

CONNECTED

VISUAL MEDIA ALLIANCE

FALL 2024



Harnessing the Future of Print & Design: AI, Robotics, & Automation

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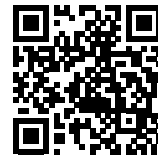
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Visual Media Alliance is non-profit trade association serving Northern California printers, packaging, label makers, and design agency and other small business owners. By providing events, education, discounts, advocacy, industry promotion and insurance programs, we help our member firms become more successful and profitable.

ON THE COVER

Cover art digital embellishments by Harris & Bruno's ZRX machine.

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Valued Members,

Over the years, I have had the pleasure of witnessing first-hand several transformational leaps in our industry from the transition to desktop publishing to the rise of digital printing and online ordering. Now, we are seeing another acceleration into an exciting new era, where automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence (AI) are driving the next wave of innovation and efficiency.

My trips this year to drupa, Labelexpo, and PRINTING United Expo confirmed this transformation. At the shows, I saw extraordinary advancements in automation from nearly all the major equipment vendors in auto plate loaders, robotic material handling arms, 3D printing, and major advances in embellishments technology that can handle repetitive tasks and free up employees for more relevant needs.

AI is being heavily promoted by vendors in MIS systems, quality control, and inspection systems, prepress, digital front ends, and press automation. We are also seeing use cases for AI where companies are more productive for the ultimate benefit of their customers.

VMA is here to support members in staying up-to-date with technology and innovation. This issue of *Connected* magazine includes stories from members and subject matter experts who share their experiences with automation, robotics, and AI. You can also stay current by taking advantage of resources like our Collective Conversations events which have included topics such as "Saving Time with Marketing AI," and our online training platform, Print University.

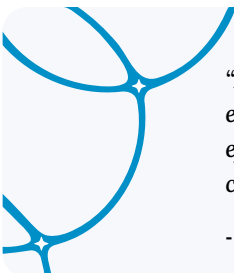
Finally, join us at our next ConnectUp event in December at Harris & Bruno in Roseville to see their new digital embellishment machine, the ZRX, in action and to network with industry peers. You can see a sneak peak of the ZRX's abilities on the cover of this issue of *Connected*.

Please reach out to me anytime with your comments and thoughts at ian@visualmediaalliance.org.



Sincerely,

Ian Flynn
VMA President



"AI is the defining technology of our time. It's transforming every industry, from healthcare to retail, by creating more efficient processes and empowering workers to focus on creative and critical tasks."

- Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft

PRINTING United Expo Recap: Innovations in AI & Sustainability Lead the Way

Ian and Shannon enjoyed engaging with members at PRINTING United Expo 2024 in Las Vegas, where the focus was on AI advancements in the print industry. This year's show highlighted groundbreaking innovations in AI, automation, and robotics that are transforming business operations.

The event guide features insights from the latest "State of the Industry Report", which describes AI as the "single biggest disrupter to the print industry" and a "game changer" that "will play a large part in shaping our industry." Those who embrace AI are poised to operate more efficiently than their competition and create new growth opportunities. Importantly, the report notes that AI's impact extends to "all disciplines" and "all levels" of a company, making it essential for business success.

Key highlights included demonstrations of AI-driven workflows that enhance efficiency and reduce costs, as well as state-of-the-art automation tools and innovative machines.

The event also emphasized sustainability initiatives, showcasing how new technologies enable eco-friendly printing solutions. Attendees gained insights into leveraging these developments for a competitive edge in a rapidly evolving market.



AI In the Spotlight at Labelexpo Americas

The 2024 Labelexpo Americas event in Chicago highlighted the latest innovations in flexo, hybrid, and digital press technology, along with advanced finishing solutions. Attendees explored educational content focused on automation, RFID, and sustainability, featuring insights from industry experts.

Katie King, an authority on artificial intelligence, delivered a keynote presentation declaring AI as "the defining technology of our generation." She emphasized how label companies can leverage AI to enhance design processes, noting its ability to autonomously generate multiple product design variations faster and with greater precision than human designers.

A notable example is Nutella's "Nutella Unica" campaign, which utilized AI to create 7 million unique jar designs, all of which sold out. Additionally, AI can play a crucial role in inspection and quality assurance, helping to identify defects and thereby, fostering customer trust and loyalty.

King advised businesses to develop an AI playbook outlining objectives, use cases, team roles, and implementation guidelines, while also ensuring data privacy and ethics.

Here's a tip: Consider using AI to help draft your playbook, and share your experiences with us!



Spicers Wide Format Expo: The Latest in Large-Scale Printing

In October, Kelly Spicers hosted a wide format expo and customer appreciation event at their Fremont warehouse. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet some of the top suppliers in the industry and learn what's new. Attendees also enjoyed a complimentary lunch and fun raffle.



