

How to Have a Record-Breaking

2021

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think 

think is an independent community of Canon Solutions America inkjet customers, solution partners, and print industry experts, and Canon Solutions America is a proud executive sponsor. Led by some of the most successful inkjet service providers in the country, it provides a forum for members to network, gain knowledge, discuss common challenges, and share best practices.

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Introduction

Each December, the Miriam-Webster Dictionary folks announce their word of the year. While we can all assume it will be a noun – Coronavirus – it's an equal bet to be a word we have all uttered multiple times as the perfect adjective for 2020...

Crazy. Can you imagine someone telling you a year ago how the next 12 months would play out? You would do everything in your power to have them locked up. And yet, it's all true and it all happened. In fact, it's still happening.

The world is holding its collective breath while looking towards 2021 to be our return to normal. Vacation spots are already booked. Wedding halls are reserved. Once the ball drops on New Year's Eve and 2020 is in the rearview mirror at last, optimism will return.

At least that's the hope.

From a sales standpoint, the time is now to start planning for your comeback. But more than just a return to yesterday's sales numbers, you should be tanned, rested, and ready for a record year. You are adjusted to the "new normal" of working from home. You have adapted to the new rules of sales and in particular, getting in contact with customers and prospects.



Right now, your customers are also thinking about 2021. They are making plans of their own. They, too, need and want to come back and to grow sales. Sadly, many did not make it and became yet another victim of COVID-19. But for those left standing, an opportunity exists for them and for you and your inkjet print capabilities.

Opportunity. That's the word we must focus on. The mere word itself breathes optimism and hope. Let's make opportunity 2021's word of the year.

You are reading the fourth in a series of four White Papers written this year to help you grow your inkjet print sales. The first one gave you a general overview of what it takes to be successful by beaming you into the future and taking a look back. The second White Paper gave you 10 sales actions to take immediately. And the third, most recent piece, reminded you of the once-optional selling skills from decades past that are now mandatory.

As Kelly and I thought about what to write next, we were reminded of a conversation we had back on March 11...

The last live, in-person presentation Kelly and I gave was in the Philadelphia area on March 10. It was a THINK "On the Road" event, the second of three planned for the year. The following morning as we were preparing to get on the road, I received an email from my daughter, a doctoral candidate at Cornell with an undergraduate degree in Infectious Diseases. She wrote, "Dad, take this virus seriously. The world is about to shut down." I remember my reaction to those words: I scoffed. But Emma continued, "You sent me to college to learn. I am smarter than you on this subject and you need to listen to me!"



As Kelly and I drove away, it began to hit us what was about to happen. I dropped Kelly off in Connecticut and continued my way home. Two-and-a-half hours later, I was in Walmart grabbing rice and red sauce and pasta and yes, toilet paper.

The initial shock of learning the pandemic may potentially stop the world in its tracks seems like forever ago. Since then, Kelly and I have made adjustments and found our footing again. Early on, it seemed like change came every 24 hours; it was impossible to plan beyond the next day. Soon after we felt more comfortable making planning a week out - then two. As we enter the fall of 2020, we can only now dare look further ahead to predict and plan for 2021.

And that's why Kelly and I have dedicated this fourth and final White Paper to your success in 2021. In fact, what we want for you is not just success, but record-shattering success. What will it take for you to achieve that? The next 4000 words will provide some answers and a plan to prepare.

At least, that's the hope.

Bill Farquharson
Kelly Mallozzi



Plan & Prepare for the Ride

You wouldn't go shopping without a list of what to buy. You wouldn't go on vacation without packing. So, before you set out on the road to crush it with inkjet print sales in 2021, you need to do an equal amount of preparation.

Ask yourself:

- Do you know how to sell inkjet printing?
- Do you know where to find the best leads?
- Do you know what to say in order to get in the door?
- Do you have a process to follow?
- Do you have a plan for sales activity?
- Are you adequately motivated?

