew in complexity, targeting financial institutions, retail businesses and critical infrastructure. The following provides an overview of the year's top breaches, evolving threats and key regulatory developments, including PCI compliance updates and the FTC Safeguards Rule.

## Top breaches and threats of 2024

- 1. Move it: The supply chain breach that shook the world** – In one of the year's most far-reaching cyberattacks, hackers exploited a zero-day vulnerability in MOVEit, a widely used file transfer software. Over 65 million records were compromised, impacting industries ranging from healthcare to finance. This breach underscored the critical importance of third-party vendor management. Businesses relying on external software must go beyond basic security protocols, regularly auditing vendor systems to ensure robust defenses.
- 2. The Acme Data Brokers hack: 2.7 billion records exposed** – A shocking attack on a leading data broker resulted in the exposure of 2.7 billion records, including social security numbers, purchase histories and personal details. This incident highlighted the risks of concentrated data storage and the lack of stringent security measures within the data brokerage industry.
- 3. Ransomware-as-a-Service** – The ransomware landscape expanded dramatically in 2024, fueled by Ransomware-as-a-Service (RaaS) platforms that made sophisticated tools accessible to a broader range of attackers. This development reinforces the need for robust encryption, real-time backups and employee training as foundational defenses against ransomware.
- 4. AI-powered attacks take the lead** – The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into cybercriminal operations was another defining feature of 2024. Generative AI was used to craft highly convincing phishing emails and even deepfake videos of executives, enabling fraudulent transactions and security breaches. One multinational company reported a loss of \$15 million after an AI-driven scam mimicked their CEO's voice and appearance to authorize fraudulent payments.

These attacks signal a new era in cybersecurity, where businesses must deploy equally advanced technologies to detect and counter AI-powered threats. Employee awareness campaigns and advanced anomaly detection tools have become critical to defending against this emerging risk.

## Changes to the compliance landscape:

The events of 2024 also served as a wake-up call for regulators, leading to stricter enforcement of cybersecurity standards, particularly in industries handling sensitive financial and consumer data. Two significant frameworks came into focus: PCI DSS 4.0 and the FTC Safeguards Rule.

- 1. PCI DSS 4.0: Securing payment systems** – This year's updates to the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard emphasized continuous monitoring and stronger authentication to prevent breaches. Businesses processing credit card data were required to implement multi-factor authentication (MFA) across all systems and conduct real-time monitoring for suspicious activity.
- 2. FTC Safeguards Rule: Elevating data protection standards** – The revised FTC Safeguards Rule for financial institutions and related businesses, enforceable as of June 2024, mandated risk assessments, encryption of customer data and formalized incident response plans.

Together, these compliance measures set a higher bar for organizations to meet, urging them to adopt a more comprehensive approach to cybersecurity.

## Looking ahead to 2025

As we move into a new year, the lessons from 2024 are clear: Cybersecurity must be proactive, comprehensive and aligned with evolving compliance standards. Businesses that fail to adapt risk not only financial penalties but also loss of trust from their customers and partners.

Shield IT Networks remains committed to helping organizations build stronger defenses. Whether it's achieving compliance with PCI DSS 4.0 or fortifying your systems against ransomware and AI-powered threats, our team is here to guide you every step of the way.

Source: Shield IT Networks, [www.shielditnetworks.com](http://www.shielditnetworks.com)

## MEMBER NEWS

# CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR MEMBERS THAT MADE THE TOP 300 LIST!

Each year Printing Impressions presents a list of the top 300 printing companies in the U.S. and Canada, ranking by annual sales volume. We recently learned that 20 PIA members made the list for 2024! Congratulations to...



- #20: ALPHAGRAPHICS CORP., LAKEWOOD, CO
- #27: FRANCHISE SERVICES, INC., MISSION VIEJO, CA
- #45: PUBLICATIONS PRINTERS CORPORATE, DENVER, CO
- #48: DCG ONE, SEATTLE, WA
- #55: LITHOGRAPHIX INC., HAWTHORNE, CA
- #97: PREMIER PRESS, PORTLAND, OR
- #107: HUDSON PRINTING, SALT LAKE CITY, UT
- #112: THE DOT CORP., IRVINE, CA
- #116: PDF PRINT COMMUNICATIONS., LONG BEACH, CA
- #117: JOURNAL GRAPHICS, PORTLAND, OR
- #148: PECZUH PRINTING & PAPERBOX, PRICE, UT
- #158: O'NEIL PRINTING, PHOENIX, AZ
- #168: D' ANDREA VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS, CYPRESS, CA
- #179: WESTAMERICA COMMUNICATIONS, LAKE FOREST, CA
- #191: MARINA GRAPHIC CENTER, INC., HAWTHORNE, CA
- #192: CPCNEUTEK, GRAND JUNCTION, CO
- #219: CONSOLIDATED PRESS LLC., SEATTLE, WA
- #253: LITHTEX PRINTING SOLUTIONS., HILLSBORO, OR
- #266: 5 DAY BUSINESS FORMS MFG. INC., ANAHEIM, CA
- #268: CLASSIC LITHO AND DESIGNS, TORRANCE, CA
- TOP 5 PUBLICATIONS PRINTERS**
- #4: PUBLICATION PRINTERS, DENVER, CO

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# EVENTS CALENDAR

For full list of events, please visit [www.piasc.org/events](http://www.piasc.org/events)

**PRINT UV 2025 CONFERENCE**  
Monday, March 10, 2025 –  
Wednesday March 12, 2025  
Las Vegas, NV  
[www.PrintUV.com](http://www.PrintUV.com)

**TAGA: NEXTGEN CONFERENCE**  
Tuesday, March 25, 2025 –  
Friday, March 28, 2025  
Boulder, CO  
<https://taga.org/conference>

**SAVE THE DATE GRAPHICS NIGHT**  
May 29, 2025  
Disney's Grand Californian Hotel & Spa  
Anaheim, CA

**SAVE THE DATE PRINTING UNITED EXPO**  
October 22 – 24, 2025  
Orlando, FL  
[www.PrintingUnited.com](http://www.PrintingUnited.com)

## SPOTLIGHT EVENT

**PRINT EXCELLENCE AWARDS**  
Call for Entries Deadline  
Friday, February 21, 2025  
[www.piasc.org/printexcellence](http://www.piasc.org/printexcellence)

Each year this regional event rewards the best craftsmanship and technology in the dynamic printing, imaging, and finishing communities. Entries are accepted from members in all 13 western states of the U.S.: California, Arizona, Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming.

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