



Tip Sheet: How to Work Best with Your Commercial Printer

10 ROI-BOOSTING TIPS TO MAXIMIZE THIS BUSINESS RELATIONSHIP

How many times have you asked your team...
"How can we ensure we're getting the most out of the relationship with our commercial printer?"

Your decision to partner with a service provider is more than just an investment in a service — it's an investment in people. Here are 10 tips (in no particular order) that we believe will help you drive ROI in your commercial print partnerships.

01 ALIGN THE TEAM TO YOUR BIGGER PICTURE

Take time to get to know all of the people on your supplier's team, not just the senior members. Foster a true team dynamic by involving (when feasible) all contributing team members in conversations about your ultimate goals.

Printed media doesn't end at the end of a run — it's job is to communicate your brand's story and engage customers with valuable information. Share this vision and passion with your supplier. Nothing motivates people more than feeling like they are part of something bigger than the day-to-day tasks they manage.

02 SHARE YOUR PAIN POINTS

Maybe you're looking for ways to ensure on-time delivery at the lowest possible cost. Or maybe you're faced with a demand you just scale to. Share your team's pain points and give your printer the opportunity to provide solutions your team didn't know were possible.

The approach is simple: help us help you. This transparency will help consolidate processes, reveal new opportunities for collaboration, and better allocate resources to effectively manage operations.

03 GET A SECOND OPINION

We love when clients ask "what do you think?" Or "how would you do it?" It sounds simple, but some clients get stuck in a rut of doing something a certain way simply because that's how it's always been done.

Think more strategically and long-term about your campaigns and their results by setting aside time upfront to outline specific program goals. Ask for feedback to help optimize the process of establishing a test design, reviewing results, and going to market efficiently.

04 ALWAYS PROVIDE CONTEXT

As Tom Cruise famously said to Cuba Gooding Jr. in the movie Jerry Maguire, "help me, help you." As your service provider, a printer cannot fully help you if they don't know the "why" behind your request for support.

It's critical that you share what's happening within your walls. The more context, the better. Increased communication allows a partner to not only deliver on your request, but also recommend additional insights for continuous improvement.

05 ASK FOR THE METRICS YOU WANT — AND NEED

No matter how long the relationship has been in place, don't assume that your printer knows what you're thinking. Without additional communication, sometimes a program or tactic may be viewed as just that — a program or tactic. If you want to ensure you'll get the exact performance metrics and insights you need, just ask.

06 COLLABORATE FROM START TO FINISH

It's important for you and your print supplier to define deliverable requirements at the beginning of a project. Kickoff meetings are often a valuable time to outline specific project objectives, align on a proposed approach or solution, and plan out finer details such as budget, timing, deliverable formats, etc.

In our most successful client relationships, the teams work directly with one another, collaborating closely on projects from start to finish. This level of collaboration is key for client growth. Improving how engaged a client is in its sourced services relationships becomes a surefire way to produce true innovation and meet expectations.

STREAMLINE YOUR COMMUNICATION TOUCHPOINTS

Early in the relationship, make sure your commercial printer knows who their main point of contact will be and where their final approval will come from on all deliverables. Juggling multiple opinions and points of contact can cause confusion and can increase the likelihood of crossed wires, duplicate work, and missed deadlines.

Also, don't overlook the importance of scheduling — and committing to — regular status meetings. Schedules can be demanding, but a brief check-in can help get questions answered and items reviewed in a timely manner. Check-ins can also spark an idea or discussion that might not have been brought up otherwise.

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08 BE TRANSPARENT FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Even though your relationship may only overlap in certain areas, giving a print vendor visibility across your entire department will help them think more holistically. Knowing your goals helps a service provider bring in solutions that can also advance the impact of your work with other vendors. - Remember, we want to see your whole business succeed, not just the projects that we are delivering.

GET ON THE SAME PAGE INTERNALLY

From short runs to massive campaigns, printers are often asked to move forward on projects or deliverables without full agreement among the client team. Take the necessary time to get everyone on your team on the same page internally. This due diligence will prevent costly rounds of additional work and the lost time that comes with it.

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10 REMEMBER: PARTNERSHIPS TAKE TWO TO TANGO

According to forrester research, most providers will shoulder the blame for a business relationship that just never lives up to its potential. In reality, clients have the opportunity to create a relationship where a supplier can “easily or advantageously organize around and deliver customer-centric strategies.”

Ensure you're creating a mutually-beneficial partnership by: 1) increasing communication surrounding expectations, 2) addressing (and breaking down) internal channel silos, 3) prioritizing a lasting partnership, and 4) vetting a potential supplier's long-term staff quality.

ONE FOR THE ROAD

A common mistake companies can make is treating their commercial printer strictly as a vendor. That can leave a lot on the table, because the businesses you choose to work with are, in essence, an extension of your team. Include them in continued strategic conversations to ensure they know both your immediate and long-term business goals.

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