

# What Customers Don't Know Can Hurt You

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## Education Strengthens the Bottom Line

It's a common misperception that greater profits come from working with clients who don't have an understanding of printing and production issues. While maintaining autonomous control might seem like a way to keep your costs lower, clients with little knowledge of the production process can actually add to your costs.

For example, a customer might not know to calculate width first when providing catalog dimensions so you can order paper in advance of the run. If you have received specifications for an upright format, but come to discover when you receive the file that it's actually an oblong catalog, costs will rise. While we may think that everyone knows width comes first, the truth is that clients often don't know. With a customer education program, clients will learn about the production process, turning the perception that educated customers lead to greater profits into a reality.

Educating customers and staff may range from the basics to the latest in printing and production. Courses can be customized to fit the needs of

each student group whether they are printing novices, seasoned professionals or a mixture of both. Basic classes may include an introduction to paper and ink covering topics such as coated versus uncoated paper, paper basis weight and working with different types of ink. Advanced courses typically cover specialty applications such as in-line finishing, variable data imaging, and mailing and logistics topics.

This investment in education serves three primary goals for printers:

- ensuring that sales executives and account managers are familiar with all aspects of production so they can become partners and consultants guiding customers through the design and production of their projects;
- ensuring that all employees understand the company's capabilities, strategic vision and role in the marketplace; and
- assisting customers with training for newer buyers and other staff in what to expect during the production cycle.

## Value of Educating Staff

Printers may draw staff from many disciplines. While employees may be hired for their proven abilities in a specific discipline, it's important for them to understand the entire production cycle as quickly as possible. An education program allows new managers to understand the entire platform. Creating a reference manual to cover all capabilities is a great supplement to classroom training and a valuable resource for both staff and customers.

Training should not be limited to technical and production topics. Curriculum devoted to soft skills — communications, problem-solving, responsiveness, etc. — has been proven to increase customer satisfaction levels as much as 30 percent and improve internal communications between departments at the same time.

Technical training is a great tool to tie various parts of the organization together. Consider a training series to broaden knowledge of personalization and bindery issues so print specialists have an understanding of how up-front design issues can impact efficiencies at the end of the process. Training can also help mail specialists understand print quality issues so they can be an extra set of eyes to ensure quality standards are maintained.



Another popular feature of training across the organization is “Basics” classes. These “Production 101” classes allow associates in what traditionally are considered “staff” disciplines (accounting, human resources and information technology) to gain a high level of understanding about various operational aspects of production and manufacturing.

### Value of Educating Customers

Providing training for customers should be considered a value-added service. Although you may not see direct benefits from this service, the indirect benefits are immense — particularly in areas of customer satisfaction and customer loyalty. Training for customers can be offered either at their site or on campus while they are visiting the facility. The

training should be tailored to cover the topics of interest to that customer and to the background of those attending the class.

Training programs can be especially beneficial to those organizations needing to downsize as budgets are further squeezed. Remaining staff are spread thin and often need to pick up additional training to cover new product or service responsibilities. Training offers buyers an opportunity to quickly understand the specifics of new programs. The result is a much stronger buying partner who is aware of what is needed at each step of the process and who depends on the training organization as a resource for new products and programs.

A formal training program can also be used to assist customers with training coworkers about the production process. Training sessions

