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Werner executives:
Standing (from the left) Ray Frick and Bob Werner.
Seated: Debbie Pollard Pawlowski, Louis Werner, and Bill Fitzgerald.

Making Print That Lasts a Lifetime

WHETHER IT'S FOR A FORTUNE 500 CLIENT OR A LOCAL BUSINESS SEEKING A TOUCH OF CLASS, WERNER PRINTING & ENGRAVING HAS CARVED A NICHE PROVIDING PRINTED PRODUCTS THAT STAND THE TEST OF TIME.

Printing That Matters

By Erik Cagle, SENIOR EDITOR

As the purported war over market share between print and digital media wages on, it is important to distinguish the down-and-dirty print jobs that are gravitating toward electronic versions, and meaningful printing.

Bank statements. Tax codes. Annual reports. Media guides. Telephone directories. Encyclopedias. Certainly the migration of these once ink-on-paper jobs to digital is a loss for printers, but let's be honest. No one will tie a ribbon around last year's Donnelley Directory and safely tuck it away in a cedar chest. It's utilitarian print, often time-sensitive information, necessary but forgettable.

Midwest. Werner's team of highly-specialized employees, buoyed by a crew of master craftsmen and women with an average of 25 years engraving experience, appreciate that their work will be carefully perused, coddled and admired for years to come. Their work is held to a higher standard, an echelon where "close enough" printing is simply unacceptable.

The world of engraving and specialty printing is intolerant of imperfections. Designers, professional firms—such as legal and finance entities—and business corporations rely on Werner for their engraved letterhead, business cards, marketing collateral and many other specialized paper products. Its ceremonial clients need invitations for weddings and Bar/Baht Mitzvahs, along with birth announcements. Government entities, from the mayor's office up to the White House, require engraved printing for special events. Colleges, universities and other educational institutions rely on Werner for diplomas, invitations and various event announcements.

Quality Is Still Paramount

"We may be the last bastion of the true craft of printing," notes Ray Frick, a 1999 PRINTING IMPRESSIONS/RIT Printing Industry Hall of Fame inductee who was recently named company president. "As a society, we're all drowning in e-mails and all things digital. Consequently, we're now seeing a renewal of interest in the personal touch, the elegance and look of premium quality printing and engraving."

According to Bob Werner—CEO of the firm founded by his grandfather Robert in 1921 and then run successfully by his father Louis—electronic invitations have their place, but it's not in the consciousness of the clients that the company serves. "On the lower end, a lot more people are using the Internet and e-invites," he says. "On the high end, people don't want to go to (stock) catalogs anymore. They want the elegance of a custom invitation."

Engraving only scratches the surface of Werner's capabilities. Its printing capabilities feature manual and mechanical engraving, two- and four-color offset lithography, digital printing, thermography and Perma Raised printing, and letterpress printing. Adding sugar to the mix are value-added capabilities such as foil stamping, embossing (including blind embossing), diecutting, perforating, scoring and numbering.

Werner Printing & Engraving is a mix of old world printing art and craft complemented by digital technology enhancements. In



Harvey Benjamin (shown left) and Dave Szczepanik inspect a job produced on an automatic engraving machine.

Some printing, on the other hand, is forever. The framed college diploma hanging on your wall. The wedding invitation carefully kept in a photo album or scrap book. The military citation for a life risked, perhaps lost, in service of one's country. This flavor of printing marks a moment in time, or perhaps succinctly epitomizes a long journey or quest. It is symbolic of what we hold to be valuable and valued.

In truth, it is no more than words and images on paper. Yet, when we run our fingers over the raised type, gold foil stamping and embossing of these documents, no one would dare ask why there are tears in the corners of our eyes.

Just a piece of paper? You bet. It just won't be found in any recycling bin, nor will digital media ever stand as an acceptable substitute.

This concept is not lost on Chicago-based Werner Printing & Engraving, one of the largest engraving and specialty printers in the

the past year, the shop acquired a four-color Xerox 700 digital press along with a Halm Jet envelope press. The firm is also backed by robust Web-to-print on-line ordering capabilities, providing old school printing without the long turnaround times.

“Our new digital press helps us respond to clients’ needs for the fast turnaround of marketing collateral and we use it for internal purposes, as well,” Frick notes. “In terms of our capital expenditure planning for the next 12 to 24 months, it would be hard to imagine the growth plan we’re embarking on without an additional piece of equipment to further accelerate our capabilities in digital printing.”

