

Our Influence on the Printing Trade in Perth, WA

Other than the fact that I thoroughly enjoyed my work, I have never given much thought to my time as a printing executive for Frank Daniels Pty Ltd during the 1970's and 1980's but, in later life, several people made comments that set me to remembering that which I helped to achieve.

First I would like to point out that what I did was only possible because of the enormous support I had from my Managing Director, Des Williamson, factory manager, Bob Pratt, and all the staff who knocked themselves out to make everything happen...on time. Also, the extreme support of all the industry suppliers needed to achieve success.

I was lucky that my time as a print exec coincided with the boom in all industries; to many known better as "The Bond Era".

It really started when I got involved with Bond Corporation's financial report printing and saw that many of his various companies' reports were very badly presented. I suggested they allow me to correlate it all so that the Bond companies came across as "diversified but unified".

This they agreed too.

I got Neil Turner of Turner Graphics on board and the rest is history. There was something like 11 Bond companies at the time and Neil and his staff, especially a young designer named Steve Castledine, designed the reports for all, showing the companies as different but with a common theme that presented them as one cohesive group.

The logistics of producing 10's of thousands of reports (probably around a 100 thousand in total that first year if I remember correctly) in a matter of months was enormous.

Not long before all the real pressure started, my MD, Des Williamson, asked me, "If we put in a large 4-colour press, will we have the work to keep it going?" I said, "Yes!" with fingers crossed behind my back. He got approval from the owners and ordered a large 5-colour press.

Let me digress here for a moment. The original Frank Daniels had a philosophy that when things were bad, buy more machines. His heirs followed this philosophy. In my first couple of years with the company, this philosophy proved very right...and the following story backs it up.

From the moment this new press was installed it worked two shifts a day and still could not cope with all the work, so Des then bought another 4-colour press to back it up.

During the 3-4 months of the year that the financial printing was done, these two machines worked 24 hours a day, 6 days a week (and sometimes seven) on 12 hour shifts.

The machinists found this very draining, but when I explained to them that the increased income derived through these few months made sure that we could always carry our entire staff through the lean times without making anyone redundant gave them the incentive to carry on, and proved to be very true when the quiet times, caused by recessions, invariably came in the early part of each year. Not once did we ever lay off staff for lack of work.

To reduce the stress on the machinists, I made myself available 24 hours a day so they would not have to make the decision whether to run with a suspect form, or stop. That load was on me.

How did this influence the printing industry in Perth? First was the change in business approaches to

presentation. Seeing the influence that Alan Bond achieved by waving around his reports made the other entrepreneurs realize that they needed to follow suit. Many came to me, but also many more had their regular printers lift their game to match us by improving the quality of what they were producing.

Businesses were developed to cope with the much more up-market designing that followed. The Graphic Design industry expanded; hence, there was a large increase in applications to Curtin University of Technology's Graphic Design courses.

There were many stages in the production of such high quality reports and other books, brochures, etc.

After the initial design and art was done, came the negative preparation. This was a highly complex procedure and with so many reports being produced in a short time, one company could not do it all (printers did little or no negative preparation themselves, leaving this to the experts in that field). Consequently, during the next couple of years, 3 more neg prep companies emerged.

Of these, there were times when I would have all 4 working on negative preparation for me at the same time.

On top of this, our two presses could not always cope with the work being fed in so it came about that, at times, we would have 2 and 3 other printers doing work for us.

This is where the enormous support from my MD (Des) and factory manager (Bob) came in. I got the work...I would call them from the client's and by the time I returned to the factory they would have figured out how it could be produced, and by whom if necessary, to meet the deadline.

Keep in mind that financial printing always has a deadline that must be kept. If not, a company can be suspended from the Stock Exchange if their reports are late...a disaster for any company. We never once failed.

There were other aspects of printing that we were not particularly set up to do on a large scale. One of these was foiling and embossing.

Not long before all the above started, I had a guy come to me and ask that if he started a business specializing in foiling and embossing, would I support him. Again, another "Yes".

Because of his business I was able to push clients into using more of this type of presentation. As well as stationery, it was introduced onto the covers of reports, books, etc, and this allowed him to quickly expand his business in a short period of time to cope with the huge increase in demand for his expertise. Not just by us, but other printers as well.

I had not given much thought to any of this until one day, some years ago, I needed some foiling and embossing done for a friend going overseas on business. The printer they used said he couldn't get the foiling and embossing done in time and, as it turned out, I found they used the business I'm talking about. So I called them and asked them could they fit it in.

Although the staff at that time didn't immediately recognize me, he must have spoken to someone there who did (I had been retired for over 20 years) and I was told it would be done on time.

The next day I called in just to check and was welcomed with open arms (so to speak). It so happened that the owner, Kevin Blennerhassett (who was also semi-retired), was in, and when he heard what I needed, made it happen.

He took me aside and said: "Stuart, they have been told that anything Stuart wants, Stuart gets!" He waved his arm around the factory and said: "This is here because of you!"

That made me think that, yes, I did have an influence on the printing industry in Perth. Albeit, only because of the boom times and the enormous support I had from my MD (Des Williamson), our Factory

'Order of Driveway Blockader'

We all managed to keep our sense of humour, despite the pressures inserted on us by auditors who pushed time to the limits...frightened of making a miscalculation!

During the pressure times of producing financial reports for Perth's leading entrepreneurs there was one particular firm that handled a lot of my negative preparation (an essential part of colour printing).

Their's was an old building with a driveway that went down under the building to a parking area for the executive staff.

When the time would come that they were in a position to have me come and check over the work they were doing for me, I would turn up and, if there was no parking in the street out the front, would simply leave my car in the entryway to their underground parking while I raced in and signed off on the work they were doing for me.

During the three months or so of the financial printing period, this would happen quite frequently.

I simply did not give it a thought as, at these times, I was always under the pump time-wise... no time to spend looking for a parking spot that could be far off.

Anyway, one day they called me over urgently to check on something. When I arrived I was led into the neg prep room where I was met by most of the staff and management.

They proceeded to make me a presentation of the award seen in the photo shown here.

(No-one ever learned to spell my name right.)

As much as I caused some headaches for those wanting access in and out of the driveway, the amount of work we put through that firm (and others) at that time of the year was considered compensation enough.

They turned it all into a fun presentation with obvious respect on both sides.

