

PROFITABLE PRINT RELATIONSHIPS

The Successful Print Sales Circle

Print Product Inspiration Podcast 8:

Publishing, part 1

Hello, and welcome to episode eight of the Print Product Inspiration Podcast. This month, I'm going to be talking about publishing. Now, when I mention the word publishing, many printing companies have images of huge web presses or specialist book presses, producing long runs of newspapers and magazines and books, but actually that's only a small part of the publishing market. And in today's episode, I want to look at the whole scope of the publishing market, because it can work for just about any printing company out there, as you will see.

But more than that, I want you to take the lessons from today's podcast, even if you decide that publishing is not for you, and apply it to whatever sectors that you are involved in. What extra scope could you create from the products you produce, the sectors you specialize in, and the markets you serve?

So as always, this isn't just designed to be about publishing products, it's designed to be a lesson and some inspiration in how to approach the print market differently. So let's do this by looking at publishing opportunities in markets that you may not have thought of. And for this episode, I've picked six different markets. You may think of some other ones as well, but I've picked six different potential markets where I think there are great opportunities to offer publishing services and products.

So we're going to go through those markets one by one. I'm going to talk to you about the products and how those markets can work. And then next month, we're going to carry on with the theme of publishing and we're going to look at these markets again and see how you can broaden your offering to offer so much more than just publishing within each of these sectors. But for now, let's focus on the publishing opportunities.

And the first area I want to look at is in comics and fanzines. There's a huge underground market in this area, which just isn't recognized by so many people. In fact, I know one print company that has a multi-million pound turnover and they focus almost exclusively on the underground market of fanzines, of comics, and also on record labels as well.

Now, the interesting thing to look at is that this is very varied. There's the comics that we think of in the newsagents, where you have a standard magazine format, but many of the underground ones have got some very different formats. They're much smaller runs, maybe smaller paginations, but there's a lot of these titles around. People who buy comics and fanzines appreciate the power of print. They like things to be tactile. They like to have something that they can touch and read and collect, and you just can't get that in digital. So this is why print still has a major impact in this market.

The other thing to recognize is that many of the creatives have high production values. Even if they're looking at a lo-fi product, they want their production values to be right. They're not just looking for the cheapest printing company. They are looking for someone who can work with them to give them the feel and the look that they want that speaks to that audience.

The second area that I think we can look at for publishing is newsletters. There's a huge range of newsletters out there these days. They vary from parish newsletters, where it looks as though they've been produced on a photocopier. They're small paginations, the production values are low and the runs are low as well.

But then we also can look at a huge range of organisations and societies who produce newsletters to communicate with their supporter base, such as heritage sites, arts venues and preserved railways. There are all sorts of organizations that use newsletters as a vital way to communicate with their audience. And what's interesting to note is that many of them have a multi-million pound, multi-million dollar turnovers, which you may not necessarily think when you say museum or heritage attraction. But they're big business and they need the right type of newsletter, and it can be sometimes very professionally produced.

Right, area three is company publishing. Now, when I talk about this, many people assume that I'm talking about the company magazines are produced often by print management companies that are going out to a very specific type of audience, but there's a much bigger range of publishing going on in this marketplace.

One area in particular is the subscription market for deliveries. So we get a veg box delivered every week, and there's also huge amounts of subscription products out there from perfumes to beer, to all sorts of things. But if we go to our veg box, every week without delivery, there's a mini newsletter in there. It's just a four-page A5 product, but it tells us a little bit about the vegetables and it gives us inspirational recipes, and that's publishing. But so many commercial printing companies could be producing this newsletter.

In addition, we get a bi-monthly quarterly magazine with a lot more in-depth content for us, some articles, more recipes telling us more about what we should be buying and why we should be engaging with that company. And then there's a whole range of other print to encourage people to buy more vegetables and different types of vegetables as well. Suddenly we see a huge scope in publishing from a market that isn't traditionally associated with the idea of publishing.

