

BID OR SELL?

By Dennis Mason

Not long ago, a viable strategy for printers was to fill the press with successful bids on tendered jobs, perhaps adjusting prices depending on the market. Sales personnel sought relationships with print buyers, and for many printers, long-term connections with a few key customers would help keep the order board full at somewhere north of the lowest margins.

Today, the world has changed. The Internet has greatly expanded print buyers' purchasing options. Keeping the press running at capacity today is often a tall order—one that necessitates conducting business in new ways. Relationships are still important, but today's key customer contacts are often marketing personnel and graphic designers.

The Think Patented Story

In several instances, printers have moved into what they saw as a void—one which involved bringing in business differently. And when well-executed, this strategy has resulted in a new breed of commercial printer—one that presents an entirely different face to the world. A case in point is Think Patented, located just outside Dayton in the suburb of Miamisburg, OH. The Think Patented doors opened in 2005 when Niels Winther and Ken McNerney bought Patented Printing in Dayton, where McNerney had worked since 2003. Winther brought the company some 32 years of experience with Heidelberg and a vast knowledge of the industry. Today the 125-plus Think Patented employees offer offset, digital, and wide-format printing, as well as premedia, graphic design, mailing, fulfillment, and Internet marketing services—all from a spanking new 75,000 square foot facility.

The business that Winther and McNerney acquired was a traditional print business. A key element of the new partners' business plan, however, involved changing the name of the firm from Patented Printing to Think Patented. In so doing they repositioned the company not merely as a printer but as a business partner that would help clients "think" about how to grow and market better to their customers—all while remaining one of the largest "printing" companies in the Dayton market.

The concepts behind the changes wrought by Winther and McNerney are familiar to printers, although too few have made the total commitment and extensive strategic alternations seen at Think Patented. A bimonthly magazine covering marketing tips and techniques is sent by the company to prospects and customers alike. An in-house Web development group

advises customers on how to engage in Internet marketing, and even assists them in designing digital storefronts and fulfillment operations. As part of providing complete marketing services in addition to printing, Think Patented offers customers a complete array of promotional products such as shirts, pens, and other tchotchkes—all of which can be ordered online from the Think Patented website. When Think Patented consolidated operations in a single facility, the company held a massive open house, attracting not just print buyers, but also graphic designers, brand managers, and marketing personnel from the greater Dayton area.

Exploring Packaging

Recently, Think Patented mounted a new campaign targeting marketers interested in brand identity and enhancing shelf presence—the idea being to expand the company's presence in the burgeoning packaging market space. The campaign is based on the Color-Logic license held by Think Patented. The Color-Logic Process Metallic Color System permits the company to create a broad range of metallic printing and special effects using either CMYK-plus-silver ink on conventional substrates, or CMYK-plus-white ink on metallic substrates to develop brand identity for customers across all types of printing—collateral material, signage, labels, and packaging, among others—all of which can be produced in the Think Patented facility.

The Think Patented Color-Logic campaign began with the company printing metallic swatchbooks which show brand managers and their graphic designers exactly what Think Patented can produce. Because presses, inks, substrates, and workflows can vary considerably from

printer to printer, the Think Patented swatchbooks provide a fixed and visual standard that graphic



This metallic swatchbook is specific to Think Patented, its presses, inks, processes, work - flow, and the substrates used to produce it. By referencing the swatchbook, Think Patented customers can be assured of their print results.

designers can rely upon. The Think Patented swatchbooks call out specific hues in the Color-Logic system and show the effect of the process on specific substrates, thus removing the uncertainty which typically plagues metallic print specifications.

The Think Patented efforts speak to the partnering and alliances that printers must invoke to be competitive in the marketplace today. In the Think Patented case, the successful Think Patented program involves an alliance which embraces not just Color-Logic, but also Case Paper—a supplier of both metallic and conventional substrates. The Case Paper portion of the alliance has resulted in the Think Patented and

Color-Logic stories being told nationwide by Case Paper representatives who now use the Think Patented swatchbooks to illustrate what can be done with their substrates.

Conclusion

The Think Patented story is not unique. But it dramatically demonstrates the benefits realized by printers who take a different approach to the customer interface. Influencing the design is often critical in today's print marketplace. And those printers who put themselves in the position of assisting graphic designers and ensuring a predictable result are winners in the current print environment.

Color-Logic Advertisement

Think Patented. Driving demand for your brand™ with Color-Logic



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