1 State of the Industry report by NAPCO Research and PRINTING United Alliance and sponsored by Canon USA

Top Human Resource Law Pitfalls: A Recap

This summer, we hosted a popular Collective Conversation event on "Top Ten Employment Law Pitfalls" with guest speaker Jenny Wiegley, a human resources and employment attorney.

The session provided invaluable insights for small business owners navigating the complex landscape of California's employment laws, helping them mitigate risks and avoid costly legal issues.

Jenny covered issues like misclassifications, paid sick leave, feedback delays, and ignoring your gut to help small businesses stay compliant and avoid legal headaches. If you need more assistance, contact Jenny at 415-634-7472 or jenny@welcounsel.com. Members get a complimentary 20-minute counsel with Jenny.



50th Collective Conversations: "The 25 Best Sales Tips Ever"

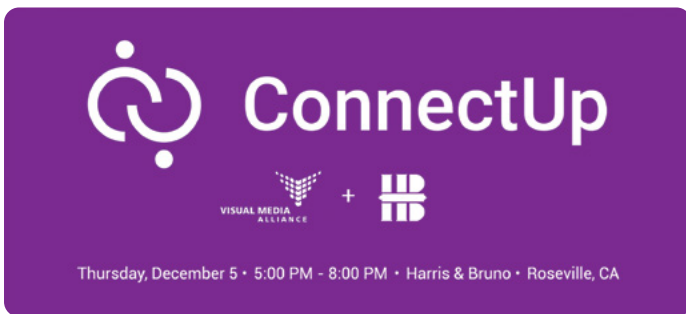
On October 16th we hosted our 50th Collective Conversations event. This valuable series has covered many topics, from human resources, to paper shortages, marketing AI, and more.

During this live event, Bill Farquharson, industry sales coach, shared his top sales tips ever such as "final quarter strategies" and "time management tactics." The session was so informative and engaging that he only had time to share six of the tips! Stay tuned for a follow-up session with Bill and/or contact Shannon to receive a complimentary (for members) copy of Bill's "25 Best Sales Tips" ebook.

shannon@visualmediaalliance.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

View all upcoming events at visualmediaalliance.org/upcoming-events.



ConnectUp at Harris & Bruno • Roseville • December 5, 2024

Join us to network and tour our VMA printer member facility, Harris & Bruno in Roseville.

Harris & Bruno are experts in coating, embellishing, and printing equipment for digital, offset, flexo, and corrugated. See a live finishing demo on their new ZRX machine. Plus, we'll have food and refreshments.

Register at bit.ly/3UP4dc8



Annual CrabFest at PIASC • San Mateo • January 24, 2025

Save the date for VMA's annual VMA Dungeness CrabFest at the Peninsula Italian American Social Club in San Mateo.

Enjoy a fun night out socializing with old friends and meeting new ones. Plus, back by popular demand, get ready to groove to the beats of DJ music! And get excited to see who wins our second "most crabtastic" award!

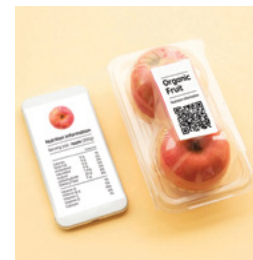
See more details at visualmediaalliance.org/crabfest

MEMBER NEWS

MCC Expands Smart Label Capabilities

Multi-Color Corporation (MCC) has acquired Kansas City-based Starport Technologies, a leading smart label solutions provider. Starport specializes in RFID products and smart labels for consumer and supply chain applications, utilizing advanced manufacturing processes. This acquisition strengthens MCC's position in the growing RFID labeling market.

CEO Hassan Rmaile said combining Starport's expertise with MCC's global leadership will deliver innovative RFID solutions. Starport's founder, Jeff Nedblake, will lead MCC's newly formed smart packaging business unit, accelerating growth in intelligent labeling solutions. mcclabel.com | starporttech.com



Delta Print Group's Hottest Printer

Delta Print Group conducted some interesting in-house research to guide their technology purchasing. They polled their customers on what was the printer the audience thought they should acquire. The results thrilled the team: The winner was the Canon Colorado M-Series!

Needless to say, they were quick to add the Canon Colorado M to their Large Format department, providing a major upgrade that will take their printing capabilities to the next level.

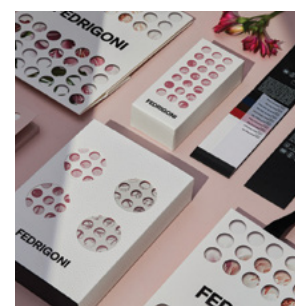
The installation, which took place on the second story of the DPG Campus, was a true team effort. deltaprintgroup.com | canon.com/shop/colorado-m-series

Kelly Spicers Partners with Italian Paper Maker Fedrigoni

Kelly Spicers has teamed up with iconic Italian paper manufacturer Fedrigoni to bring the North American Collection to market.

This collaboration offering includes premium paper options carefully curated for Kelly Spicers' customers. The collection features top-quality, beautifully crafted paper designed to inspire creativity and enhance print projects.

