

Unseen Value-added Services

Bringing more value to your *time* is a sure way to pave the way to more effective sales.

BY DAVE KING

When it comes to selling digital graphics, the concept of *value added* can be a pretty broad category. Most shop owners think first of the idea of *selling* value-added services — *extras* such as framing or other finishing services. You can charge a bit more for your pre-press services, such as file preparation and call it a *value-added service*. Another possibility is tweaking a client's design as a value-added service, or helping the client come up with a design from the very start.

These are great ideas, and I hope to cover some of them in future articles, but it's the *other* side of the value-added equation that I'd like to address today.

I'm talking about the *unseen* value-added services, the services that you, as the print provider, perform to add value to your *business*. I want to talk about ways to help

shorten selling time and time spent on explaining your products and services to clients. Wouldn't it add value to your business if you shortened the amount of time you spent on administrative stuff — stuff you never collect money for. I know you can relate to this. In the long run, however, you will make *more* money by adding value to *your own way of doing things*.

WORKING SMART

It all boils down to being *proactive*, or, what I like to call *working smart*. Lately most of my new clients seem to come from one of my competitors — a little fact I love very much. But these new clients come with some baggage — meaning that they felt that my competitor did *not* treat them right. In our initial meetings with them, the most common comment we hear over and over

again is, "*They kept over-charging me. They didn't tell me about...*" (fill in the blank).

What this new customer is *really* saying is that they were not given the proper information and documentation *up front*. You (print provider) provide the client with expert advice and graphics. What you get in return is their hard-earned money. In all 50 states, this is called a contract.

Let me give you a perfect example. Vehicle graphics are typically warranted for five years, but window perf is only warranted for one year. Most (if not all) customers who purchase a vehicle wrap with window perf don't understand that the window film will fail long before the rest of the vehicle. The biggest vehicle graphics manufacture in the USA provides a one-year warranty for its window film, but do the fabricators of this film include four more pieces of window film in the sale, so the customer can truly have a five-year warranted vehicle wrap? Nope.

The customer leaves the shop with a beautiful wrap, only to be mad nine months later when the window film starts to curl up on the corners and chip off. Instead of angering your customer and having to eat the cost of replacing the film because your contract didn't cover this little known fact, why don't you either: a) warrant the wrap for only one year, or, b) build in costs of replacing the window perf into the contract? There are lots of problems that can be avoided by adding some up-front value.

COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Castle is 10 years old this September and although we have been practicing "Value Added" since day one, we still make mistakes. What I feel is the best value a print provider can add is "Communications." When we started Castle, the first thing we did was to figure out that what customers



Castle Graphics' designer, Richard Abreu (standing), compares colors of a proof against Pantone charts for a concerned customer. The colors actually do match. The customer had been looking at our proof under the florescent lighting in his office where the colors appeared too dark. You can't always avoid this kind of situation, but having your ducks in a row will mitigate problems and help you avoid re-dos.

PRODUCT NAME	IMAGE SUBSTRATE	TOP LAMINATE	BOTTOM/BACK OF IMAGE	MOUNTING BOARD	REPLACEMENT WARRANTY	PRICE NO LAM	PRICE WITH LAM
Print Only	Paper	—	—	—	—	\$10.00	\$12.00
3 Rollable	Paper	Luster/Matte/Crystal	Luster	—	6 months	\$14.00	\$15.00
Flex 15	Film	Polycarbonate	—	—	6 months	\$19.00	—
FoamCore	Paper	Luster/Matte/Crystal	Adhesive	3/16" FoamCore	—	\$14.00	\$15.00
Dplast 4	Paper	Luster/Matte/Crystal	Adhesive	1/4" Duraplast	2 years	\$18.00	\$19.00
Dplast 16	Paper	Luster/Matte/Crystal	Adhesive	1" Gator	2 years	\$20.00	\$21.00
Sintra 1	Paper	Luster/Matte/Crystal	Adhesive	1 mm Sintra W	2 years	\$15.00	\$16.00
Sintra 2	Paper	Luster/Matte/Crystal	Adhesive	2 mm Sintra W	2 years	\$16.00	\$17.00
Sintra 3	Paper	Luster/Matte/Crystal	Adhesive	3 mm Sintra K/W	2 years	\$18.00	\$19.00
Sintra 6	Paper	Luster/Matte/Crystal	Adhesive	6 mm Sintra K/W	2 years	\$20.00	\$21.00
DuraTran	White Film	—	—	—	1 year	\$18.00	\$19.00

really wanted was a whole finished graphic that meets their immediate needs — how you make the thing is of no concern.

So what we did was create names for each of our *finished* products and we then published this list to all our customers and prospects. For example, we would offer a product called *Sintra 3*, and all a customer would add to this order was the type of finish (Matte, Luster, or Crystal). The actual print is a Lambda 4000 dpi print mounted to Sintra 3mm (Black or White) and then over laminated with the customer's choice of laminate. In most cases we would not ask the customer what laminate they wanted, we would ask them what they were *using* the graphics for and for *how long*. This tells us what we need to know and we then recommend the product to our clients. The Sintra 3 product is \$19 per square foot, regardless of the laminate or board color. After we came up with the list of products we published the list as a chart showing our customers *exactly* what the products were and how much they cost. A small sample of the product list we use for our indoor graphics appears on page 53.