Take our Self-Assessment Test

The very first White Paper we wrote for **think** back in the spring of 2019 titled "Why Aren't You Selling More Inkjet Printing?" focused on the four fundamentals for sales success:

1. Make a high-value, well researched sales call
2. Choose the right accounts to call on
3. Create an effective prospecting process
4. Apply that process with diligence

That first White Paper also included a link to a self-assessment test for salespeople to rate their readiness on a scale of 1 to 10. If you didn't take the test – or come to think of it – even if you did and wish to compare then and now – we have good news for you: [the link](#) is still working!

The Self-Assessment Test consists of five sections addressing a variety of areas related to sales. Each section contains four questions to be answered using a scale of 1 to 10:

Section 1 Quality of your calls.

Section 2 Target markets.

Section 3 Sales Process.

Section 4 Diligence.

Section 5 Anything left over.



ASSESS YOURSELF & BE HONEST!

[Click here](#) to take the test and find out what parts of your sales approach are solid and which parts need your attention.

Upon completion, your total score is calculated and sent to you along with a list of the average scores of others who have taken the test.

We strongly suggest an honest and detailed assessment of your current strengths and weaknesses prior to moving forward with any kind of conversation regarding next year. Inkjet printing is the future and numerous, profitable opportunities await. Let's make sure you bring your A-game. Taking this test is a great place to get you on your way to understanding or identifying what areas you might need to work on before setting out on the road to success in inkjet printing.

Upon a full assessment of your sales assets and deficiencies, take the next step and utilize resources that are available to you.

Because digital and inkjet printing have been around for a while now, it is highly likely any sales challenge you are having has been overcome by someone else.

Chances are, there is information on the [thinkForum.com](http://thinkforum.com) website regarding any issue holding you back, including the seven other White Papers Kelly and I have written on the subject of sales and marketing inkjet print.



Okay, assuming you are locked and loaded and ready, let's start our 2021 plans in the shallow end of the pool...

ACTION #1

Target the Low-Lying Fruit



Existing Customers

Whether it's inkjet printing or some other service, the shortest distance between you and quick sales growth involves selling more to your existing customers.

When it comes to your plans for inkjet print superstardom, there are two types of opportunities to pursue within your existing customer base.

First, ask yourself the question: *"What work are you currently producing that could be moved to an inkjet press in a way that benefits the client?"*

Every printed piece represents a solution to a business need. At some point, a decision-maker placed an order and you filled it. Re-examine that solution, study the story behind the printed piece, and consider inkjet print as an alternative. Is there any advantage to the customer? For example, if you are running the job on a traditional press in large quantities, would there be any benefit to printing on demand and eliminating inventory? This might give a Product Manager the chance to have completely up-to-date sell sheets or documentation.

In order to take this step, you will need to find out everything that happens to this job from the time it arrives at the clients Receiving Department to the moment it is used. This becomes the, "Story behind the printed piece." You'll need to ask a lot of, "Why?" and "What if?" questions, but it's this process that will uncover a potentially better option.

But, hold on a second. Won't switching presses affect the price? In the previous example, simple economics say the cost per piece rises when you go from one large run to several smaller ones. The answer is most likely, yes. However, if you've done your job correctly and come up with a better solution, the savings associated with lowering the usage cost of the document or increasing its value more than offset any price difference.

Then, ask yourself: *"Where are the opportunities for expanding your base of business into new areas because of the capabilities inkjet print provides?"*

This second approach involves merging your knowledge of existing customers with the benefits of inkjet printing. What work are you not getting that might come your way by applying this solution? Unless you have complete vendor exclusivity and produce every piece where ink or toner sticks to a substrate, there is room for growth. Chances are, you are already attempting to obtain more work from existing accounts, but how are you going about it? Are you throwing around prices, hoping to beat the competition? Assuming that approach isn't working, perhaps you would be open to a different idea.

While you are reading these words, meetings (both virtual and in-person) are being set up. Executives and decision-makers are assembling their thoughts and reviewing an agenda. Big decisions need to be made, decisions that will affect two futures, theirs and yours.

At least, that's the hope....and that's what we'll talk about next.



Action #1



Review your existing client base to see where inkjet printing fits into both the present jobs you produce as well as what you don't...yet!