With this partnership, Kelly Spicers strengthens its reputation for delivering superior products, while Fedrigoni expands its reach in North America. Together, they offer a stunning array of paper choices for design agencies and printers looking for high-end, unique materials. kellyspicers.com/fedrigoni



CANON CORNER

Innovation with Canon is More Like 'Ink-ovation'

By Rusty Davis, Senior Account Executive, Canon Solutions America

As Canon nears the 40th anniversary of launching the first bubble jet inkjet printer, its 'ink-ovation' continues to expand across various printing disciplines. Earlier this year at drupa, Canon introduced several new press lines, including the varioPRINT iX1700, varioPRESS iV7 B2+ press, LabelStream 2000, and a new 4-7 color corrugated sheetfed system. The varioPRINT iX1700 was a showstopper at PRINTING United Expo 2024, with every session at maximum capacity, even on the last day of the show.

Canon's success is driven by its commitment to innovation. For the past 38 years, Canon has consistently ranked in the top five for patent filings, often placing in the top three. This dedication to new technology provides Canon and its customers with industry-leading advantages, particularly in the printing sector.

A recent example of this "ink-ovation" is Canon's new thermal inkjet head technology, featured in both the iX1700 and LabelStream 2000 (shown at Labelexpo Americas 2024). Paired with Canon's patented polymer pigmented aqueous ink and ColorGrip technology, this innovation allows press owners to

print on the widest array of substrates, opening new applications for clients while delivering exceptional image quality and consistency — all without the need for expensive flood coatings or substrate treatments.

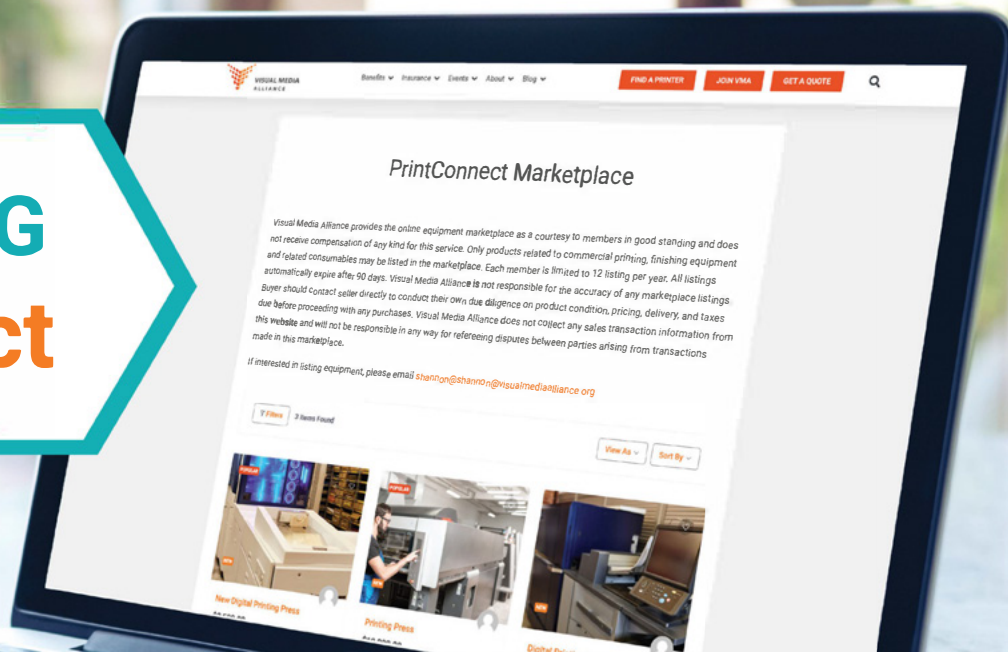
Canon's continued advancements in ink technology offer significant returns on investment, as many of these technologies are shared across different press lines, ensuring consistency for diverse business needs.

Since introducing the first bubble jet printer in 1985, Canon has made tremendous strides, and with new presses planned for 2025 and beyond, the future looks incredibly promising for the next 40 years!

Want to know more? Drop me a note and let's connect.

Rusty Davis is the senior account executive for Canon's Production Printing Systems, the division solely responsible for Canon's production inkjet systems. Rusty has more than 24 years of sales, specialist, and marketing experience with Canon and Océ Technologies, working on both coasts and in multiple roles throughout his career, but it all started at the University of San Diego, driving a golf cart for the University Print Shop (Océ customer!) and learning! rudavis@csa.canon.com | 925-949-3265

INTRODUCING PrintConnect



VMA Member's New Buy-Sell Digital Marketplace

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Be Flexible, or Else You'll Break: How Calitho Builds Through Constant Innovation

BY REVA HARRIS



Calitho client services

"There's an old fable about the tree that doesn't bend in the wind and eventually gets knocked over," says Parsa Taheripour. It's a cautionary tale against inflexibility, and as the director of client services for Calitho, a family-owned print shop, he takes it to heart. In the past 40 years, the print industry has faced some serious headwinds, but Calitho's ability to adapt not only keeps it from getting knocked over — it enables the company to thrive.

