A Practical Guide to
MARKETING YOUR PRINTING BUSINESS

A hands-on guide to the positioning, packaging, promotion and performance of your printing business through planned marketing strategies
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By John Weaver
Foreword

The constant message echoed in the printing industry globally is that printers need to become more focused on being marketing service providers, to add value to client relationships and capture more of the available marketing spend (of which print is only a part). This recognises the obvious, but sometimes overlooked business principle that printers should be motivated by profit rather than by production. That said, quality production can show us the way ahead if we consider how it is achieved.

Few would dispute that quality production depends on having the best system in place managing the production workflow. In other areas of the business, for example environmental responsibility, Sustainable Green Print (SGP) provides a system. For manufacturing efficiencies LEAN & Green provides a system, ISO provides standards for colour management and so forth. For communicating your use of these standards to clients (which are important Points of Difference) along with your capabilities and achievements, the system you need is a marketing plan.

For many this translates into a sales plan – after all isn’t that what drives business? Well not really. This manual describes marketing as “... every little detail about your company that comes into contact with your clients”. It includes branding, advertising, public relations, promotions, employee training and presentation of your premises, staff, delivery trucks – and key achievements of your business such as SGP or similar certification, participation in LEAN & Green, print or business awards success and so forth.

The marketing plan brings these and many other elements together to create a focussed system of processes and actions to guide your business to achieve a set of pre-determined objectives – and for a printing company that’s usually about market positioning in order to gain new business and maximise profitability.

A marketing plan also helps you to better identify the needs of your clients and in doing so, potential opportunities for better or new services to add value with.
Correctly done it can also bring positive workplace change by involving staff at all levels and creating a new, energetic culture that encourages and rewards initiative. And if all that sounds too hard, don’t despair because the roadmap to get you there is literally at your fingertips. Better still it has been written for you by someone with more than 35 years industry experience who knows how printers think, is illustrated with real-life printers’ situations and provides a package of ‘hands-on’ solutions to make your journey as smooth as it can be.

*A Practical Guide to Marketing your Printing Business* is more than just words; it’s a complete process tool kit needing just a little input by you to work for you. It’s been designed in bite-size chunks for easy digestion and a staged implementation. You can pace yourself and see the results as you go. But best of all – it answers the “how do I do it?” question. There are detailed templates and explanatory guides for every section – from the basics of writing to clients (what do I say?) to monitoring and measuring campaign results – the work has been done for you. Just customise, print and action the components you want.

There are marketing ideas galore, goal setting, tips on working with designers, branding, finding and managing clients, telemarketing, sponsorship – everything you need for successfully marketing your printing company between one set of covers.

If you really want to make your company stand out from the crowd, be more competitive, and increase profitability – then turn a new page and let *A Practical Guide to Marketing your Printing Business* inspire you.

Joe Kowalewski
About the Author

John Weaver has been in the graphic arts industry for over 35 years. A qualified graphic designer, John started his career in the printing industry at the (then) Bank Of New South Wales as the print production co-ordinator, overseeing all print buying for the bank. This included the design and production of the Annual Report and all the bank’s printed corporate and marketing communications.

He was a member of the key management team that oversaw the launch of Westpac Banking Corporation and managed the design, implementation and launch of the new bank’s corporate identity.

Following this, John was studio and print production manager for a large communications group specialising in annual report and corporate publication production.

The next stage of his career was managing a graphic design studio and in-house printing plant for a major engineering firm.

In 1988 John established Weavers Design Group, a visual communications consultancy that specialises in strategic marketing, graphic design and print production management for a broad range of corporate, SME’s, professional firms and member association clients.

As part of the business growth and diversification John also established his own printing company in 1995, “The Balmain Printing Company”. This venture proved to be highly successful, so much so that three years later he accepted a merger offer with a larger printing company, retaining a directorship in the new entity.

Weavers Design Group continues to provide its clients with visual communications solutions for both the traditional print based medium, as well as the vast array of continually emerging electronic options.
John is a long time member of the Printing Industry Association of Australia, Graphic Arts Services Association of Australia and the Australian Graphic Design Association.

He has an extensive and unique experience within the graphic arts industry, combining the knowledge and skills of business manager, graphic designer, marketer, print buyer and print manager, making him ideally suited to write *A Practical Guide to Marketing Your Printing Business.*
Acknowledgements

I am amazed at the changes that have occurred within the graphic arts industry the past 30 years, mostly driven by developments in technology.

When I started my design studio, computers were only just starting to be seen as useful, but not regarded as any more than a desktop publishing tool. We marked up type, sent it to the typesetter, pasted galleys in the drawing boards, photocopied and couriered proofs to the client. Authors corrections required the process repeated, and once the artwork was approved, each board needed a colour overlay instruction for the film house.

