

Using Print Marketing Materials to Reach Clients

The pandemic has affected every type of business, but with the economy gearing back up, it's time to think of how law firms can reach clients and gain their attention again. Over the past decade, we have moved into a digital world where we reach out to clients and potential clients through websites, email services and social media. These are great tools, but if you only use digital communication, you can miss out on reaching contacts, especially when sending emails to large lists. Adding printed materials back into the mix can help you stay in touch and draw attention to your firm – especially as in-person events and interactions begin to resume.

Having some form of leave-behind or [law firm brochure](#) highlighting your projects and capabilities can help enhance your presence. We have helped clients develop substantive, full-color brochures highlighting focus areas, case wins, new attorneys and firm growth, as well as internal gamification programs. With people starting to meet in person again, it is time to dust off those business cards and consider using note cards or other printed firm materials as a second touchpoint after a meeting.

I reached out to four printers I work with to get some insights about how printing has changed, some current trends, how print can be cost-effective and tips for developing a good relationship with your print vendors.

Current Trends in the Printing Process

It probably isn't news that the trend in the print industry is moving more toward digital printing and digital communications, according to [Tracey Treat](#) of [Merit Press](#). Companies reach their base through so many avenues today, and print is just a small part of the big picture. "Big companies have cut print budgets and we have to share funds with social media budgets and online advertising," she said. "Projects are still being designed, just not printed, and if they are being printed, it is in smaller quantities. A webpage can get to a customer in an instant while a brochure still needs to be mailed."

Digital printing has a lot of advantages over traditional, analog presses, also known as offset printers, Treat said. Set-up time and costs are lower and the digital presses can do many things a traditional press cannot. Digital printing is also better for the environment; there is less waste, no plates, no photo chemicals and they do not use water. She has found two of the biggest benefits are with rush jobs and direct mail. "We have the capability to produce a rush job in a day because we do not have to worry about drying time for the ink, and the set-up is half the time of traditional offset. We can produce a direct mail project now from start to finish. We can print and address all inline on the machine, at the same time saving time and money, and avoid sending jobs out to a mail house," she said.



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[Dean Pugh](#) at [CRW Graphics](#) sees printing and mailing as both scalable tools. Projects can start small and bootstrap from one campaign to the next. In a nutshell, the post-pandemic “survival tool” is a matter of keeping things simple enough to contain cost, while communicating a compelling message. Most projects don’t need glitz and frills, he said. Price drives many decisions, so there tends to be more focus on the graphics and the message, rather than printing techniques, paper and special treatments. Paper costs began accelerating this past March and have not let up since, further driving cost concerns. Paper mills are consolidating; discontinuing redundant lines; and reducing or eliminating many of the creative specialty papers, finishes and colors that used to litter the desks of designers and printing sales people.

[Bison Printing](#) has seen a number of paper trends evolve over the years, said [David Norcross](#). “The industry has by and large moved away from more-premium coated sheets and we rarely have calls for any coated paper that is outside of our house stocks. However, I can say that there appears to be more of a trend toward uncoated stocks and that type of look and feel that they provide. In regard to techniques, we are always looking for new ways to use foil as an alternative to spot UVs, which provide materials with a clean, professional shine. With the various color options available in foils, we have seen more and more clients open to looking for different applications.”

[David McGuffey](#) of Echelon Fine Printing, a division of [Taylor](#), finds that companies are asking about environmentally friendly paper. Basic stocks are still in use, but understanding climate change and showing a company’s commitment to responsible practices have prompted a trend to sustainable stocks. Thicker papers are also in high demand. “We have seen growth in clients engraving their logo on the stationery and then offset-printing the address or contact details, or using their office printers for the variable information. This keeps the brand consistent, and keeps a high-end look and feel while reducing cost,” he said.

Digital Printing as a Quality Alternative

Since hitting the mainstream in the early 2000s, the quality of digital printing has continually improved and now closely matches traditional offset printing. While it still has its limitations in paper size, it is a great option to keep costs down for small, short-run projects.

McGuffey said law firms are looking to get things quicker and at a lower cost, and digital printing fulfills those needs. Digital printing works best for small runs when the print image does not have to be “museum quality,” he said. Digital printing can also allow for variable information, such as personalization on a brochure.

According to Pugh, smaller quantities continue to become more affordable, and as the productivity of these digital devices improves, the “cross-over quantity” for the unit price value of digital versus offset keeps rising. “Our Fuji ‘JPress’ makes it more economical now to run offset quality work from 100 to 2,000-plus sheets, without the offset price. And the Xerox Versant still fills the gap for the smaller quantities, from any minimum up to 500, depending on the stock and personalization needs, if any,” he said. “And just within the last 24 months, the resolution on digital machines increased to match traditional offset resolution on the JPress. This eliminates one more obstacle when making the

choice to run digital versus offset.”

