

# Selling Print Today, Holistically

**holistic /hō'listik/ adjective:** Relating to or concerned with wholes or with complete systems rather than with the analysis of or dissection into parts.

With the wide breadth of products and services available in today's print shop, there exists an inherent challenge: bandwidth. Not in the traditional, data-flow sense of the word, but time – as in *a customer's bandwidth*. Every week, people are bombarded with information. Recently, researchers at University of California - San Diego deduced that “people are every day inundated with the equivalent amount of 34 Gb (gigabytes) of information, a sufficient quantity to overload a laptop within a week.” Business challenges are as numerous as the alternatives, making our customers more confused than ever. More often than not, our customers don't even know what questions to ask, or where to begin their investigation for a solution.

**Step one: Know your customer. More importantly, know their challenges.** Often, we're too quick to present a brochure like it's a sacred tablet. We should be less rote and more strategic in our actions. Next time, bring only a note pad to your discovery meeting and have a few thoughtful questions ready. Questions such as, “What prompted you to set time aside for this meeting?”, “What process did you go through to determine your needs?”, “Do you outsource your graphic design?”, “What would you like to see improved over your current process?”, and “Do you feel you're receiving enough return on your marketing dollars?” You may have noticed that a particular word does not appear in any of those questions: Print! You are simply asking business questions to another business professional, looking to uncover the broader challenges.

**Step two: Address their challenges with opportunities and avoid the wrong strategy.** If you immediately start pricing jobs; you are selling yourself short because every job is related to other tasks, processes and initiatives. An understanding of your customer's challenges is a valuable asset in driving the relationship forward so take the opportunity to improve their business by growing your share of their supply chain through additional services. The bottom line is, if you don't address their challenges in a comprehensive way, someone else will. Leverage your resources (partners, associations, vendors, etc.) and build a holistic plan for the customer.

As business accelerates, we need to embody the role of consultant, where we are not just order-takers, but insightful professionals, identifying business challenges, leveraging our resources and differentiating ourselves as problem solvers.

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