ACTION #2**Get a Seat at the Table**

We are entering the season of contemplation and planning for 2021. This is where companies start assessing the year that was and looking ahead to the year that will be. Imagine a conference room filled with middle and upper managers. Shirt sleeves are rolled up. Coffee cups are everywhere. Taped to every square inch of wall space is large sheets of paper with headings like, "What went right this year?" And "Existing challenges" and, most importantly, "Where do we want to be one year from now?"

**You want to be at that meeting.**

A phenomenal opportunity exists for you if you can figure out a way to get a seat at the table. As a trusted advisor and valued consultant, you bring ideas and advice. Your inkjet print equipment yields exciting possibilities. By understanding the direction the company is hoping to take, you can sell the benefits of inkjet as a way of meeting these business needs.

There are two main points of entry into any account, the "quote" stage and the "design" stage. The quote stage is the most common. That's the door you use after receiving an affirmative response to the 1980's-style question, "Do you have anything I can quote on?" Passage beyond this stage occurs only when you have stripped all profit from a job in an effort to "get in the door."

The other way to get in it is through ideas and problem-solving. This occurs when you have done more than just look at the specs of the job. You have taken the time to learn about the client's goals and business needs and created a custom-built solution. This is clearly the better option as it benefits both parties and not just the customer. But gaining access to this rare space requires gaining access to some necessary information:

- What are their business needs?
- How will they grow revenue:
- New customer development?
- Greater share of customer?
- Serving a new market?
- Who are the decision-makers/Key contacts?

Logically, the only true way a customer can make an informed decision is by knowing all the facts and what is possible. If you have capabilities that would help them in 2021, don't you think they should know about it? After all, they don't know what they don't know and it's your job to let them know what they don't know, you know?

During the fourth quarter of 2020, while you are going about your daily business of sales growth, these meetings are being held everywhere. Starting with your existing customers (a.k.a. the low-lying fruit) and extending into the names on your list of top prospects, another sales activity in your effort to create a record 2021 must be to earn a seat at that table in that room. Sell the benefit you bring to that planning meeting or, at bare minimum, get time with a decision-maker after the fact to

find out what happened, learn what's coming in the new year, and educate that contact and others on the possibilities inkjet printing brings to the table.



What if you can't get in the room to attend that planning meeting and gaining access to decision-makers afterward also results in a dead end? You can still plant seeds.

Put together a summary of inkjet printing benefits. Where does it fit? Paint the picture for the customer by being anecdotal. Tell stories of what you have done for others. Your goal is to carve out a space in the clients' memory that they can access months down the road. Here's how it will work: one day next summer your phone will ring and it will be a number you do not recognize. When you answer you will hear, "I was in a meeting this morning and my boss said, 'We have so many different markets for this new product launch. I wish we could send each a unique marketing piece.' This made me think of you and that email you sent me describing the capabilities of your inkjet press. Refresh my memory." Get in the room, get a meeting afterward, or get a few seeds in the ground.

Counter the Objections

One possible objection you might hear to your request to meet with the decision-maker during Q4 is: "Get back to me after the holidays."

Here's a suggested response:

"I can certainly understand, but isn't now a great time to hear some new ideas? After the holidays you will be kicking off your 2021 agenda. I want to show you some capabilities that could affect that plan in a very positive way."

If that doesn't work, continue with:

"The first business day of the new year is January 4. How about I call you that morning and we set up an appointment to speak?"

Anxious to get rid of you and end this conversation, they will agree.

Next, send an email that reads, ***"I look forward to meeting with you during the week of January 4."*** Finally, reach out again at the end of December with another email confirming your appointment.

Write, ***"As discussed, I will call you Monday morning at 10 a.m."***

What started as a brushoff ends with a conversation and a chance to introduce the capabilities of inkjet printing.

There are two benefits to picking the low lying fruit. The first is obvious: there might be some immediate opportunities from a demographic who knows and likes you. The second advantage has more to do with comfort...yours. By calling on this known entity, you are gaining confidence and experience talking the talk. This will benefit you as you move on to this next aspect of your plan.



Make contact with customers and prospects and convince them they want you in their 2021 planning meetings.

ACTION #3**Seek New Business: The Catalyst for a Record 2021**

Quick! Name a Geico ad campaign.

Which one did you pick? The caveman? The gecko?