# IWCO Direct Marketing Academy Course Descriptions

- Paper and Ink Basics
  - Paper
    - ▲ Manufacturing Process
    - ▲ Coated versus Uncoated Stock
    - ▲ Popular Stocks and Their Uses
    - ▲ Basis and Equivalent Weight
  - Ink
    - ▲ Basic Components of Ink
    - ▲ Litho versus Flexo Ink
    - ▲ Specialty Inks
- Color Theory
  - Additive Color (RGB)
  - Subtractive Color (CMY)
  - Halftones/Duotones
  - Four-Color Process Printing
  - Flat-Color Printing
- Working with Color on Press
  - Color Reproduction Capabilities
  - Additive versus Subtractive Color
  - Process Color versus Spot Color
  - Factors in Color Reproduction
  - Controlling Color on Press
  - Color Control Strategies
  - Color Control Tools
- Prepress
  - Electronic Prepress
    - ▲ Workflow Issues
  - Media/Software/Hardware
  - Preflight
  - Image Resolution
  - Customer Supplied Film
  - Proofing
    - ▲ Conventional
    - ▲ Digital
  - Plate Making
    - β Conventional
    - β Computer-to-Plate
- Envelope Design
  - Sizes
  - Styles
  - Construction
  - Terminology
- Envelope Manufacturing
  - Blank Cutting
  - Blank Converting
  - Web Converting
  - Converter Capabilities
- Envelope Printing
  - Flexography
  - Lithography
  - Jet Press
- Press Capabilities
  - Basic Design of Web Offset Presses
  - Perfecting/Non-Perfecting Presses
  - Heatset/UV Presses
  - In-Line Operations on Press
  - Fitting Projects to Presses
- Promotional Plastics
  - Manufacturing
    - ▲ Core Stock
    - ▲ Card Construction
    - ▲ Surface Finishes
    - ▲ Printing
    - ▲ Laminating
    - ▲ Signature Panels and Magnetic Stripes
    - ▲ Cutting
  - Imaging
    - ▲ Embossing
    - ▲ Videojet SR50
    - ▲ Thermal Print
- Data Center/Tape Processing
  - Data Center Basics
  - Common Processing
    - ▲ File Conversion
    - ▲ Address Enhancement
    - ▲ Generalized Selection
    - ▲ Postal Presort
  - Advanced Processing
    - ▲ Merge/Purge (Duplicate Elimination)
    - ▲ National Change of Address (NCOA)
- Imaging (Personalization)
  - Print Programming
  - Laser
    - ▲ Océ VarioStream 7650
    - ▲ Océ PageStream 530
    - ▲ Océ PageStream 466
    - ▲ Duplex Imaging
    - ▲ MICR Imaging
  - Ink Jet
    - ▲ Scitex 3600
    - ▲ Ektajet
    - ▲ Videojet SR50
- Continuous Form Design
  - Rolls versus Fan-Folded
  - Roll Unwind
  - Pinfeeds and Cue Marks
  - Document Trims
  - Gutters
  - MICR Checks
- Finishing/Lettershop
  - Trimming and Folding
  - Card Affixing
  - Label Affixing
  - Tabbing
  - Inserter Design
  - Standard Inserting
  - New Technology Inserting
  - In-Line Operations During Inserting
- Postal Basics
  - Classes of Mail
  - Piece Size
  - Payment of Postage
  - Postage Discounts
    - ▲ Presort
    - ▲ Automation
    - ▲ Destination Entry
  - Automated Sorting Center
    - ▲ Commingling
    - ▲ Drop Shipment (RideShare)
- Reply Mail Design Issues
  - Business Reply Mail
  - Courtesy Reply Mail
  - Postnet Barcodes
  - Facing Identification Marks
  - Automation Rules
  - Ancillary Service Endorsements

held at the customer's organization brings together designers, marketers, product managers and others with whom production managers collaborate on a daily basis. Educating the customers' customers makes them more a part of the team working toward the common goal of a great program produced cost effectively and on time. The education process also provides an understanding of the impact of changes at various stages of production, illustrating why it costs so much more to make a change when a job is on press versus making a change at the proofing stage.

### Case Study:

#### Building Loyalty through Customer Growth

Instant Web Companies (IWCO) customized a training program for a continuity services customer wanting an in-house postal expert. Although the customer had a buyer with an interest in this new position, the individual needed a great deal of highly specialized training involving postal regulations. The customized program combined classroom training and hands-on experience on the production floor to highlight the role of postal regulations throughout the direct mail process.

The two-day session highlighted both design and production issues and included the creation of checklists for the in-house postal expert to review with the organization's creative and production staff. The customer's in-house postal expert is now IWCO's partner in ensuring that all packages designed by the customer meet all applicable postal specifications. The number of packages qualifying for automation discounts from the customer has increased by more than 25 percent since the training session, helping to quantify the value of the training.

### Case Study:

#### Higher Quality Inputs from Customers

A financial services customer was experiencing rapid growth causing the customer to quickly expand staff in order to accommodate this increased volume. IWCO designed a training curriculum for the customer's newly hired production staff. The training program focused on portions of the production cycles that were creating delays. IWCO shared challenges experienced with the customer files in prepress and how simple changes to the files would result in a more efficient production process for the client and for IWCO. Education led to better materials, improved workflow and stronger profit margins.

#### Education Yields Cost and Time Efficiencies

Education sessions for clients can range from special events to ongoing classes conducted via web-conferencing. In addition,

suppliers of ink, plates, paper and other materials are often eager to participate in "Technology Forums," helping to educate customers about advances in the marketplace and new processes and products to speed production and enhance existing formats with specialty applications and finishes.

Focusing on education will build a stronger, more cohesive workforce as well as a loyal customer base. Customers involved with training and education programs are more knowledgeable of not only the industry as a whole, but of your organization's specific processes and procedures. An increased understanding of printing basics results in fewer errors and greater cost savings making the entire process run more efficiently.

The Instant Web Companies (IWCO), headquartered in Chanhassen, Minnesota, has served the needs of North American direct marketers for more than 34 years. IWCO provides direct mail like no one else by seamlessly integrating direct mail service from a primary campus resulting in streamlined production for all components — creative, printing, promotional plastics, envelope conversion and mailing. IWCO's industry experience and technology along with proprietary P.O.S.T. (Postal Optimization Strategy and Technology) and RideShare™ commingling and logistics management programs deliver dramatic postage savings and faster time to market. ♦

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