It starts with his parents, founders Mardjan and Bahman Taheripour. "Our leadership has always been on the cutting edge of innovation and change," says Dhara, Parsa's brother and Calitho's director of business development.

The Taheripours grew the company from a small print shop into a full-service operation, with a particular emphasis on packaging, wide format printing, and fulfillment and distribution. At every step of the way, their forward-thinking, flexible approach has been the secret to Calitho's success.

To drive innovation, listen first

The inspiration for Calitho's innovation often starts with listening to customers. "Our sales and customer service teams are constantly trying to figure out what our customers are really struggling with. How can we help them beyond this box, this distribution, or this kit that we're doing right now?" says Dhara.

Through that listening and responsiveness, Calitho has developed solutions like digital storefronts that allow customers to order materials on a just-in-time basis. Since many of Calitho's customers have dozens of

branches, each one can order what they need using an Amazon-style model.

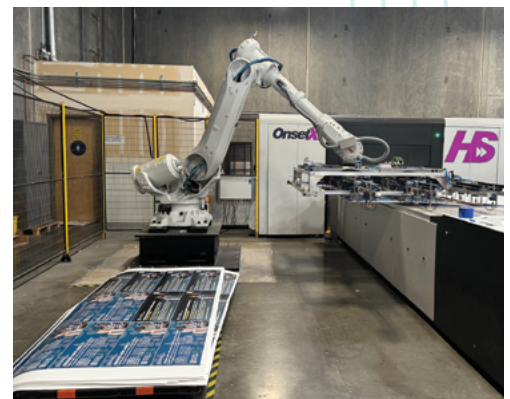
To make it easier to provide customers with samples, Calitho created its own digital document library. Each sample is tagged with information about the production method and where it's located in Calitho's library. "A customer service rep can say, 'I want to find unit cartons with foil stamping.' Every relevant example that we produce will show up in that document library so they can pull the samples and send them to the client," says Parsa.

Keeping up with the cutting-edge innovation

To keep up with the latest innovations, the Calitho team learns about new technology from a range of sources, including *Connected*, print industry publications, and trade shows. Dhara says, "It's important to step outside of your bubble and read these publications and learn from your peers in the industry who might have a different perspective than you do."

The company also established a position with the express mandate to innovate existing processes. They hired long-time company "fixer" Hector Franco for the role. In a short amount of time Franco successfully enacted changes across departments, processes, and technologies, reflecting the company philosophy that innovation is a full-time job.

An example of innovation in the production environment is Calitho's Agfa Onset X HS, an automated flatbed inkjet printer with a robotic arm. The arm removes sheets from the printer and sets them aside, which frees up the operator's time, resulting in a major productivity boost: "If it takes 30 seconds to go around the machine and we're doing thousands of sheets, that adds up very quickly," says Dhara.



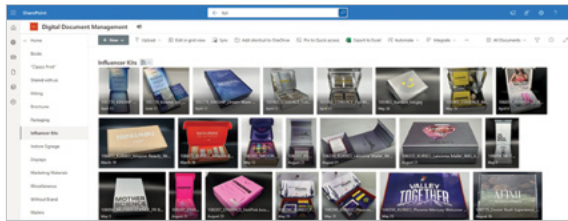
Agfa Onset X HS



“Every printer could go out and improve the margins and efficiency of their business by just implementing AI in these small areas like billing and data analysis.”



Bindery department kitting See's Candies signage



Calitho digital library foil unit cartons

Streamlining business processes with AI

For Calitho, some of the most powerful applications for innovative tech, especially AI, are to improve business operations, like billing for See's Candies. Each of See's 280 stores receives custom signage packages, and Calitho has to account for the value of each package, as well as the sales tax. “AI has massively improved the efficiency of that process,” notes Parsa. With AI crunching the numbers, an eight-hour process has been whittled down to 20 minutes.

Parsa sees operational improvements as the biggest, most immediate way to benefit from AI. Right now, he says, “Every printer could go out and improve the margins and efficiency of their business by just implementing AI in these small areas like billing and data analysis. I think there are immediate gains to be had there.”

Experimentation comes with risk

Despite Calitho's approach to trying new tech, the team does take care to manage risk. Parsa believes that, “As AI becomes more powerful and more comprehensive, and you're feeding more and more data into these programs — more customer data, more job data, more production data — the need for robust cyber security as a printer increases as well.”

They're incorporating protections like firewalls, backups, user authentication, and cybersecurity insurance through VMA. “That's something that's going to have to grow with AI at the same pace, otherwise, you're going to be extremely vulnerable,” he says.

The future is flexibility

Risk aside, Parsa and Dhara see lots of exciting potential applications for AI, robotics, and automation on the horizon. As they explore how to incorporate new technology into Calitho's operations, they plan to stay true to the company's core values of flexibility and openness to change.

