

What it takes

*The ingredients
to being a
successful
marketing
services provider*

By Graham Garrison

Sponsored by



Ryan Sauers took a long deep look at industry trends five years ago, and knew that a change was in order.

“We looked at the future and asked ourselves, was print going to keep growing?” he says. “The answer we came to in 2004 was no.”

Sauers, president of Sauers Communications, saw the “price piranhas” coming and too many printing companies vying for the same business. So he and his father decided to rebrand the company, creating subsets to

handle the different facets of communications. However, Sauers doesn’t adhere to the term “marketing services provider” as much as the mentality of being the go-to resource for his clients.

“A better way is to say it is, we’re in the business of solving our client’s problems and bringing value to their business needs,” he says.

The tangibles are a given. If you want to introduce a PURL campaign, you either need the software or a partnership with a cross media company. If you want variable printing capabilities, you need the right press technology.

But what about the intangibles? What mentality do print providers need from their employees to become successful in what essentially is being labeled marketing services?



The right attitude

The first sale starts within the company, between the ears of the owners, managers and salespeople. Peter Winters is president and CEO of The Winters Group & Associates, LLC, a company focused on marketing effectiveness and logistics. He says that providers who have made the successful transition from traditional print to MSP recognize that the print industry is changing, for good. He compares it to the railroad industry in the late 1800s, on the verge of shifting to the transportation industry. Print is becoming more like a communications logistics industry. And instead of mourning that fact, providers should embrace it.

"The mentality is not so much a defensive posture ('we've got to do something'), but an offensive posture," Winters says. "'Hey, this is a wide open opportunity, we should pursue this because there's going to be good things that come from this, even if we don't totally understand it.' It's more an offensive strategy rather than defensive."

Chris Petro, president and CEO of Global Soft Digital Solutions, says providers must train their whole organization to have the same mentality. "You can't have some people not in the boat," Petro says. "It starts at the top and goes through sales, but it also

has to carry through in marketing as well as press operations. The mentality of being an MSP has to be universal, certainly global in the company, and that's a challenge we learn pretty quick."

The right people

While the entire company would do well to adopt the new mentality, it doesn't mean everyone should focus on the new services. A successful MSP salesperson isn't necessarily the top print salesperson. Winters says providers should consider minimizing the number of people working on the MSP side.

"There really has to be some forethought into who would be most comfortable, natural and successful standing toe to toe with the senior marketing executive," he says. "It's almost a tip-of-the-spear approach, instead of an all-out blitzkrieg. You will see many of the business owners getting involved in this kind of selling cycle. You will also see many business owners, who had for the most part finished up the bulk of their selling careers, going back out in the field as the chief rainmaker in the MSP discussion.

"He or she does not need to have had past print sales experience," Winters continues. "In fact, it would probably be beneficial if they didn't have past print sales experience and were more familiar with enterprise level sales; marketing and workflow cycles, systems sales as opposed to print sales. Inside the four walls of a print company there's more than enough intelligence on the print side of the business."

Petro says his company looks for people who have a solutions-based selling background, such as postal print, people from the software industry and people from the service industry in general. Preferably people who understand indirect cost savings and value. "You do have to go out and get new people," Petro says. "You can convert some, but there's a large chunk that you can't."

Sauers says proactive thinkers and those that are fast on their feet will be the best in the new sales landscape. They need to be prepared to compete against ad agencies and marketing and PR firms for business.

"The way things were done yesterday, last month, the last five years, they just don't apply," Sauers says. "You have to think more like an ad agency than a mechanical business."

Winters says that successful MSPs have understood that there are different processes in place and disciplines that need to be developed. It's not just adding a new sales rep and selling something new, he says.

"You're talking about the development of a new business unit," he says. "The kinds of things that are indicative of a business unit are: Does it have the right strategy in place? How does it act toward the current customer base? And think about that customer base from the senior marketing executive point of view and what the organization is trying to do. It is X and we have Y. It's a different kind of selling process."

The right approach

When you become an MSP, the entire sales process, from pitch to production, changes. Providers entering the MSP realm should



rethink compensation packages, and the varying length of an MSP sales cycle. But first, they must rethink their sales pitch to their customers.

"You have to be able to be more educated on how you present your solution to the client," says Petro. "The proposal is typically not a quote sheet. When you're in the MSP realm you have to give a proposal for something – a campaign, application, direct mail piece that maybe goes deeper, has maybe cross platform marketing. How you communicate to your customer also becomes different."

It's much more big picture. Winters says that a marketing services call is essentially a de-commoditization of the print sale. "The reason for this is, you're with the senior marketing executive, at the strategy table. You're six months in front of the purchasing agent. When the correct sale is done, the deal is taken off the street, before it ever reaches the purchasing department."

Print plays a role. Sometimes the largest role. But the fundamental shift in a print provider converting to a MSP is that print is just one offering.

"In the MSP world, the print is just a delivery vehicle, and it may not be the only one," says Petro. "It may be the smallest one that you



"The way things were done yesterday, last month, the last five years, they just don't apply. You have to think more like an ad agency than a mechanical business."

– Ryan Sauers, president, Sauers Communications

give for the solution to the client. There might be a PURL campaign, e-mail follow ups, multiple stages and components. You really have to become more agnostic with the print side."

"You're talking about a business transformation shift," says Winters. "Organizations are going to keep a foot firmly planted in the ground in their print business, but also recognize that they have to borrow from the traditional business, while building this new business under the same roof. The MSP position is there to drive print. It's a different way of focusing on how you will be getting your print in the future. It's a bit of an innovative environment."

Sauers says in today's market, you are essentially providing a variety of services that bring value to your client. Not just ink on paper. It's whatever the customer wants and needs.

"The people who are pros at this see their roles," he says. "If we can make money helping our clients by making popsicle stick stands in a parking lot, then we might be in the popsicle stand business. Whatever it is that's a viable entity to help our clients grow." ■

HP is proud to sponsor CANVAS. We invite you to visit the [HP Digital Printing Resource Center](#) to download whitepapers, view on-demand press demos, webinars and more!