

Printers and Peppered Moths continued...

So we're still heralding "Printers" as the business world's Peppered moths. That's to say that the evolution should be an example to every industry trying to adapt to the ever-changing environment.

So far we have explained the first 4 steps in the graphic communication journey (See [Part 1 of Printers and Peppered Moths](#)), there are 3 more to go. The first being that for which graphic communication houses are most well known - Print.

Print Preferences

Historically, the core function of a graphic communication house was printing. Technology though constantly stretches the limits and the capabilities of print today are astounding. There are two major options when going to print.

Lithographic printing - the most common commercial printing process, is used for everything from brochures to annual reports to flyers. Litho is based on the theory that water and oil do not mix. This method of printing uses plates whose image areas attract ink and whose non-image areas repel ink. Plates can be made from film positives or with the latest technology, straight from computer to plate (CTP). CTP technology cuts out the film stage and creates a first generation dot which gives the customer visibly improved quality. This huge quality advantage has placed CTP as the primary choice amongst customers. Litho printing is the preferred option on large print orders as the bulk of the cost is associated with the initial set up.

Digital printing - when using this method information is transmitted straight from the digital file to the printer. This method gives marketers a huge advantage of being able to cheaply produce smaller amounts of material but also allows one to use print technologies such as 'Print on Demand', which allows marketers to print marketing materials as they need them thus negating obsolescence and warehousing costs. Another print technology is Variable Data Printing (VDP), which is particularly effective in direct mail. At incredibly high speeds VDP is able to personalize and customize every single page of your marketing materials by historical preference using your database of information. This facilitates the development of more rewarding relationships with customers and results in a significantly better ROI.

The Finishing Touch

The right finishing details, however small, can enhance excellent design and printing and take your communication to its final destination. Graphic communication houses today offer almost every conceivable form of finishing. Finishing options include die-cutting, embossing, folding, varnishing, binding, stitching, rewettable gluing, laminating, numbering, perforating, stitching, scratch offs, spot UV and silk-screening.

All these options at every stage allow you to be as creative as you can possibly be and have an entire project completed in one place where the responsibility lies with one team.

From Creative to...Fulfillment

Finally the function that is very often overlooked, fulfilment. Making logical sense, to really provide the full service from idea to end user, the most advanced of the graphic communication houses have added fulfilment into their offering. Your graphic communication partner's secure warehousing with restricted access and sophisticated stock control allows customers to store materials for delayed or on demand delivery. Mailing and delivery can also be done in-house to any location, single point or complex delivery, local or international. What a pleasure. Allied to warehousing is the fulfilment function which allows customers to take delivery of replenishable materials as and when they need them. For example, you might choose to take part delivery of marketing brochures for your client and replenish these stocks when they run low. Just in time delivery is another marketing miracle wherein your Graphic Communication partner can produce and deliver new materials immediately without you having to incur warehousing costs.

And so our journey ends. We've traveled from idea to end user, from creative to fulfilment and showed in each case how the most advanced graphic communication houses continue to adapt to meet the needs of the market place and their customers. Meet with your current graphic communication partner to find out how they can further help you...and if they can't, don't be complacent. When it comes to value, there is no messing about. Find a graphic communication partner that can really contribute to your project objectives and not just your printing requirements.

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