According to Parsa, “I think there's a lot to be said for having a nimble and flexible mindset. If this is the way the wind is blowing right now, let me try it, and if it doesn't work, one day, it's going to blow the other way, and we'll be bending that way too.”



Calitho company

Leading the Leap Forward: Navigating the Future of Print

BY REVA HARRIS

As new technologies become more advanced and accessible, staying in the know, deciding which technologies are best for your business, and incorporating them into your shop can be overwhelming. However, forward-thinking printers are leaning into this new era of innovation by successfully integrating automation, robotics, and AI into their operations.

According to Pat McGrew, technology evangelist and consultant for the print industry, the secrets to success are strategic decision-making and a willingness to try technologies that are dramatically enhancing the operations of printing businesses.

For the past four decades, McGrew has worked at the intersection of print and technology, giving her a rare insight into the industry.

“Most printers have workflow bottlenecks and gaps, and while many of them want to automate their workflows because that will help them solve labor and turnaround time problems, they’re not sure where to start, and they’re not sure where their problems are,” says McGrew.

Today, she works with printers to improve their operations and use technology more effectively. She also works with vendors to help them understand printers’ needs and differentiate their products.

Here are some of her tips on how to strategically incorporate robotics, AI, and automation into your print operations.



Pat McGrew, print industry consultant, Managing Director at McGrewGroup, Inc and MC2 Services LLC

How to integrate robotics in print operations

McGrew believes that the industry is ready to fully embrace robotics, especially as labor challenges continue to be a struggle. “People want jobs that are meaningful. Lifting a box of paper from place A to place B is not the most meaningful job in the world.”

Using robotics frees people up to do more meaningful tasks and minimizes human error. With new tech like automated mobile robots (AMRs), which she saw operating at drupa this year, you can move print jobs between tasks, like from the printer to the sorting table, or move a die from the shelf to the die-cutting machine, without human intervention. Robotic arms can add efficiency to packing mail trays or shipping boxes, too.

The technology is more accessible than ever. “If you’re buying finishing equipment from anybody in the US, they all have robotic solution partners that can help you, which is really great.”

How to use AI to work smarter

McGrew says that printers can use free AI tools to analyze their data and offer strategies to help them make better decisions.

“AI has the potential for every printer everywhere to learn more about their business by having these tools look at your data, the tools you’re using, the work you’re doing, the reports out of your MIS and ERP systems, your inventory buying patterns, and have it bring back suggestions on how you could become more efficient.”

For example, you can use AI to look at sales data and determine whether there are patterns in what services sales reps sell and when they sell them. Using that information, you can retrain your reps to sell products and services that improve profit margins, use your equipment more effectively, and even help increase their commissions.

There are two keys to making this work. First, McGrew says, “Learning how to write a prompt really becomes an essential skill. Here’s how I like to start things: ‘Imagine that you’re an analyst and you’ve been given these three reports. Review these reports and make recommendations of where the bottlenecks, gaps, and opportunities are based on the data in them.’”

The other key is data quality. One of McGrew’s customers spent two years cleaning up their data before running this process. While that was an extensive project, it was worth it. They were able to increase profits by 55% over the course of a year.



drupa 2024 exhibit floor

“There is a way to leverage the power of technology to help you achieve your goals faster and to open up your profit potential...”



The Packsize EFI X5 Nozomi, featured at drupa 2024, is a fully automated on-demand packaging system

How to stay current on the latest print tech

McGrew keeps up with industry trends because she’s a voracious reader. “I probably have 150 newsletters I subscribe to, and in a given month, I’ll scan all of them.”

