

PROFITABLE PRINT RELATIONSHIPS

The Successful Print Sales Circle

Print Product Inspiration Podcast 9:

Publishing, part 2

Welcome to the Print Product Inspiration Podcast, episode nine. And this is the second episode where we are going to cover publishing, a huge market with great opportunities for all types of printing companies. So last month we discovered the size of the publishing market, all the different sectors that are available, and the huge number of products that we can produce for this market. But one of the things I hear from a lot of printing companies, and it's a very valid comment, is that traditionally publishing is a cost-conscious market. So how do we move from commodity through to value and higher profit margins? That's what I want to focus on in this episode.

And again, even if you decide that publishing is not for you, I'd be surprised if you don't see opportunities there, but if you do decide that publishing is not for you, you'll still learn from this process. So I'd encourage you to listen from it, and see how you can apply it to other markets, ones that you specialize in.

Now one of the problems about publishing being seen as cost conscious is that the commoditization of prints has actually partly been led by printing companies themselves. Here's one example. Some of you know that I used to work as the buyer for a large magazine publishing company in the UK, and during this time we used to tender out the printing of our magazines. And one of the elements in our tender was a paragraph that said, "If you can help us to become more efficient or to reduce costs, we'd love your proposals on how you can help with this, even if they're outside the normal scope of this tender." And I used to explain to printing companies how important this paragraph was.

What it basically meant was I was happy to spend more money with them if they could provide extra services that would help us become a more profitable company. But despite the fact that I told them this, I think that over my time as a buyer running these tenders, I got only two proposals on how companies could help us, and one of them was very much specification related rather than being about extra products or different services where a printing company could help us. All these companies who were tendering on our work just assume that we were really only interested in the lowest price when that wasn't the case.

So we need to move our mindset away from the fact that we see publishing as a low cost commodity part of the marketplace, into the mindset that this is a market where there are opportunities to

provide extra services and grow our profit margins. So let's look at those six markets that I covered in the last episode again, and let's see how you can help them add more services, more value to their business. Let's see how you can become a partner to these types of companies and help them be prepared to pay more because they see a real value in what you're offering, because it's an opportunity for them to grow their businesses and grow their profit margins.

So the first market that we looked at last time was comics and fanzines. Think about the opportunities for augmented reality in these areas. Just imagine being able to put your phone over a comic and see the character spring to life, to see videos of that character in action. To see more information about the storylines, maybe access to videos or PDFs of hidden material as well. I think there's a really big opportunity that hasn't yet been explored in this marketplace.

And then in addition, there's huge opportunities for art prints, for postcards, annuals, promotional items, all of the sorts of things that the people who are producing these publications may have thought of, but lack the expertise or the inspiration to go ahead and actually produce. You're the company, you're the person that can help them in these areas, and you can help them to grow their business, there's a whole range of other items that they can sell to their own fan base.

Number two is a newsletter market. And again, traditionally, this is seen as very cost conscious, even though I explained to you on the last episode that there are multimillion pound societies out there that use newsletters in a much more traditional publishing way and have high production values. But one of the big issues for the societies and the organizations that produce newsletters is that they're not really used to publishing. They're reliant on volunteers, and these volunteers do not have the expertise that they should have when it comes to producing professional publications.

So how can you help them in these areas? How can you help volunteers to reduce the amount of time they're spending? Can you help them manage design and layout more? Maybe you can give them templates to lay out themselves, which reduces your production time and makes you more efficient, but also helps them reduce that time, for which they aren't prepared to pay. In addition, maybe you could provide an advertisement setting service. So rather than them having to spend their time trying to put together something worthwhile for advertisers when they're not designers, you can produce this for them for a very small fee per advert, and the advertisers will be prepared to pay more because they're getting a professional design service.

And finally, what about delivery? Many of these organizations are relying on people going out in all sorts of weathers to push these through local post boxes. Maybe you could do that instead, maybe they'd be happy to pay for that. There's a whole range of extra services that you can provide to these organizations, and don't be held back by assuming that all of them are low budget organizations. Many of them do have very wealthy donors who are happy to help with this sort of thing.