Colour separations were done, boards photographed and film planned on the bench, and combined for chemical proofs to be approved by the client. Corrections were a greater nightmare, with the whole process needing to be repeated.

Printers would lay plates from the approved film and print the project using chemical based inks, and colour adjustments by eye.

As you would imagine, the timeframe for a project from start to finish was significantly longer than these days. But each stage was considered a profession, with trained and skilled graphic designers, film planners and printers who “did their time” to learn their skills.

How different things are today. Computers have revolutionised and opened graphic design to anyone who buys the hardware and software, film planning has ceased to exist, printing presses are all CTP and computer controlled - and clients expect their work virtually overnight, of high quality and as inexpensive as possible.

During my time working in the graphic arts industry I have been fortunate to make the acquaintance of a number of very colourful and knowledgeable people who have been pivotal in my development and understanding of this complex and always changing industry.
In 1978 a real gentlemen, Mr. Trevor Milligan was the Managing Director of Mockridge Bulmer in Artarmon, which later became part of the Penfolds Printing Group. As a new boy in the world of print buying, Trevor took me under his wing and guided me through the myriad of print specifications, stock options, economies and buying options for print materials.

Some years later I worked for Ric Bowker of Colona Graphix, a quiet but very savy manager who had come from the packaging industry, and who taught me a great deal about systems, processes, and people management.

In 1995 I merged my printing business with Green & Gold Printing of Artarmon, and worked for a number of years with David Tonkiss and Adrian Blessington, both with a background of owner/operator of a small commercial printing business. This interaction gave me a first hand understanding of the issues faced in the smaller commercial sector, when the owner has so many issues to address, without the supporting budget and infrastructure that is enjoyed by large commercial operations.

For many years now I have been privileged to know and work with Ken Mapledoram and David Austin from Superfine Printing Group in Arncliffe. I first met Ken when he was at John Sands Printing and I was responsible for the production of the Bank of New South Wales Annual Report, and where he delighted in always organising press approvals for 3.00am.

Beneath their larrikin nature, Ken and David are very astute business men who run a successful medium sized printing business by knowing and implementing many, if not all of the strategies outlined in this manual.

In 1998 I obtained the re-print rights to a US publication titled *High Profit Marketing System for Printers* by Michael Kimble, and I have drawn on a number of his marketing ideas, adapted them to our own business climate and incorporated them within this manual.
Joe Kowalewski, National Director, Marketing & Media Services of Printing Industries Association of Australia is a great advocate on behalf of members of the printing industry and is passionate about continuing to improve the situation for every business owner and their staff. Joe is a strong believer in the need for continued development of skills and business acumen, including marketing, and I am grateful for his belief and support of this project.

I know that there are many astute business people running printing businesses and I don’t assume that I have all the answers to the issues you face in generating business through marketing strategies. I do hope that you might get some new ideas and strategies from this manual, that you can incorporate into your business, and that they prove to be beneficial to you and your printing business.

John Weaver
Introduction

What is marketing? 1
How to get the most out of this manual 2

1. Your role in marketing

1.1 Your role in marketing your printing business 4
1.2 Plan to Succeed 5
1.3 Staying on top of things 5
1.4 Reputation 6
1.5 Get your staff involved 7
1.6 Printing Associations 8
1.7 Trade Journals 8

2. Planning your marketing strategy

2.1 The stages of your business 9
2.2 Know where you’re going & how to get there 11
2.3 SWOT analysis 12
2.4 Analyse what you do best 13
2.5 What’s special about your company? 15
2.6 The client experience 16
2.7 Know your clients 19
2.8 Fire your bad clients 20
2.9 The lifetime value of clients 20
2.10 Know your competitors 23
2.11 Clients’ marketing materials 23
2.12 Target marketing 24
2.13 Setting goals 25
2.14 Know your numbers 26
2.15 Marketing Plan 28
3. Positioning your printing business

3.1 Positioning
3.2 Your unique selling point (USP)
3.3 Your brand
3.4 Brand strategy
3.5 Developing your visual identity
3.6 Brand management

4. Packaging your services

4.1 Business tools
4.2 Marketing materials
4.3 Producing your marketing materials
4.4 Working with a graphic designer
4.5 Working with a writer
4.6 Budgeting and managing the process
4.7 Following the lead
4.8 Content of marketing materials
4.9 Your Website
4.10 Building your website