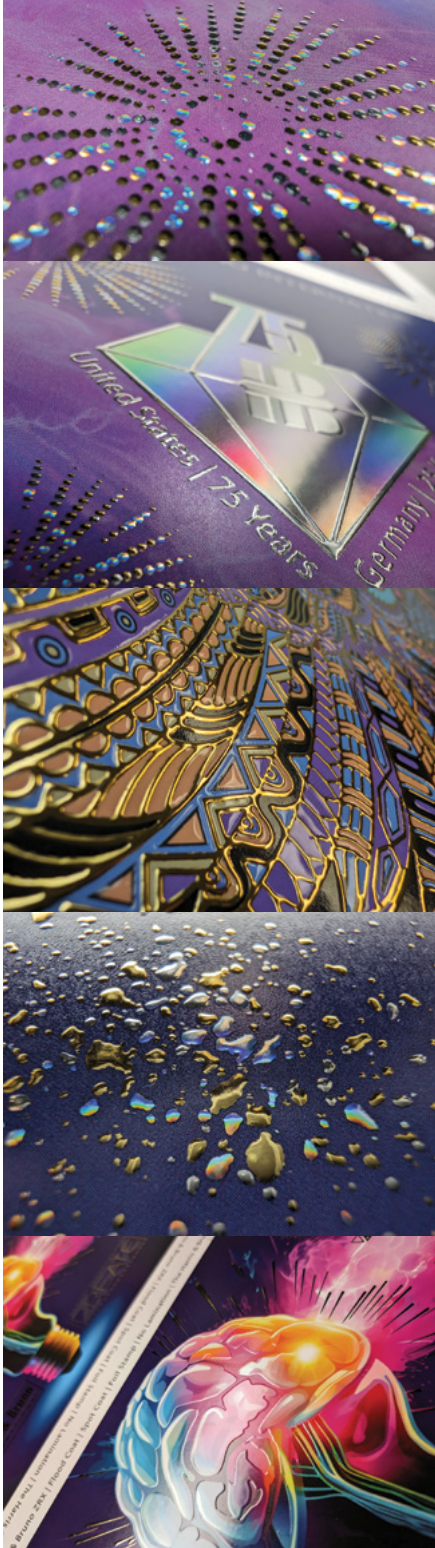
Her reading list includes US publications and international magazines from Australia, Europe, and Asia. “I’ll find something in one region that is really kind of interesting, and they think is normal, and I’ve never seen it anywhere else, and I can pick that application up and take it to clients in other regions to help give them differentiation.”

Since most business owners don’t have time to consume as much information as she does, she recommends taking a more simplified approach. On a monthly basis, “Pick something like Bain or McKinsey or *Harvard Business Review*. They all do newsletters that you can subscribe to for free, and they give you a good context for where business is going.”

To round out your reading list, she suggests industry publications like *Connected* and other vendor newsletters. “Most of the vendors want you to be the best you can be. And one of the things that they’ll do is they’ll put a case study in their newsletters.” Keeping up with those case studies can give you an edge.

What it takes to win with technology

For McGrew, successful innovation requires willingness to try and trust in the data: “There is a way to leverage the power of technology to help you achieve your goals faster and to open up your profit potential. You just have to be willing to take the first step and understand yourself, understand what your data is telling you, and not believe you know better than the data. If you can make that leap, then this technology can help you grow your business.”



With the ZRX, Harris & Bruno Is Pioneering Print Automation

BY REVA HARRIS

As a manufacturer of automated coating and inking systems, Harris & Bruno is known for engineering solutions that push the print industry forward. According to Ryan Moskun, Harris & Bruno's marketing manager, the company's latest innovation, the ZRX, stands to transform the way digital embellishments look and feel, as well as how they're made: "This is the first machine of its kind that allows printers to digitally embellish on uncoated media."

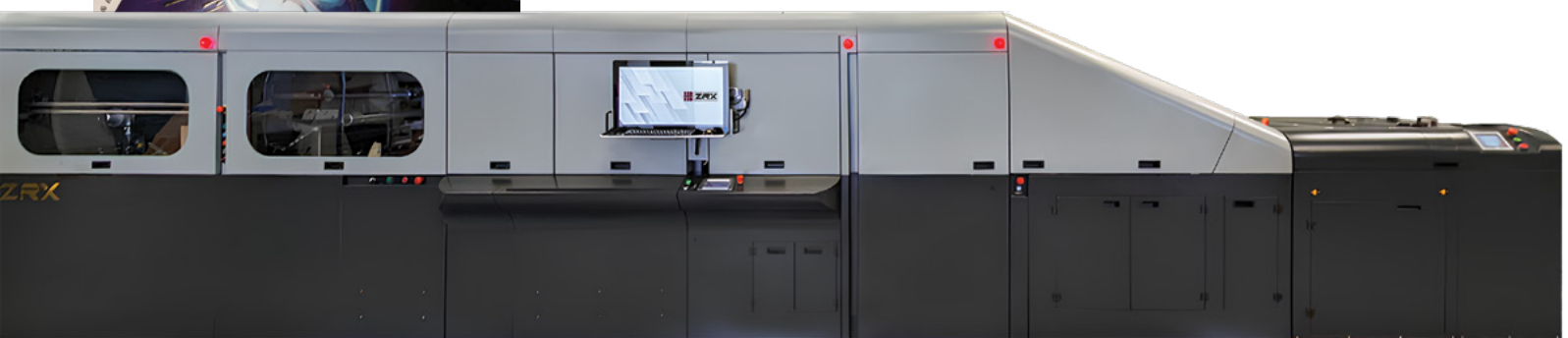
The ZRX allows customers to be able to digitally embellish onto uncoated media, safely. Harris & Bruno has engineered an alternative that allows you to produce digital embellishments more efficiently, sustainably, and at a lower cost, while also unleashing new creative possibilities.

An advanced alternative to lamination

In the past, if you wanted to embellish on uncoated media, you had to use lamination, which has several drawbacks. For starters, it adds another step to the process, since you need to carry your project from one machine to another. "We've cut out the need for another machine, another operator, and the slowness of lamination. You just put your sheets on the front end of our machine, and they run straight through in one single pass," Moskun says.