Number three, company publishing. So this is where we talked about vegetables deliveries, and food deliveries, and the newsletters and the leaflets that got involved here. This is a brilliant area for personalization. These companies have huge amounts of data on the purchasing habits of their customers, and this can be used to make sure that either customers are being encouraged to order more of their old favourites, or to try out new things. These companies have a huge opportunity to combine personalization and the data they have on purchasing habits to run a whole range of

special offers. They can encourage customers to buy something new with a money off offer, but that offer can be made very specifically so that people have the maximum chance of taking it up according to their past purchasing habits. And you can help companies plan these.

In addition, there's a whole host of opportunities to provide loyalty cards and vouchers that encourage people to purchase a minimum order quantity within a certain timeframe, in order to benefit from either an extra gift or some money off.

The fourth area we looked at was self-publishing. Lots of authors want to sell their work, many authors don't know how to do this. There is one person that I know who manages a book production service, and he's not cheap, but he manages everything from running crowdfunding opportunities for photographers, through to designing their books, making sure that they're printed beautifully to the correct production values, that the books go out to the supporters of the crowdfunding campaign, and other books are put into the local market to the right types of bookshops, and mail-order lists as well, so the books are being promoted correctly to the lists that the photographers have already.

You have opportunities here as well for other people who want to self-publish. We'll go back to our family recipe book, maybe there's opportunities that we never saw to actually make this more of a commercial venture. Maybe a printing company could have helped us because they have the right links to local bookshops who are keen to stock and sell these types of publications. There's also an opportunity here for just-in-time publication as well, so that there's no actual risk in undertaking a commercial venture like this.

Then we moved on to photography and craft books. And again, there's a real opportunity here because as you're producing catalogues and books for photographers, as you're producing catalogues and books for people in the craft market, there's all sorts of other things that you can produce for them as well. Particularly in the photography market, can you move into producing prints for the photographers, or even just fulfilling those prints, to producing just in time books and postcards so that a photographer can just receive an order, send it through to you, and you print it and fulfil it on their behalf. There's no need for expensive upfront orders to make sure that they have the right items in stock, there's no need to have a minimum run on any items where there's a commercial risk to producing something.

In addition, this is a market which is very quality conscious, so you have great opportunities for colour management. And I also think it's a market where there's a really good opportunity for augmented reality. You scan your phone over a product, a craft, a piece of jewellery for instance, and you can get a 3-D render where people can actually turn the camera around and see it from all sides and all angles. Again, something that could be very valuable to the rights craft producers.

And then finally, we talked about you becoming a publisher maybe for local businesses, local retail shops. Again, what else can you produce for these types of companies? There's all the voucher schemes and the loyalty cards, there's all the opportunities to upsell people, to make sure that there's all the right leaflets, print and catalogues in that retail premises as well. Producing a catalogue or a magazine that gets delivered to local premises is only the start of the opportunities to get involved with these businesses.

So remember this isn't just about publishing. The publishing offer is simply a route to market for many more opportunities. You have a real chance here to build powerful relationships with your customers and help them produce much more prints, which doesn't just help you, but helps them build their businesses as well. So it's time for action again. Go back to the action points from last month, go through those, I gave you five action points in the month eight podcast. Then I want you to work out a new service that you can offer to the market that you're going for.

So listen to what I've said about these six markets again, and see what you can apply to your market. Either you can use one of the six examples I've given, but you may see publishing opportunities in other markets that I haven't thought of because you're much closer to these. What are the publishing opportunities? What are the extra services that lead on from this? And how can you add extra value-added opportunities within traditional publishing?

Finally, I want you to think about the profit margins on what you're offering. So many of these other opportunities count as upsells, and you'll remember that we did a task on upsells and profit margins in last month's Successful Print Sales Circle, it was one of the video tasks you have there. So go back and look at that as well, and think about how you can use publishing as a way to offer some really good upsells that can push your profit margins up as well.

I wish you success with venturing into the publishing market, and as always, I'd love you to feed back to me how you're doing, whether this is on a group call, or whether you want to drop me an email, I'd love to hear how you're getting on, if you have any questions, and most of all about what you've decided to do and what successes it has brought to you. Next month on the podcast, we're going to talk about events. Now live events have had a real hammering over the past few months. We're actually going to talk about how print can help online events. Does that sound really strange? Listen to next month to find out more.