Through clever ads on TV, radio, and (yay!) print, Geico has attacked different aspects of the market with one common message. You can learn from this and take a similar approach, concurrently applying several different sales campaigns, each with the same goal.



We've written several White Papers that present ideas for building a sales campaign for inkjet printing, you can find all of them online on thinkforum.com. Here are some from the highlight reel:

Situational Selling

At various times during the year, temporary opportunities become known and you need to jump on them. These opportunities coincide with calendar-specific sales campaigns.

Some examples:

- Automobile dealers have pegged Presidents' Day weekend as a huge opportunity to sell cars.
- Weight loss clinics and gyms have end of year specials to help us get rid of the average of 11 pounds we gained during the holidays.
- Back to school events and sales begin in July.
- Church membership drives coincide with the beginning of the school year, typically in September.
- Retail establishments make most of their money in November and December with Black Friday sales and holiday specials.

In the weeks leading up to these opportunities, there is a blitz of advertising going out to the public. So, one of your Geico-like campaigns needs to be contacting these various vertical markets weeks or even months ahead of time and discussing what you can do to help them reach their goals.

Verticals

A vertical market is defined as a group of similar companies or organizations such as banks, colleges, and nonprofits. The thinking is, they all have similar challenges. As a salesperson, if you get to know and understand one such challenge and design a solution, you can move on to another company within that vertical and bring the knowledge of that first sale with you. For example, imagine reading a story about banks in your state now being able to sell life insurance. You contact Bank A (perhaps a client of yours already) and work with them on a successful series of postcards that alerts their existing customers of this new capability. The effort works and life insurance sales bloom! Armed with a story to tell, you reach out to Banks B, C, and D and take an, "If you are looking to introduce this new product line, let us tell you how we've done it for others" sales approach.

Big Fish

Every über-successful sales rep has at least one large account. A Big Fish is to sales what Dillards and Macy's are to a mall. Another part of your sales approach must include the pursuit of these kinds of game-changing customers. However, there are two things you need to know about hunting game of this size:

1. It takes time...lots of time. For a number of reasons, you can expect this selling cycle to take an average of 18 months before you see any movement and then at least another year or so to add them to your client list. During this time, you must send a steady stream of sales messages to several different key contacts. Each needs to be relevant and on-brand. But even if you do manage to heed this advice and maintain a constant attack, this second point is rather deflating...
2. More often than not, sales success with Big Fish comes more from a fluke source than as a result of your earnest selling efforts. On countless occasions, we have heard from our weekly coaching clients how, after years of solid attempts which went nowhere, it was an odd and random event (a fluke meeting of a key contact on an airplane or reading an email from a sign in sheet and realizing someone else at a volunteer event works at Humungous Corporation...) that got you in the door. But take heart: the hardest working people are also the luckiest!

Selling Through Price Points

A Taco Bell in New Mexico was the first restaurant in America to put together meal deals. Instead of ordering each item individually (à la carte), the manager decided to do his customers' thinking for them and come up with price points consisting of different combinations of food. He saw an immediate jump in sales and the idea caught on.

You can do the same thing only without the bitter aftertaste of caloric regret.

Consider putting together several packages, each consisting of different combinations of inkjet print solutions. For example, a \$999 package might include 2500 personalized full-color postcards. The \$1499 option adds a second mailing. And for \$1999, the mailing list will get hit a third time.

Get back to those vertical market or situational selling opportunities for a second and think about creating a sales campaign where, instead of saying, "I can help you with your sales and marketing," the approach would be, "Here's some different packages that demonstrate how I can help you with your sales and marketing." In other words, you have "productized" your pitch. You have changed the conversation and, in doing so, altered the possible replies for the better. Putting a bow on different price points allows the customer to understand what they can get and for how much. Things become far easier to visualize as a result.



Get your new-inkjet-business-from-new-customers act together by formulating a plan for the year. Each of these 4 categories has potential. Choose one or all four and create a plan of attack. Think like Geico. Sell like Taco Bell.