The ZRX also reduces the costs that come with lamination. According to Moskun, "On a B2 sheet, lamination is about 30 to 35 cents a sheet, depending on what you're doing. Coating, on the other hand, is roughly three cents a sheet, so the cost savings are incredible."

There is also increased scrutiny around lamination, as regulators set their sights on reducing single-use plastics in packaging and disposable food containers. European regulations have been in place for a few years, and it's likely that American laws, such as California's SB 54, will eventually follow suit.



ZRX Machine

Making it easier to design digital embellishments

Moskun shared the ZRX with designers at PaperSpecs. He says they liked how the ZRX streamlines their processes and allows for more creative freedom: “You could tell that this machine speaks their language. It is so simple and easy to edit and change things on the fly.”

Traditional embossing requires platemaking, which can take a couple of days. If you make an error or need to change the design, that'll cost you more time and money. With the ZRX, he points out, “All you have to do is edit your file, just like you'd edit a Photoshop or Illustrator document.” Designers have the flexibility to create multiple designs and generate samples without any additional costs or waiting periods.

They also don't need any special training or technology to design for the ZRX. They simply use a special color to indicate where they want foil or embossing, and the machine takes it from there.



ZRW Web Coater

Under the hood

Automation drives the processes that make the ZRX work. The operator only has to load the media and use the touchscreen user interface. From the feeder, the sheets are pulled into the coating unit, where the machine flood coats them. Then, the sheets go to the digital spot unit, which spot coats the embellishment.

Next, it goes to the foil unit which stamps down on the same area of the spot coat. Lastly, it comes out on the other end where the stacker automatically stacks it. Moskun emphasizes the ease of the process: “You come in with your pallet jack, and you're done. And the only operator intervention was the quick setup at the beginning, selecting the file, selecting the amount of sheets, hitting go, and the job's done.”



Founders of Harris & Bruno



Harris & Bruno's original shop in San Leandro, Ca



Harris & Bruno 75th Celebration

Building on a history of breakthroughs

This isn't the first time Harris & Bruno have pushed the boundaries of print technology. The LithoCoat Coating System, which was released in 2000, is a fluid delivery system that works with digital, flexo, offset, and corrugated units to allow for automated, consistent application of coating. “It was a very big shift for the print industry at that time because there wasn't a very good, efficient way to have a consistent product come out with coating systems,” says Moskun. That innovation led to the creation of the ZRW, a web coating system, in 2018.

The common thread among these breakthroughs is that they're a response to customer needs. The ZRW was created to meet the need for high-speed web coating that could keep up with the demands of high-speed presses. With the ZRX, he says, “Keeping all the sheets in line to be able to go from flood coat to spot coat to foil in a single pass, that saves time, energy, and labor. We're always looking for ways to innovate on that end.”

The promise of the ZRX

The ZRX was introduced at drupa, and Moskun says it received overwhelmingly positive reactions from attendees. “They would pick up one of the samples and we'd say, ‘Yeah, that's uncoated media,’ and their eyes just lit up because it was something new that they have not seen yet.”

The first two ZRX machines sold at the show, and he believes that the ZRX opens up a new world of possibilities for packaging, labeling, direct mail, and more. In his opinion, “Uncoated media just expands the gamut of what can be done with digital embellishments...The sky's the limit with what this thing can do.”



Left: Embellish of foil and emboss. Top: Web Rolls



PRINTS EVOLUTIONARY REVOLUTION

MICHAEL J. PALLERINO, DIRECTOR OF CONTENT, CONDUIT, INC.

The print industry is undergoing a transformation driven by advances in automation, artificial intelligence (AI), and robotics. As these technologies evolve, their impact on the industry continues to expand, offering both opportunities and challenges for print business owners. Fujifilm, a leader in print innovation, views these advancements as essential to the future of print — not as a revolution, but as part of a steady evolution.

The evolution of print

"This is not a revolutionary industry; it is an evolutionary one," says Mike Graff, CEO of Sandy Alexander in Clifton, New Jersey. Graff emphasizes that automation, particularly in digital printing, is transforming the industry. Digital printing's proven benefits include faster turnaround times, improved color quality, and cost-effectiveness. As customer demands shift toward smaller, more frequent, and personalized orders, the flexibility of digital printing has made it a game-changer.

Graff believes these advancements are just the beginning. "I think the speed and quality, and thereby the cost, of digital print will continue to improve," he says. He also points out that labor shortages and rising costs make automation increasingly critical. Automation isn't just about efficiency anymore — it's essential for staying competitive.

AI will accelerate everything

Dayna Neumann, chief sales and marketing officer for United Direct Solutions (UDS) in Louisville, Kentucky, sees AI as the next major technological advancement in printing. Already driving innovation across the industry, AI — along with machine learning, data analytics, and robotics — represents the future.

