

We deliver herewith a series a series of articles, from designers, brand owners, printers, converters, journalists and influencers. We look forward to working together with experts, who enrich our drupa Essentials with fresh impulses, sound expertise and remarkable experience. All these articles will allow visitors to understand a world that has changed dramatically since the creation of drupa in 1951 and will continue to evolve. Different observations and perceptions of an industry seeking innovation in a fast-changing world. Give free rein to your instinct under the adage: "to each his own drupa".

**We are happy to provide you with this expert article and we would be pleased if you publish it.**

**Be inspired!** \_\_\_\_\_

**Good reading.  
Sabine Geldermann & Team**

## **Silas Amos: Making things happen - 5 ways to persuade a client to be bold and innovative with their print**



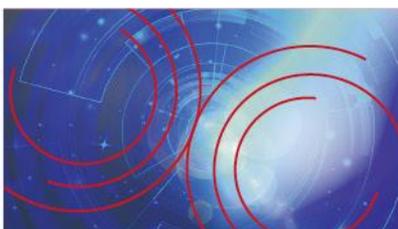
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# Silas Amos: Making things happen - 5 ways to persuade a client to be bold and innovative with their print

**This piece is written for anyone who has a new piece of printing technology to use, but no immediate queue of clients lined-up who will either understand its advantages or see why they should be the first to use it. In other words – you know you have a new solution to offer, but the challenge is your clients don't recognise a problem that needs fixing...**

I'm a designer and design strategist. Much of the media I work with is packaging and my clients are typically marketing leaders and brand managers for big brands stocked in retail outlets such as supermarkets. Over the past few years I have become convinced of the benefits of digital print in delivering a more creative and agile approach to how marketers use the media of packaging. I've worked with HP quite a bit, creatively experimenting with their digital print capability and talking to their circle of print suppliers and the brands that use them.

Getting busy people on board to 'try something new' can be hard work. These aren't entrepreneurs, they are business professionals trying to meet their targets efficiently and effectively and they are not prone to moving away from tried and tested approaches.

So it's not always an easy 'sell' – but here are some common-sense suggestions based on my own experience of trying to persuade my clients to have a go, to be bold, to try something new. Hopefully the things I have observed can act as general principles for anyone trying to get their clients to try something new and to then reap the benefits. It's not the whole story – being a great business salesman comes down to many factors and skills (many of which I lack) but here's how I try to make things happen...

## 1. Find the right opportunities

The 'new thing' you have to offer won't be for everybody. The majority of customers will be happier as followers of a proven approach than as innovators of something less tried and tested. So the first task is to find amongst your contacts those people who like to feel brave and who get inspired by trying something different. The ideal candidate is someone young enough to want to make their reputation, but senior enough to make their own decisions! They also need to be passionate about what they are doing – because they genuinely want to make it better, not just more efficient.

Having found this rare person, you now need to identify and understand two things about their professional working lives. What is it that keeps them awake at night, and what is it that would make them jump excitedly out of bed? Once you understand their big 'problem' and their big 'I wonder' questions, you can then figure out if the innovation you are championing can be overlaid onto these things as a potentially smart solution. The principle is simple – ask the right questions of the right people and listen to the answers – look for the 'win-win'.

One other thing – you need to be a passionate, informed and inspiring spirit yourself. You won't convince others if you are not convinced yourself!

## 2. Lead by example

As Henry Ford put it "You can't build a reputation on what you propose to do."

In order to ignite interest you will need to show successful applications of the tech you are championing. The reality is that getting to these first concrete examples often comes from the first work being 'given away' to prove its worth. In blunt terms you have to put some skin in the game – on your own time and from your own energy. The Smirnoff work I developed with HP and the Yarza Twins came from an email I sent the Diageo design team headlined 'Free Lunch?'

I simply asked them to lend me a brand on which I could prove the equipment's capabilities. I was asking for a chance for us to prove ourselves. Happily, they obliged.

## 3. Explain the value

"We can deliver better, faster and cheaper, but can only do any two of these at a time" is a classic way of explaining ones offer to clients. But more and more they are demanding "all three please."

The value the innovation can bring needs to hit several targets in order for your client to become truly interested in it... In cost and speed it should be competitive or provide an affordable alternative to typical processes in the right context. In output it should produce something of equal or greater quality to typical alternatives. In application terms it should enable the client to do something they could not do before.

This is the key factor: How can you creatively 'up the game' with the final product. Will people pay more for it? Love it and buy more of it? Notice it (when before they were blind to it)? Will it make your clients competition look average by comparison?

If you can offer comparative evidence against these basic points you have a good position to then look at how to tailor your pitch to your client.

## 4. Reduce the risk

Only the reckless would bet their career and core business or brand on an untested new approach. There are two magic words that can unlock the proposed project: 'Pilot scheme'. Start small, think of the first steps as a low risk experiment – if it fails, the only thing it has really cost is some time and energy. But if it works, the process can be reviewed, streamlined and made fit for larger and larger projects. Build trust, learn on the job, and there's a good

chance more work will develop organically from the process.

### 5. Join forces

Be it with competition amongst creative agencies or amongst solution-providers in the print world, we are all used to a 'dog-eats-dog' approach to business. But with innovation, if you only stick to selling the one thing that you alone can do, there's a chance you will become disconnected from your client's bigger challenges and processes, especially when looking forward. So, if you can learn to play ball with other key suppliers or teams you will more likely get to bigger and bolder solutions that can be truly game changing.

My analogy is the stained-glass window – arguably the world's first example of mass communication. Engineers figured out how to put big holes in lead bearing walls using flying buttresses. Craftsmen figured out how to colour glass and work it into images. And the 'marketing department' had a whole story to tell about 'I am the light'. Put them all together and the Sunday worshippers got to see the world of their faith in a whole new way.

When I wanted to promote HP's SmartStream software that underpins their digital printing solutions, I would have

got nowhere without recruiting the talents of a great artist, Sir Peter Blake, and a great printer, F E Burman, to help connect the dots. Together with some HP Indigo software developers we pushed the tech and opened up a conversation about the cultural relevance of the technology. Connect the dots with the help of others and you can truly change the business we work in.

In conclusion, I'd observe that there's really nothing new under the sun. And success in promoting any radical leap in technology relies on very simple human values. Have passion, be positive, embrace new technologies, be open for partnerships and teamwork and care about genuinely resolving your client's challenges. That way you'll be well set to pick up new business whilst also having some fun along the way.

And last but not least – do visit drupa 2021 in Düsseldorf as that'll be the place where many innovations can be seen and touched.