Norcross said digital printing has had a greater impact than digital prepress or direct-to-plate when it comes to offset printing. He has seen a greater demand for more printed products but with much smaller quantities. Digital allows his clients to test certain ideas and products without a great impact on their budgets. Most of all, digital provides a cost-effective way to test mailings and mail lists. With progress in inkjet technologies, this gap is tightening more and more each day. There are huge advances in the digital printing market on a daily basis.

Personalizing Printed Materials

By using a spreadsheet and command codes within content fields of a design for something like an invitation or targeted brochure, digital printing can customize the project and target the recipients by name, creating a more-personal touch.

Such personalization is on the rise, Pugh said. This is due to the variable data (one-to-one marketing) capabilities of digital printing. Targeting your audience by name, demographic or history is almost always going to net a bigger return. It costs a bit more per piece, but printing far fewer pieces cuts the total investment, and can increase the return if done wisely. These are best done in a single pass on digital equipment.

Digital Printing Advancements

Today’s digital presses can UV-coat, emboss and foil-stamp all in line, according to Treat. High-resolution [inkjet technology](#) enables selective [coating](#) with variable thickness, simulating embossing through a stampless [embossing](#) process. You can also transfer foil to paper or use a foil paper and print on top of the paper with a white ink base for overprinting color and knockouts, which lets the foil paper show through to simulate a foil stamp without a pressure impression affecting the paper. “These digital options allow for on-demand printing for as few as one item to thousands of copies, and enables us to pass along substantial savings to our clients on smaller jobs,” she said.

Pugh reminded us that digital printing is a CMYK (four color) process, similar to offset in many ways. “Printing all solid PMS (Pantone Matching System) colors accurately is not possible using CMYK, but the inkjet color purity and color-build tables enable the JPress digital press to mimic more PMS spot colors than are possible on an offset press. We tell customers that the vast majority of the PMS colors now can be matched on that press.”

Pugh also noted that the JPress is the first digital press in their shop with a robust sheet-to-sheet scanning and self-calibration feature, which maintains consistency from the first sheet to the last, and from one run to the next rerun. This is superior to the offset presses currently in service.

Law Firm Stationery: Letterhead, Envelopes and Business

Cards

According to McGuffey, the Echelon Fine Printing engraving division has seen a steady workflow for letterhead and business cards. Law firms have realized that a letter stands out more than an email. With so much digital traffic these days, a physical touchpoint makes a bigger impact than a digital one. Here, quality of the paper and the printing technique, such as engraving, is more prominent. What makes the [engraved printing process](#) unique is that it is tactile and elegant. The engraving process is an art form. "When you see someone run their hand over your business card or letterhead and feel the raised effect, you know they are receiving the message. The desire for your company to make a statement to a current or prospective client is accomplished with the engraved technique," he said.

Printing of letterhead and stationery packages varies between the printers I spoke with. Pugh said his shop has seen these items move to specialty stationery shops and when CRW does any of these projects, it's because of some unique requirement that the smaller shops cannot handle. Treat has seen a drastic decrease as well; of the items in the full package for letterhead, she sees mostly printing of business cards. Norcross sees business cards being widely used today as in years past, however, they have seen a decline in letterheads with the advancement of desktop printers. Demand for envelopes, on the other hand, has increased.

Have a Working Relationship with Your Print Vendor

All the printers emphasized good communication as key to achieving beautiful print products with impact. "Honesty is always the best policy," said Treat. "Always give the best price first, always tell the client what can and cannot be achieved based on what they are asking, and do not promise something you know you cannot deliver."

"We have seen deadlines and turnaround times to be tighter now more than ever in the history of the industry. We are in a world that demands instant results," said Norcross. While digital has allowed the industry to reduce turnaround times, clients have to remember that each print project is custom and unique. "Working with your printer and discussing upcoming projects, providing timelines, working on specs and paper requirements – those are key."

Pugh agreed. "Communicate the desired purpose of the project, not just the raw specifications. With that info, a good vendor will look for ways to shorten the turnaround, improve the target's interest with visual and tactile choices, contain cost, and assist with distribution."

"We are printing in ways that weren't even possible a few years ago," McGuffey said, "so let us know what you need and we will find a way. There is nothing more rewarding than a true partnership with a client."

Conclusion

Your printer is an external part of your team. They can offer a wealth of knowledge and

insight to help guide you through your project, from effective use of color to page sizes that avoid waste, to the best-quality brands. In more than 35 years of working with print vendors, I often rely on their experience to help complete a quality print project effectively. Design and printing go hand in hand. Reach out to me, [Alan E. Singles](mailto:Asingles@jaffepr.com), with your marketing project needs at Asingles@jaffepr.com.