

A TRIBUTE TO SKIP SAYERS

I was saddened to learn of the passing of Skip Sayers, a wonderful person and true gentleman.

What many people in our industry may not know is that Skip Sayers was a modern-day pioneer in the printing industry during some of offset lithography's finest growth years. Skip was an entrepreneur in its most positive meaning, and a trendsetter.

I am proud to share the following anecdote.

I was privileged to have worked for the Graphic Arts Technical Foundation (GATF) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania from 1968 to 1976. I was hired as a Technical Services Representative, and trained to conduct Technical Plant Audits. These audits involved going into a printing company and spending several days observing operations with regard to methods, techniques, equipment, and personnel, and then making recommendations for improving quality and productivity. My first such assignment was with GATF's Director of Technical Services, Chuck Gramlich, who trained me. We visited several printing plants in the US and Canada. These plants had many problems with dated equipment, poorly trained personnel, poorly lit and dirty facilities, and tremendous quality variability. It was easy to come up with long lists of recommendations for improvements.

Following my training, I was "cleared" to go out on my own, and my first solo assignment was at Sayers Printing in St. Louis, Missouri.

This was in the late 1960s. I recall pulling up in a taxi to a beautiful-looking building on well-landscaped property. Upon entering the plant, I was greeted by a receptionist in a very inviting welcome area, and then introduced to the Sayers president, Skip Sayers.

We started off by Skip taking me on a tour of the plant. We started in prepress, then went to press, and to post press, and then to the management areas. I gasped as we walked through the facilities, thinking: "My goodness, what could I actually recommend to this company for improvement?" The prepress area was immaculate: well lit, clean, and...carpeted throughout! I later learned that Sayers Printing was the first printing company in the United States having carpeting in prepress.

We then proceeded to the press department equipped with sheet-fed offset lithographic presses. I recall standing there in amazement. The press department was clean, brightly lit, and...each press was painted a different bright color and had a name! When I asked about the significance of this, Skip explained that a clean, well-lit facility is equated with a corporate value for high quality. The colored and named presses, he explained, created a personal relationship between the press operators and the presses. The operators, Skip said, took pride in maintaining the appearance of "their" presses and in producing the best quality printing possible.

Likewise, the bindery was clean, very well lit, and efficiently operated. The management office suite was equally impressive and inviting with matching furnishings and modern, for its time, office equipment.

Well, I spent three days at Sayers Printing, and concluded with a meeting with Skip and his management team, where I provided my assessment. I don't recall what I came up with, but Skip did graciously thank me and said that the visit was helpful. However, I recall leaving the plant

thinking to myself: "Boy, did I learn a lot during these three days." What I learned from Skip and from Sayers Printing influenced the recommendations that I made to many printing companies that followed my first solo GATF Technical Plant Audit. Over the years when I'd run into Skip at various industry events, we'd sometimes reminisce on that visit in the late 1960s.

Thank you, Skip. As my career unfolded, I've become a better professional person because of what I learned from you.

Harvey Levenson
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