



A Digital/Offset Printing Sales Professional Isn't an Oxymoron

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I'm often asked the question: "Can offset printing salespeople sell digital printing products and services?" The answer is a resounding yes. Many top digital printing salespeople started their careers selling offset printing. Talented, professional salespeople can sell almost anything.

Profile of a successful digital printing salesperson

More than 12 years ago, Richard Coriaty began his career selling offset printing. Nine years ago, he began to commit himself to learning about digital products and services. Today, Coriaty works for Sir Speedy Whittier, which is one of the largest single-location franchise shops in the country. It has been an early and leading adopter of digital technologies not only in the Sir Speedy network, but also within the printing industry.

Last year, Coriaty sold more than \$1.8 million worth of printing services, with 60 percent coming from digital print and 40 percent from offset print. When I interviewed Coriaty, he shared his formula for becoming a successful digital printing salesperson. His six part formula for sales success includes:

■ Exercising discipline;

Get up early and put in a full day's work that includes planning and setting performance, income and sales activity goals.

■ **Being enthusiastic and energetic**
Make a personal decision to put your best effort out every workday.

■ Being patient;

Be willing to wait out the longer selling cycles needed to land printing jobs with higher profit margins.

■ Learning continuously;

Stay up on industry trends, "killer" applications, products, software and services.

■ Preparing thoroughly; and

Proper preparation builds a sales rep's confidence and persuasiveness. A confident, persuasive salesperson is comfortable calling on anyone at any level within an organization, whether the person is an administrative assistant, marketing manager or CEO.

■ Knowing your customer's business.

Thoroughly research prospective and current customers' current and future business objectives. Before making a sales call, know the client's specific work processes, key customers, business objectives, business challenges and decision-making processes.

Coriaty also credits his success to professional pride. "I strongly believe that being a professional printing sales-

person is not an oxymoron," he remarks. "I love what I do."

Finding great salespeople for your shop

Most shop owners and managers already know to look at sales candidates' experience, background, professional skills, technical and business knowledge, and track record during the sourcing, recruiting and hiring processes. But, personality traits are harder to discover. Often, a sales rep's deficits in leadership and cooperative abilities, work ethic or emotional IQ show themselves months after the person is hired.

At Intellective Solutions, we have seen some printing companies use standardized and relatively inexpensive online assessments to help flesh out key personality traits. For example, global executive recruiting firm Korn/Ferry Intl's assessments look for action-oriented and creative people for successful sales hires. Remember an employee, who has the skills, knowledge and the qualities required of a professional salesperson, can sell digital printing successfully.

The three causes of a digital print selling program's failure

If the failure of a digital print selling program cannot be placed solely on the shoulders of offset printing salespeople, what causes a program to fail? Intellective Solutions has identified

selling strategies

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three general issues that hold back offset printing salespeople from transitioning to new technologies and products.

1. There is a consistent and ongoing lack of sales, business or technical knowledge and skill.
2. The compensation plan does not support development of digital business.
3. The salesperson is adverse to change. He or she isn't willing to invest the time and effort to learn and generate new customers, applications and business opportunities.

As printing transitions to a more digitalized industry, it will require more professional salespeople to handle complex and relationship-driven transactions. The fact is there always will be

demand for successful salespeople, and this fact might be the one of the best reasons to pursue a career in sales. But, this is an especially great time to be a professional salesperson in the printing industry. ●

Joe Rickard is a sales training leader and consultant who works with printing and technology companies to improve their sales effectiveness. He is the founder of Intellectual Solutions, a provider of customized sales and sales management training material and services.

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