Market four, that's self-publishing, and lots of authors want to sell their work. It's not just the traditional idea of unpublished authors wanting to publish their novels. There are a whole load of small areas of self-publishing. So we have friends and they published a two volume book about their

recent family history. It was all written up from diaries, with photographs, and it was just a small run to go out to people within their family. But nonetheless, it's publishing.

My wife produced a family recipe book, and that was a collection of favourite recipes from members of the family for us to share amongst ourselves. So just amongst an audience of around about 20 people. But there are opportunities here to make that commercial as well, and a lot of people want to create the right product. They don't know how. They're looking for companies that can help them with this, and that could be you.

Next, let's look at the craft market, photographers, jewellers, all sorts of people. They can produce their own magazines, their exhibition catalogues, and catalogues to go out to people who are interested in buying their products. There's a real need here for these people to produce print of the right quality that shows off their products in the right way. And again, they're not just looking for the cheapest printer. They are looking for someone who can help them get the right look for their products and print to the right quality as well.

There's really high production values in this, and some of the things that are being produced have much bigger impact than you might realize. In addition, there's also the need for prints and postcards and lots of collateral prints as well. So again, this is developing into a much bigger market than just the traditional idea of publishing.

Finally, have you thought about becoming a publisher? There's a number of magazine printers out there who run very successful publishing arms that are producing their own magazines or magazines on a contract basis, and that's looking at their traditional publishing market. But what could you do to create a different publishing market?

Here's one idea that you can hear me and Deborah Corn and talking about on the UK v USA Podcast. Imagine if you went out to a number of your local retail clients and you created a magazine or a catalogue just for them, and they have the opportunity to pay you to put content in this magazine. You'll produce the print, you'll design it, you'll make their companies and their products look great and you'll deliver it to local homes or you'll sell it in the right marketplace. But you can create something which is valuable to your customer base.

It may not be retail. You may have a range of other customers who can come together who would benefit from this type of publishing arrangement. This may not be a magazine that goes out to local homes. It may go out in the business world instead, but there's all sorts of ideas that you could bring to the table to your clients build their businesses through the power of publishing. And best of all, you create it all for them and it can have a very healthy profit margin.

So there's six ideas that you may not have thought of on why publishing can be a vibrant profitable market for your company. Will it fit in with one of your sectors? Only you can answer that question, but I think there are real opportunities here.

Publishing is a growing market. Amazon, one of the leading e-retailers has just introduced a toy catalogue in print that's going out through traditional catalogue publishing methodologies. MailChimp, one of the biggest email providers out there, they've started producing a magazine, again in print, that's going out to people and you can subscribe to it. In addition, they also print postcards and you can create your own run of marketing postcards if you want.

Publishing is becoming big business, even in the digital channels, despite the fact that it's often ignored or looked at in very traditional ways. You have real opportunities to add value to the publishing model and to bring the publishing model to markets that may not realize how valuable it can be to them.

So within your marketplace, you can bring something new, and that means that you've got a much better chance of building valued long lasting partnerships with your current customers and with future clients. And you can charge more, you can increase your turnover and your profit margins as well. But how else can you build on this? That's what we're going to look at in month two. When we look at the models around this and how you could offer extra services and products and start building even more powerful relationships and building up those revenues further.

In the meantime, as always, I have some action points for you. I'd love you to just think about this and write down one potential publishing model that you could bring for your clients. Maybe it's one that's based on a sector I've talked about here, or maybe this podcast has inspired you to realize how you can bring publishing to some of your existing clients. Write down some of your potential clients around this as well and talk to them. Find out their challenges, not just their print challenges, but their business challenges as well. How could publishing help with some of these business challenges?

Also, think about your production sweet spots. What type of publishing is right for you? Are you into producing short run case bound books? Will you produce longer run magazines? Do you want to produce the leaflet publishing market? There are so many opportunities for you here, but it's good to think about the right products that you will introduce your clients to so that it works for you as well as for them.

And finally, make sure you listen to the next episode of the Print Product Inspiration Podcast as well, because that's where we'll carry on with a second episode on publishing and you'll get some more great ideas and inspiration about this. So I look forward to hearing your thoughts, thanks for listening, and do keep an ear out for the next episode.