

EMPLOYMENT AND HIRING OPPORTUNITIES AND SOLUTIONS: *Addressing Your Industry's Labor Shortage*

By

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I've written this article in the spirit of the monumental and seminal **Print Across America** and **International Print Day** program put on by Deborah Corn and the Print Media Centr.

It is written specifically for two audiences:

1. Up-and-coming young people seeking a profession to join or for those exploring new positions.
2. Those industry leaders and company owners seeking employees today and in the future who will contribute significantly to company growth and development.

TO OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

There is a progressive industry out there that started in the 1450s and, after numerous transitions over the centuries, has emerged as one of the most "high-tech" and growing industries today and in the future.

You may have heard of it as "the printing industry." However, what traditionally was known as "printing" with an image of merely putting ink on paper is now one of the most creative, scientific, technologically advanced, and modern industries. In fact, traditional printing is now one part of the industry, dominated today by digital printing, non-print digital imaging, laser imaging, scientific processes, app and website development, social media marketing, and all of the latest technical and digital processes and applications that enhance communication between and among people and businesses. You may find it interesting to know that most of these new technologies evolved from computer science and aerospace technology. While "printing" is still part of the industry, "graphic communication" is a term that better describes this industry and a viable profession that awaits you.

As you consider present or future career opportunities, I encourage you to explore graphic communication, a profession that will provide rewards and growth opportunities for you for many years to come.

TO OUR INDUSTRY LEADERS AND COMPANY OWNERS

Your industry, "the printing industry," like most in North America, is facing a labor shortage that will not go away soon. In fact, your industry's labor shortage is greater than others due to the need of having employees trained with special skills. In fact an understanding of STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) has infiltrated nearly every segment of the printing industry from technicians and operators to management.

I've been approached numerous times by industry leaders and company owners about how they can attract young people to consider employment or to attract people from other

industries seeking new creative and viable jobs in a modern industry. I, and other industry advisors, have explored this, and we are in agreement on a number of points that “printing industry” leaders typically do not consider. Here are some.

1. People in the printing industry are usually the worst marketers of their industry. The image they portray of their industry and their outreach as compared to other industries, e.g., electronics, pharmaceuticals, law, agriculture, architecture, etc., is minimal and for the most part geared to people already in the printing industry. The industry’s outreach is invisible to young people considering career choices or to people already employed in other industries that may be seeking career changes.

2. For the most part, the way people at all levels communicate about the printing industry is a “turn-off” as an industry to consider. I’ve observed that even seasoned veterans in the printing industry portray the industry as it was many years ago, not as it is today and will be in the future. If you want to attract the interest of young people and others, stop using the words “craft”, “trade”, vocation”, “shop,” and other similar words and phrases that are not representative of the industry today. It is not a craft. It is an art and/or science. It is not a trade or vocation. It is a communication profession (graphic communication). Your businesses are not shops. They are companies or plants.

This field is a profession seeking men and women representing the diversity and inclusivity of the population across North America. Visit school career fairs to promote the modern nature of the industry. Offer tours of your companies to demonstrate the modern technology involved. Offer internships while young people are still in school (high schools, technical schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities).

If you want to increase employment interest in your companies, I recommend heeding the advice I have offered in this article.