Offering customers a complete list of your products and what components are used in making them removes uncertainty and answers most of the questions about the products.

The product chart is packed with useful information, but typically, clients will tend to choose the least

expensive one. Here is where you add value to the transaction that will pay off big time because if you do a good job for your client, they will come back. If you sell them something that does not last as long as they expect, most customers will find another vendor next time. They will *not* call you to discuss their concerns.

So, if for example your customer wanted a 30" x 40" trade show graphic, but they will be using this same graphic for the next four shows, you should never allow them to purchase this graphic on simple foam board. Move them to something sturdier, like Sintra, because after three shows the Sintra would still look great.

If you help your customers understand *why* they should use one product over another, you will earn their trust. This is what I like to call *value added selling*.



A Pantone chart for the Durst Lambda and Pantone Process Guide sits with a proof of a poster job we recently completed. The customer initially didn't like the red we printed.

PROFITS AND SALES

Now, let's look at your profits and sales. If you sell them four 30" x 40" prints on foam board, the retail value is \$500, but if you sell them the proper product for their four trade shows (*Sintra*) the retail value is \$633. Is your customer going to argue over an additional \$33.25 per graphic for something that will last for four shows without any problems? Most likely, yes they will.

But letting them know that they will actually *save* money by going this route (by not having to re-do all those foam board graphics that failed during shipping to the third trade show), you will bring better value to your customer and to your shop.

In addition, you now made about \$133 more for selling the *Sintra* order and you have no risk. So what decision do you feel was the best? Now, if your customer only wanted a one-time graphic usage for the show, then *Sintra* would be overkill. And if you tried to push them towards this solution, you might lose them because you were overselling.

THE NEXT VALUE-ADDED STEP

At this point your customers will know what products you offer, their construction and their respective warranties. You have to tell them how long it will take to create their graphics and what they must provide you so you can get their graphics to them in the time frame required.

Value-Added Services

Turnaround time is the part of this business that gets most of us into trouble. Too often we say *No Problem, I will have it to you in 48 hours*. But then, when you get the files, they are a mess. So you call them back, only to get voice mail, and by the time you get someone on the phone, the 48 hours has been reduced to eight hours. Now the customer gets you the correct files and they still have to have their graphics shipped that night, and charging them *rush fees* for last-minute output is not going to fly. Remember, you said *No Problem*, and this is all they heard!

What you have to do is make it very clear to them up front (during the sale), that they can indeed have their graphics in your given time-frame *provided the following*, and you lay out and define the rules for them (which, of course includes timely delivery of *useable* files). That way, when you are given bad files, and you have to stay late to finish the graphics and then you have to drive them to FedEx and miss your son's Cub



Scouts Meeting, the consolation is that you made a lot more money for your trouble.

A FUNNY THING

Here's a funny thing (not ha-ha funny): six years ago we started offering our customers 48-hour turnaround times for inkjet prints. We made over 99 percent of our deadlines. Today we have a Durst Lambda photo imaging system that is 10 times *faster* than inkjet with better color and resolution. But now we're missing more deadlines than ever!

I've discovered that most of the missed deadlines occur because some of our customers think they have become designers

Consistently getting quality files from your clients requires up-front communication. Good communication at the front end can save you time, effort and money -- thus adding great value to your bottom line.

after purchasing Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator. But now the files we are getting are just horrible! They take a Web page logo, and embed it into a layered Photoshop file, and then embed the Photoshop file into an Illustrator file. What a mess!

Then they want us to fix it, and I say "Fix What? I do not have enough C4 in the office to fix this file." Again, the key here is *communication*.

You must tell your customers *in writing* exactly what they need to provide to you (properly configured files), and what happens if they don't (*rush charges*).

And if you feel there is even a 1 percent chance that they will not give you the correct files, then you need to move your deadline date for the customer.

Once you explain the rush charges they will face if their files are a mess, a more reasonable 5-day turnaround time now will become more acceptable to them.

IT REALLY WORKS

Back in 1996 we documented everything about our products, and created a complete *Castle Preparation Guide* that outlined file format and setup. Within six months of publishing these documents and getting them into our customers' hands we reduced our administrative time on the phone with our customers by 80 percent.

To put this into real numbers, we can go from "Thank you for calling Castle Graphics" to a complete estimate in the customer's hands in under 10 minutes. And, when the customer places the order, the total sales time to process the order and move it to production is under 10 minutes. Total time for each sale — 15 minutes!

Most of my competitors take hours to just get a quote together, and then they have to call the customers back to see if they liked the quote. This new type of system gives you happier sales people, reduces the amount of mistakes and returns a lot more profit to the bottom line. This is what I call *value added*.

DG



Once the customer was able to see the final print under the natural lighting in our offices, he loved the job.