Bob Werner adds that his company is keeping an eye on large-scale thermography technology for producing pocket folders, and anticipates an equipment purchase to that effect in the next year or two. The company certainly doesn’t make a habit of ineffective or outlandish purchases: In an era when capital spending is guarded at best, Werner Printing & Engraving enjoys the distinction of having zero debt and owning its building.



At left, work is fed into an engraver by Gladys Rodriguez.

Below, Sal Hernandez and Benjamin check an offset print job.



also has selectively chosen the best of the movers and shakers in our space to help enhance and guide our business. Each acquired company has added value to Werner’s knowledge and capabilities.”

“GOING FORWARD, WE FEEL ABOUT A THIRD OF OUR GROWTH WILL BE ORGANIC, AND TWO-THIRDS WILL COME THROUGH SELECTIVE, ACCRETIVE ACQUISITION.”

Ray Frick

Werner Printing & Engraving has also taken aggressive steps to augment its staff, hiring a pair of veteran engraving salespeople to strengthen the bottom line, along with Debbie Pollard Pawlowski, the new director of sales and marketing services. Frick, of course, boasts an impressive resumé that includes stints with RR Donnelley and The Lehigh Press, along with former heavyweight firms Banta Corp., Quebecor Printing and Brookshore Lithographers. His background in mergers and acquisitions also meshes well with his new employer, which has acquired six competitors over the years.

“Going forward, we feel about a third of our growth will be organic, and two-thirds will come through selective, accretive acquisition,” Frick remarks. “We’re fully prepared to expand our tentacles into acquiring engravers that might not be prepared for the future—financially or strategically—or that don’t have a succession plan.”

It is Werner Printing & Engraving’s willingness to pull the trigger on acquiring top-flight competitors that has enabled the company to set its mark as the standard for excellence in the Midwest, according to Harvey Benjamin, plant manager. “In a niche market such as engraving, what helps differentiate Werner from the rest of the field is the fact Werner was borne of the experience brought from the acquisitions of six engraving companies,” Benjamin says.

Not Stationary About Stationery

Frick notes, “We have become an unsurpassed leader in serving the stationery needs of professional firms and businesses. Through the vision of (CFO and patriarch) Louis Werner, the company

Building Brands

Another feather in the Werner cap is its consultative approach toward selling and cultivating clients. With brand identification such an important element of client marketing materials, and with M&A activity often changing the face of customer logos, it behooves Werner to establish a bond to effectively answer client rebranding needs. To that end, the firm has established Werner University, a program to help educate client staffs—some of which are smaller and younger—on the ins and outs of engraving and brand management.

CEO Bob Werner is also proud of his company’s environmental commitment. In the past year, a plant lighting replacement initiative has shaved electricity usage in half. And the company has exceeded the 65 percent mark for recycled paper usage. “We’re getting closer and closer to becoming a zero waste facility,” he notes.

Going forward, Werner sees opportunities for organic growth in areas such as security applications; specialty packaging (aided by the company’s foil stamping, embossing and diecutting capabilities); and expanded personal communications, namely holiday and note cards, along with invitations. An acquisition of a Midwest or East Coast firm is not out of the question, and there’s also something to be said for the simple and effective execution of a crystal-clear game plan. As Frick is fond of saying, it’s the “blocking and tackling” fundamentals that also help produce and sustain customer confidence.

“Our mantra remains simplify, focus, execute,” Frick states.

Bob Werner also echoes the importance of taking care of the little things. And, frankly, creating mementos that will last a lifetime is sure to put a smile on your face.

“It’s about meeting and going beyond client expectations; making few promises and delivering on all of them,” he says. “And, we also want to make sure that we have some fun along the way.” **PI**



WERNER PRINTING

Printers & Engravers Since 1921

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Werner Printing & Engraving Co. is an unsurpassed leader in the specialty print, engraving and stationery sectors. We have worked with thousands of professional firms and corporations of all sizes, from the small/mid-size firm to Fortune 500 organizations across the country and internationally. We are proud to be an independent, third generation family owned business.

Seven printing processes under one roof to serve you better!

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- Offset lithography, 2 and 4 color
- Digital 4 color printing
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 - o Foil stamping
 - o Blind embossing
 - o Die cutting
 - o Perforating/scoring/numbering

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We have recently added experienced, senior sales staff and project managers with decades of experience in the engraving and specialty printing industry. We can manage your project, big or small, from start to finish. We offer end-to-end solutions including robust on-line order stores and typesetting and design capabilities. We feel you will find our unique blend of capabilities and production expertise to be essential to your marketing and brand management requirements.

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