Neumann highlights that AI will soon influence nearly every aspect of the print process. "Leveraging AI in job tickets, machine learning, scheduling, and job automation can quickly provide a competitive edge," she explains. AI can

also enhance user experience: "Chatbots will help website visitors learn more about services, submit estimate requests, and even receive real-time quotes. As clients submit more complex orders, AI will streamline the process in DIY settings on storefronts or enterprise platforms."

Innovating the path forward

As the print industry evolves, the key to success lies in adapting to these emerging technologies. It's not just about preserving print's strengths, but about continually innovating the path forward. Those who embrace AI, automation, and robotics will not only survive but thrive in this rapidly advancing landscape.

Michael J. Pallerino serves as Director of Content for Conduit Inc., an award-winning agency dedicated to building community and connections through content. With more than 30 years of experience, he has earned numerous accolades, such as the Pulitzer Prize for b2b magazines.



EMBRACING AI: TRANSFORMING SMALL BUSINESS MARKETING

KELLY MALLOZZI, OWNER & SALES COACH, SUCCESS IN PRINT

The graphic arts industry thrives on creativity and precision. As a sales expert in print and graphics, I've witnessed how artificial intelligence (AI) revolutionizes business operations. AI has become an essential tool in my practice, transforming content creation, client engagement, and marketing strategies.

Personalized content at scale

One of AI's most significant advantages is its ability to deliver personalized content at scale. Previously, crafting tailored messaging for diverse audiences required extensive manual adjustments, consuming valuable time. Now, AI enables me to generate customized messaging for various segments in minutes. For small printers and businesses, this means they can engage customers on a more personal level without sacrificing efficiency.

Streamlining creative processes

The graphic arts industry demands high creativity, but inspiration doesn't always strike on cue. AI streamlines creative processes, freeing up time for strategic thinking. For instance, AI tools assist

in generating content briefs, editing drafts, and suggesting design layouts. This allows sales consultants to focus on developing higher-level strategies and addressing complex client needs. Any technology that saves time is invaluable, especially for small businesses looking to maximize resources.

Data-driven insights for smarter content

AI also offers powerful data-driven insights, transforming how businesses understand content performance. Before AI, evaluations were often based on intuition or outdated historical data, risking missed opportunities. Now, AI algorithms provide real-time analytics and predictive insights, allowing small businesses to adjust their content strategies on the fly.

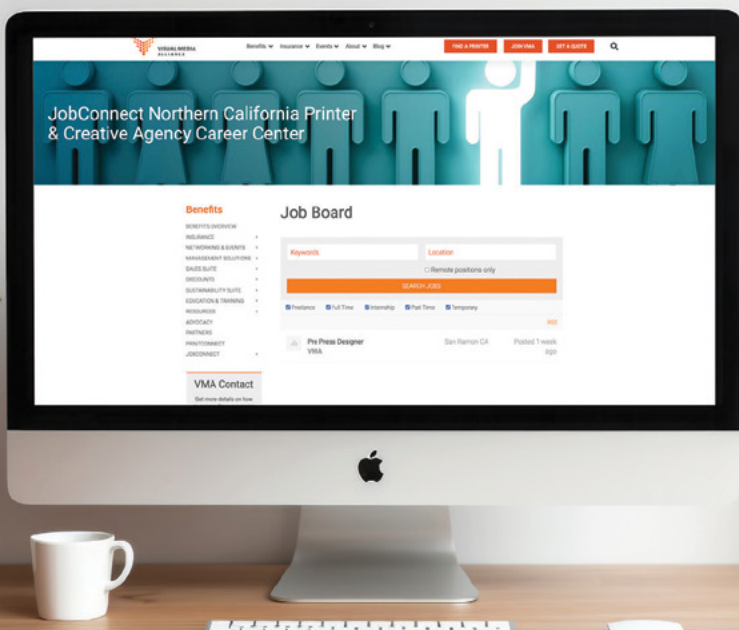
These insights help identify which content resonates best with specific audiences, which platforms drive the most engagement, and how various formats (blogs, videos, social media posts) perform across channels. A data-driven approach ensures that every piece of content is not only visually appealing but also strategically aligned with broader business objectives.

The AI advantage for small businesses

Can small businesses thrive without AI? While possible, the efficiency and effectiveness AI brings are undeniable. Businesses can focus on building relationships with customers rather than getting bogged down in administrative tasks. In today's fast-paced market, leveraging AI isn't just an option; it's a necessity for staying competitive and relevant.

As AI technology continues to evolve, its potential to enhance content creation and overall business strategies will only grow. For small printers and businesses, embracing AI is no longer just a trend—it's the future of success.

Kelly Mallozzi is a sales coach, marketing consultant, speaker, blogger, and podcaster with 30 years in the print industry. Her mission is to help print companies enhance sales and customer loyalty through strategic content and optimized sales processes. Her diverse background and energetic approach make her a dynamic voice in the industry. Contact Kelly at kelly@successinprint.net.



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