

drupa Essentials of Print



The print & packaging industry is a living world and once every four years, it is important for all its stakeholders to meet and share for a better future. At drupa, we promise you inspiration, innovation, knowledge sharing and networking. Each visitor will have his own places to go and must-see hotspots. On the way to this event, we release the “drupa essentials”, a series of articles from designers, brands owners, printers, converters, journalists and influencers. These articles will offer visitors an understanding of the print & packaging world that is transforming rapidly under the umbrella of digitalization, automation and sustainability. So, enjoy the reading and give free rein to your instinct and curiosity 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! _____

Your drupa Team

François Martin – What is drupa? Far more than just a tradeshow!



VITA

François Martin

François Martin is a freelance consultant in graphic industry. He is specialized in the digitalization of production processes. He believes that the changes to come are bigger than the one who already took place and his focus is on educating Manufacturers and Printers & Converters to embrace the digital transformation. He worked for Hewlett-Packard, Michelin, HP and BOBST driving new businesses.

You can reach François under [LinkedIn](#)

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contributor**



François Martin – What is drupa? Far more than just a tradeshow!

Over the last 20 years, the way to engage with customers across the entire sales-cycle has evolved beyond recognition. New technologies have enabled things that simply were not possible before and this process continues. Traditional customer touchpoints are being challenged, even replaced, as the mix of engagement activities becomes more complex and sophisticated. So here are a few personal insights into ways to captivate and inspire customers in this evolving, dynamic situation.

Having spent over 20 years in the graphics industry, attending numerous tradeshow and events across the globe, not one occasion passes by without me being asked “how long will we attend tradeshow?” or “are tradeshow still relevant?”. These questions, often raised by financial controllers looking out for potential savings, are not surprising and are also raised by many tradeshow visitors themselves. The answer is neither yes nor no, as that would be just too simple. What is important is to put things into perspective and to understand that we live in a more complicated world – especially in the graphics industry where, for example, ongoing digitalization creates opportunities but also fear or uncertainty.

The rise of digital communication, which started in the late 90’s, helped customers to access product information instantly at their fingertips, via websites and all kinds of e-newsletters. Later, around 2010, many manufacturers went further by opening eye-catching, content-rich demo-centers to host and engage clients in various ways, in person or digitally. Webinars, amplified during the COVID time, became as popular as e-newsletters. This happened as traditional media, especially newspapers, declined and journalists and influencers grew to rely on the web to access and share information. They also started organizing actual events with properly integrated online components including social media, which is still something of a buzzword in the graphics industry. The resulting traffic and customer engagement has been incredible. Email-campaigns to customers and prospects are more efficient and automated, even traditional direct mailing is more effective with better targeting. To complement this, industry-associations continue to organize local events and user-communities run even more sophisticated global events, all with digital outreach. Lastly, the traditional tradeshow, predicted by many to die out by the time COVID was over, have adapted and are

thriving and that is so true for drupa, which takes place again soon.

So how can we connect the dots and navigate around this complex, dynamic environment? One could claim everything nowadays is in such flux, even chaos, that it’s actually impossible to fathom. Well, from far away yes maybe - like our universe - it could look daunting. But when you break it down and look closer, it all comes down to customer touch-points which each have their reason to exist, their purpose. They are all aligned to and orbit around the customer purchase-cycle. Let’s take a look.

Starting off, when you are simply an observer, today you can surf the web and easily find all manner of useful, rich content. You can subscribe to numerous newsletters and collect enough subject-matter to make your own reference-collection. You can attend a few webinars, even sign-up for an online immersive experience, to learn something new, something that triggers your mind further. Then, when you become more serious, attending an industry or association event and meeting your peers will make a lot more “real” sense.

This could also be the time when you’ve decided to check out a specific configuration for real, like wanting to sit in the car you previously configured on the web. You could visit a demo-center, see the solution for the first time in action. But let’s say they seduced you but didn’t quite convince you – it was so VIP, but you still want to be sure you haven’t missed anything. This is where an industry tradeshow fits the bill, it can and will help you make the most important, reliable decisions. In one single location, you can see and feel everything that could make your dream a tangible reality. You can compare things that are either not on the web at all or identify their real differences when everyone online often looks the same. You can read between the lines, can see what is not documented, you can connect your own dots and, for a while, sit in the future.

This helps explain why, ever since the middle-ages from around 1300-1400, numerous industries organized very large tradeshow in easy-to-reach locations, from Antwerp to Lyon to Hannover to Samarkand and many other places. Some of these were a “must attend” in order to stay ahead, to understand before others what should be offered on

the shelves. These traditions have survived and all the industries you can name perpetuate this ritual, for a very simple reason – human interaction. As humans, we simply need it, to evolve and prosper. Without it, humanity would be long gone! In this context tradeshows, although they are still narrowly called tradeshows, are in reality much more. In every industry from automotive to aerospace to travel to textile to food to home furnishing and of course to printing & packaging – there is a fundamental imperative to interact in order to understand market trends, connect the dots and so to touch the future.

This is why drupa truly is the pulse of the print & packaging industry, the place where all manufacturers exhibit and benefit, whether as a large player or a smaller one. It helps them to set timelines on internal product-development and for their industry announcements. It helps them to motivate their employees towards an ambitious target. It enables customers to meet and to exchange views and ideas. Every visitor gets to see so many things not available anywhere else. In a word, it's kind of magical.

I know it may sound old-fashioned to be promoting tradeshows in this digital world, especially knowing there are some who'd consider scrapping them for a purely digital future. But drupa is the Olympics of our industry and is evolving at the same speed of the entire industry it serves. Every drupa is different

and the way it engages with visitors is always transforming. The customer experience provided by exhibitors is evolving from “touching the metal” to understanding industry trends; from measuring speeds to discussing new business opportunities and to assessing more sustainable solutions. It is aimed more than ever at highlighting things you do not do today but which you should be doing tomorrow, in order to succeed and prosper, things which may indeed take you by surprise!

So drupa is not just a tradeshow anymore. It's the “rendezvous point” for millions of people, living for and thanks to the print & packaging industry, who seek unparalleled insights and opportunities to stay ahead of the game. That's what makes drupa the “must attend” event for anyone involved in the printing industry whether printer, supplier or software provider.

Quotes

“Tradeshows matter a lot as a glimpse to the future”

“Tradeshows – because you can't swipe human interaction”