5. Promotion to prospects

5.1 Your database
5.2 Marketing your website
5.3 e-mail marketing
5.4 Writing a free booklet or report
5.5 Write a newspaper column
5.6 Monthly newsletter
5.7 Telemarketing
5.8 Direct response marketing 83
5.9 Direct mail 84
5.10 Three step letters 89
5.11 Buying new clients 95
5.12 Postcard marketing 97
5.13 Advertising 99
5.14 Yellow Pages advertising 111
5.15 Publicity 118
5.16 Sponsor an event 119
5.17 Joint Ventures 121
5.18 Networking 127
5.19 Trade Shows & Business Expos 128
5.20 Resurrect old clients 129
5.21 Take over failed competitors’ clients 130
5.22 Barter your printing 131
5.23 Buying groups 134
5.24 Operate at 100% capacity 134

6. Persuasion

6.1 How marketing materials should be used 136
6.2 Make it easy to do business with you 138
6.3 Make your client feel important 139
6.4 Educate your clients and employees 139
6.5 Follow up 140
6.6 Risk Reversal 142
6.7 Pricing your services 144
6.8 Free Printing Audits 146

7. Performance of your business

7.1 Customer service 154
7.2 Respond to complaints fast 154
7.3 Ask your clients what they think 155
7.4 Educate your clients 157
8. Monitoring and measuring

8.1 Methods of measurement

8.2 Ongoing monitoring

9. Action Plans
Introduction

Wouldn’t it be great if you knew how to attract all the customers you could handle? Particularly if you attracted the right kind of customers – those who were a pleasure to work with, had a good volume of the type of work you do best, paid their account on time, and referred your services to other similar prospects.

By knowing the strategies of marketing and applying them specifically to your business, you can be successful at attracting and retaining all the customers that you will ever need.

The key to understanding why you need this marketing guide is also the first step in making it work for you. That key is re-thinking the real nature of the business that you’re in.

When asked what you do, you probably state that you’re in the printing business, however in reality you’re in the marketing business. This is the business you need to achieve in to be successful, otherwise you remain simply a self-employed printer, with little prospect of becoming a successful business person in the printing industry. You have to expand your perception of what you do before you can expand your business.

No matter how good a printer you are, you need to sell your printing to the market or you will have either a stagnant business, a declining business… or no business at all. There is no reason why you can’t become an excellent marketer once you know how. This manual will give you systematic and specific ways of developing and maintaining a successful printing business through the kind of marketing that you can learn to do and implement yourself.

What is marketing?

Many printers make the mistake of believing that marketing and sales are one and the same things - but they are not, and it is important to know and remember the difference.

*Marketing* is the process of creating the pricing, promotion and placement of your product, in such a way as to stimulate the purchasing of your product by your customers.
So, for the owner or manager of a printing business, marketing focuses on attracting new customers, getting them to buy your printing, and making sure that they are so happy with the experience that they come back to buy again.

If you are successful with your marketing strategies and efforts, then this will translate into sales. When you receive a purchase order you have achieved a sale, but the success of achieving that sale is dependant upon your success in marketing your business and it’s printing to the marketplace.

Marketing involves everything about your company that is visible or audible to your clients, current or potential. It can be blatant or subtle, but every tiny detail tells clients something about who you are as a company. Marketing includes branding, advertising, public relations, promotions, employee training, the presentation of your premises, staff, delivery trucks, etc.

Marketing is every little detail about your company that comes into contact with your clients.

**How to get the most out of this manual**

This manual is written like a course. It is a complete marketing system that contains marketing theory to position your business, and a range of specific strategies to gain new clients and retain your current ones.

Firstly, you should review the entire contents of this manual carefully. Consider where you feel your business is at the moment. You may be happy with your brand and marketing materials, and have identified your target market in which case you would concentrate on the marketing strategies suggested in Section 5, for the promotion of the business to its market.

You may realize that you have never really addressed issues such as brand and positioning, in which case section 3 on Positioning of your business might be a better place to start.

Every business will be at a different stage and require different approaches, so decide where it is best for you to work on first.
At the end of the manual in Section 9 are Action Plans, for you to complete. These Action Plans identify what actions need to be taken, by whom and by when, for each strategy you might execute. By completing these action plans, you are able to manage the implementation of each strategy, at a time and with the resources that suit you.

Sample letters and forms included within the text of this manual are also supplied in Microsoft Word on the accompanying CD, and you can customise and use them as you see fit.

So select the stage that you feel is most relevant to your printing business at the moment and start implementing the recommended strategies. Introduce the strategies into your business one at a time as your time and resources allow, don’t try to do everything at once, or you will be overpowered with additional work, and achieve nothing.

Always monitor and measure the results of each strategy that you undertake, to know they are running smoothly, and effectively.

Keep adopting more strategies and recommendations in this manual, because at last you are in control of your business and its future.