

A simple guide for those that manage  
print and communications

# Completing the circle

Picture this. The print buyer is juggling a number of projects, some straightforward and some complex, but most of them are under control. One in particular though is troubling her as it carries a big responsibility and a difficult deadline. Why? Because it is a campaign that includes mail, envelopes, variable data, various stocks and versions and formats, all of which have to be executed before the launch. The buyer had to deliver dead or alive on Friday.

There has been constant communication with the print provider about the project and at first glance the project appeared to be straightforward.

Fast forward to Friday. The document was launched on time and copies were duly distributed to the media.

**But behind the scenes all was not well. None of the other elements came together. Artwork and data files didn't match as it contained inaccurate and incomplete information.**

Many of the elements were correct but ultimately the campaign got off to a very slow start, much to the client's displeasure.

The moral of the story, of course, is the need for the print provider to get a deep understanding of what the client wants and know the whole project, not just the print production element.

Print buyers want partners rather than just suppliers, because clearly it is no longer enough to offer to manage just the print elements.

Through proper collaboration and understanding of the 'end-to-end' nature of a project, a true partner can advise on process efficiencies that ease the difficulties through the entire project. This differentiates Finsbury Green from run of the mill suppliers, as we are concerned with the management of the entire project, not just the part we are printing. This can be as simple as consolidating deliveries, or rationalising communication threads; whatever it takes to streamline the project.

# What print buyers want

**The following is a simple list, in no particular order, about what print buyers want, although in reality there's nothing simple about such a list, because print buyers are not all the same.**

## **The truth**

This is at the top for good reason. Buyers always list 'honesty' among the top three qualities they seek in a provider. For example, concealing the truth, or switching papers without their knowledge are universally despised.

## **To be kept in the loop**

Buyers say that they want to know about the status of their work in progress, particularly deadline-related issues and any potential problems, in order to avoid big surprises.

## **Value**

They're no different from any other client of any other product or service in regard to value.

## **Alternatives**

Even though some buyers say they don't want suggestions for production tips that will improve their product or save money, they want them offered anyway. Creative, innovative ideas that relate to their materials, company and their particular industry are considered courageous and memorable.

## **Project management tools**

Software or other products that will streamline processes is something every buyer wants.

## **Print providers who take responsibility**

Sooner or later, everyone mucks up a job, or a deadline, or a small detail that got forgotten. But how they are dealt with is very important to buyers.

## **Accessibility**

Buyers want to be able to reach Sales staff whenever, wherever.

## **Respect**

Whether they're new in the field or more seasoned, clients want respect without condescending or intimidating behaviour.

## **Breaking news about technology**

Buyers love knowing about industry trends and technology. They value the print providers who deliver this information as genuine partners.

## **Professionalism**

Buyers want providers who always act, look and speak like professionals.

## **To be heroes in their managers' eyes**

They are motivated by the same things that everyone else is.

## **Print's ROI**

Increasingly buyers want to know what the ROI is, and having that ammunition to help justify how effective print is and their spend.

## **Advice**

Knowing about other media and how it interacts with print campaigns is becoming more critical and something that buyers struggle with.

## **Instant everything**

Estimates, returned phone calls, proofs, turnaround of jobs, problems solved, answers to every question.

## **Clear invoices**

Buyers want easy to understand invoices without any surprises.

## **Introductions to the CEO**

Buyers often state that they like to know and have occasional contact with the CEO of the provider. The more senior the print buyer, the more strongly they feel about this.

## **Information about services**

Despite opinion to the contrary, buyers don't know it all and most of them don't think they do. They really do appreciate understanding a provider's capabilities and usually want this to be proactively presented to them. Information on a website is passive.

## **Food for thought.**

