drupa Essentials of Print

The print & packaging industry is a living world and once every four years, it is important for all its stakeholders to meet and share for a better future. At drupa, we promise you inspiration, innovation, knowledge sharing and networking. Each visitor will have his own places to go and must-see hotspots. On the way to this event, we release the "drupa essentials", a series of articles from designers, brands owners, printers, converters, journalists and influencers. These articles will offer visitors an understanding of the print & packaging world that is transforming rapidly under the umbrella of digitalization, automation and sustainability. So, enjoy the reading and give free rein to your instinct and curiosity under the adage "to each his own drupa".

We are happy to provide you with this expert article and we would be pleased if you publish it.

Be inspired!

Your drupa Team

Rémy Touguay – Attracting New Talents - Human Resources and Artificial Intelligence Opportunities

VITA

Rémy Touguay

Rémy Touguay has 30 years of experience as a teacher-trainer in management, printing, finishing at ESAIG (École Supérieure ESTIENNE des Arts et Industries Graphiques) in Paris, France. 10 years as the R&D Director at Intraprint software, a specialized management software for printing companies, in Montreal, Canada.

Throughout these 30 years, Rémy has also worked as a consultant, trainer, and expert witness in the field of graphic arts. He is the author of "Implanter une GPAO dans les Industries Graphiques" (1998) and a member of the I.C. (International Circle of Educational Institutes of Graphic-Media Technologies and Management).

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Who hasn't heard of artificial intelligence today? The exhibitors at drupa 2024 will certainly use this motto to attract clients. However, it is essential to remember that human intelligence will be needed to manage printing operations, whether it's in the upstream design phase, during production, or for the management and maintenance of production tools. Let's explore together the reasons and modalities of this coexistence.

In recent years, and more recently with the advent of the ChatGPT robot, artificial intelligence has been increasingly integrated into our professional and personal lives. However, an observation highlights the shortage of human resources needed for the proper functioning of graphic industry companies. The graphic arts professions no longer attract the interest of young people, even though the sector has undergone significant evolution with digitalization and automation. The industry is facing considerable challenges

So, what has happened? Where do we stand today?

As we have observed in the various editions of drupa, equipment, processes, and computer tools are constantly evolving, making production tasks increasingly accessible to "humans". Today, it is no longer necessary to be a 100 kg giant to operate an offset press! However, it is important to emphasize that humans remain essential in the implementation of production processes, and fortunately, this is the case. This is evident, particularly in the training provided by suppliers when acquiring new production equipment: owning the tool is not enough; one must also possess the necessary human skills to use it correctly.

Furthermore, the qualification of operators, drivers, and managers who use these tools, which increasingly integrate automation, robotics, and assistance systems, requires a high level of skills. Artificial intelligence cannot (yet) function without the human input that enables its proper use.

Artificial intelligence already allows, to a large extent, the synthesis and utilization of vast amounts of data (management, production, etc.) to improve production processes and quality. In this regard, there is no doubt that this will also be evident at drupa 2024. Therefore, it is essential for employees, regardless of their responsibilities within the company, to learn how to question and properly navigate these intelligent tools, knowing what and how to interrogate them, as well as being able to analyze the collected and processed data to derive concrete recommendations. Ultimately, decisions need to be made, which is imperative but not necessarily simple.

Indeed, the question of the availability of skills required to use connected artificial intelligence tools arises. In terms of education and training, it is observed that young people are showing less and less interest in careers in the industry in general, including those in the graphic arts and printed communication sectors.

What is happening, what has happened?

First observation, at the level of companies. A significant change in mindset has occurred over the past twenty years: previously, the majority of printers' children pursued studies that allowed them to continue in the same path as their parents. They were motivated and had a particular interest in these fields. They could be found in schools and training institutes where they acquired the necessary technical and complementary skills. Business was thriving, with high profit margins promising a bright future in the family business.

Today, an increasing number of company leaders have more experience in commerce, management, and production management. In the past, it was often technicians who started their activities based on their know-how and passion. Now, as mentioned earlier, given the current context, one needs to be a seasoned

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manager for the company to be profitable and generate benefits.

Generally, today's printers no longer extol the virtues of their profession to their families. Profit margins have significantly declined since the 2000s, making profitability challenging, and the prospects lean more towards consolidation under the control of large groups. Consequently, it is other groups of young people who are entering the graphic arts sector, often discovering this industry completely.

Second observation, in terms of future employees: The younger generation, Generation Z, has a different vision of the world and work today. Many companies have not yet taken this change in perception into account. To make jobs attractive, companies need to revise their management style, integration methods, and attraction of new employees by adapting to their new demands. These young individuals were born with screens, no longer consider work as a priority, and prioritize factors such as working conditions, well-being, and family. Various studies conducted in different countries all arrive at similar conclusions.

Third observation is questioning the level of training programs. Are the programs offering education in the graphic industries still suitable? Are they adapting to the rapid evolutions in the sector, the jobs of tomorrow (training of trainers and teachers in schools, institutes, universities), the behavioral changes of the new generations (use of digital tools, time management, schedules, etc.), and finally, the question that now emerges clearly: the integration of new Artificial Intelligence tools made available to the general public for the acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills?

And today?

The challenge is clear. It is about attracting young people and talent so that companies can continue to thrive. Intergraf, through the Print Your Future Awards competition, has been studying this issue for several years in collaboration with partners such as federations, institutions, and professional associations. They have already identified the situation and implemented actions to enhance attractiveness. In France, a recent initiative by

a professional association (CCFI) aims to bring together stakeholders from the industry (employer federations, labor unions, suppliers, training providers, press, etc.) to develop a joint action plan to improve recruitment and meet the human resources needs in the sector. The issue of recruitment and attractiveness of the industry is closely linked to the image of graphic arts professions. The sector is often poorly understood or even unknown to the general public. If you were to ask people with no professional or family ties to the graphic arts industry, you would find a perception of an outdated image—referring to Gutenberg and past centuries—that does not convey career opportunities. Furthermore, this industry under pressure is often associated with topics such as the decline of daily press and print media in general, which contrasts with the growth of digital platforms. Moreover, this industrial sector is seen as polluting and environmentally unfriendly due to the paper production's perceived pollution.

The absence of drupa 2020 prevented showcasing ongoing technical and technological innovations that could attract new personnel. In this context, drupa 2024 is a crucial event for all matters related to human resources. drupa provides an exceptional opportunity for printers to exhibit industry transformations and showcase new trends that have taken the industry far from the era of Gutenberg.

Having participated in this event multiple times as both a visitor and an exhibitor, I know that a trip to Düsseldorf is also a fantastic opportunity for young people in training and employees of companies to gain firsthand insight into the state of the graphic arts industry today. It will be a great way to envision the future careers in the sector and, consequently, think about implementing training frameworks to acquire skills in line with the needs of the printed and multimedia graphic communication industry.

Industry events should undoubtedly be an opportunity to raise public awareness of the sector through media, press, social media platforms, etc., to showcase the technological level required for producing printed products worldwide. It is essential to emphasize that these professions require skills, knowledge, and will continue to exist in the future, with

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automation levels at least as advanced as in other industries.

It is up to us, stakeholders in the graphic arts industry, to make known that these professions are associated with innovation in various forms, including the integration of AI tools in the production process. We need to promote international events such as drupa and, if done effectively, we will attract future generations of talented individuals.

Quotes

"AI is a major opportunity for the Graphic Industry to attract talent."

"Industry events like drupa are a perfect platform to showcase the best of an industry and change the perceptions of the graphics industry."

"Enhancing the graphics industry attractiveness is possible and it can be done working together"

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