ACTION #4**Amp Up Your Marketing: The Final Piece**

We are coming up on a wonderful time of year for story-telling. No, not the one about a jolly old man in a red suit, but rather a chance for you to put some time into marketing. Why? Because just when you thought the job of sales couldn't get any harder, it did. Between voicemail and Caller ID and never mind the fact that customers and prospects seem to have collectively joined the Witness Protection Program, marketing your business and its inkjet printing capabilities takes center stage and fills a critical need to grease the skids and make your sales efforts easier.

Historically, printers have done a terrible job at marketing their own companies. That's funny, given the fact we spend most of the selling day trying to convince others to allow us to help them build their brand or handle a campaign or two. And yet, ask the average printer what they've done to get their own message out and blank stares result.

Marketing is not complex; or at least, it doesn't need to be. By sharing a few success stories in print or video form, you personify the value you can bring. Print equipment itself is not exciting. What it does, however, is as colorful in words as it is on paper. That's the message you have to get out there.

Imagine having a series of success stories on file. They sit on YouTube. They are featured on your website. You post them on LinkedIn. Get back to that vertical market conversation and the hypothetical job you ran for a bank (the life insurance promotion, remember?). As you will recall, it was a tremendous success and, as such, it's the perfect candidate for a quick video. It starts with a description of the customer's initial business need, describes your solution, and reveals the results. Just like that, the bait has been put on the hook. Now, all we need is a nibble...

Across town, a nervous vice president of marketing at Hometown Bank and Trust has just left a meeting where his boss has put it on him to launch their new service offering and he has absolutely no idea what to do next. Perusing LinkedIn, he watches your video. This is exactly what he needs! Picking up the phone, he calls you and you hear, "I have that exact same problem and could use your help. When can we get together?"

Is it that easy? Well, actually, yes. It is. Marketing paves the way and gets your phone ringing. What's more, you have plenty of selling downtime coming up. It's the perfect opportunity to put some effort into those success stories.



**Success sells more success.
Tell your success stories
through social media and
get that phone ringing by
connecting with new clients
looking for you to repeat your
success with them!**

Summary

A successful sales year rarely occurs by accident. Sure, you might trip over a big sale or have a new account fall in your lap, but that's like making the lottery the center of your retirement plan. The world is tired and beaten. It's weary from endless warnings and contradictory information. The only thing certain is the amount of uncertainty.

Come on 2021!

Let us be clear: It's important to stay in the fight for 2020 and keep up your sales, right up until the end of December. In this final sprint to the finish line, your Q1 sales are being determined by what you do or what you don't do.

Now is the time to start with a blank pad of paper and a pen, and begin to paint the picture of a record year through inkjet printing.

- » Can you add value to existing orders?
- » Can you help your customers and prospects achieve their 2021 goals and make it a record year for them as well?
- » What kind of an approach to new business could you take?
- » What will your sales process look like?
- » What sales goals could you establish?

Creating a plan like this does not happen in one sitting. It is the result of an ongoing thought process where that pad of paper gets picked up, edited and added to, and then put down many times over the course of several weeks. That's why we're talking to you about this now.

A year ago, no one could have predicted the chaos and insanity that is our daily life. A year from now, a great deal is still out of our control. However, armed with a better understanding of what "normal" looks like, we are more than able to create future success in profits and inkjet printing.

Use the remaining days and weeks in 2021 to finish strong and lay the groundwork for success. Start today by grabbing that pad of paper and returning to the beginning of this White Paper to implement our suggested action items and apply our advice.

And remain optimistic! There are better days ahead!

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Sales Trainer for the Graphic Arts and Author of three books geared toward your sales success. The 25 Best Sales Tips Ever series for the Print and Sign Industries are available on Amazon.com along with Who's Making Money at Digital Inkjet Printing and How? co-authored by Bill and Kelly.

Bill's passion for the industry and love of learning comes through with every live presentation, every Printing Impressions column, every PIWorld.com blog, and every Short Attention Span Sales Tip. Each is full of new ideas for solving old sales challenges, not to mention a lot of fun to sit through or read! His is a fundamental message: Make a high-value, well-researched sales call on the right target market using a prospecting process applied with diligence and success is inevitable. Follow that formula and he'll guarantee sales growth, a promise he makes and keeps to all of his training clients.

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