

COMMON SENSE FLEXO

From the basics come new possibilities

By David J. Lanska, "The Anilox Guy"

Flexography is where it is today for one reason: the special breed of people that make up the flexographic community. They share an entrepreneurial spirit, a can-do attitude, and the ingenuity and innovativeness to focus on solutions instead of problems. They have the tenacity to get the job done in spite of the obstacles. Flexography would not have come this far were it not for these wonderful people.

Of course, flexography is not rocket science. While many flexographers are progressive, forward-thinking craftsmen and entrepreneurs, we all know or work with less-than-stellar individuals as well. In fact, Jeff Foxworthy could probably put an entire comedy routine together on the virtues of flexo printers. While not wanting to put words in his mouth, he might approach it with a statement like "You might be a flexo printer if":

- You pull out a densitometer to check the paint job on your house.
- Your idea of a web has nothing to do with spiders or the Internet.
- Your definition of a "qualified" press helper is someone with a pulse.
- Your wife won't take you to the grocery store 'cause you spend so much time examining the labels.
- Your wife asks who this is strange woman, Anna Lox, that you are always talking about.
- You use stickyback to hold your carpet in place.
- Your "extreme dryer" is a heat gun taped to the press frame.

While we certainly can find humor in situations and practices, we can't lose sight of the fact that people's livelihoods are riding on their organizations, management and each other. Let's face it, there are flexo printing companies that go under every day.

There are others that struggle to stay afloat. Others still may not recognize the warning signs that foretell "you are about to hit a brick wall" until it is too late.

Stork Cellramic's chief operating officer Frank van den Berge, often quotes an old Dutch saying that "tall trees catch more wind." If that is the case, as I believe it is, then this book is intended to be a sequoia. It was written specifically to make people stop and think (and perhaps become uncomfortable enough with the status quo that they change bad habits and adopt good ones). Over and over and over again, I see companies making the same mistakes—

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the kinds of mistakes that lead to "going out of business" sales. As often as industry professionals write articles, books and speeches, it seems that the message doesn't get through. Maybe a different approach can have some positive impact.

To stay in business, grow and thrive, it is imperative that everyone in an organization is pulling in the same direction. We need to move forward, but in order to do that, we need to do the basics well.

Only when the basics are done properly are we able to take full advantage of the revolutionary advancements occurring in press design, as well as with virtually every major press component: plates and stickyback, doctor blades and blade systems, idler rolls, and anilox rolls—not to mention inks and substrates. As these components are refined, combined and controlled, a world of new possibilities opens up.

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