

GET INTO WIDE FORMAT WITH DES AND ROLAND  
 "YOU TRUST US WITH YOUR COLOUR  
 NOW TRUST US WITH YOUR SIGN & DISPLAY SOLUTION"



Printing news and information for Australia & New Zealand

news

shop

employment

trade services

Print21



Search

## Latest News

PRINT

latest news

packaging

labels

wide-format

Supported by



**FUJIFILM**  
Value from Innovation



**EPSON**  
EXCEED YOUR VISION

## Twitter Feed

A pathway to failure – Alan King on OnDemand. There are some intractable problems facing the industry. This is one. <http://t.co/Tjh6xANmqD>

Michael Wu wins the battle for OnDemand – Plenty of disappointed printers in Melbourne over missing out <http://t.co/IXv3PtckzF>

Starleaton expands with Zund agency takeover | Print21 Ben Eaton is on the takeover track. <http://t.co/GRtavWVg6C> via @sharethis

Joan Grace quits Printing Industries & Future Print –

### Follow the leaders to the future: James Cryer's commentary

Friday, 30 April 2010

By Print21

Age is no barrier when it comes to running a successful printing business, writes *James Cryer*, who believes that it is time to start harnessing the wisdom of our elders.

To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, the collapse of one printing company is an unfortunate accident, but two in the one month is just sheer carelessness. Just like the death of a loved-one, we as an industry should feel the reflected pain and take no joy in such events.

But being human, we also feel a sense of glib relief that the corporate Grim Reaper has passed us by. Are any of us so perfect that we can hurl sarcastic comments at these companies as if we are models of rectitude when it comes to managing a business?

I'm referring, of course, to those two giants of the forest who crashed spectacularly in the month of April: Pettaras and Chippendale. There have been others of course who had less heroic corporate histories, but we tended to put Pettaras and Chippos on a pedestal – and for good reason.

They were ornaments of the industry: Pettaras for its outstanding award-winning reputation and Chippos for being the underdog that joined the big league. And putting aside the temptation to make petty swipes, they were leaders in their sectors: proud, assertive, confident, enjoying a certain cache, and perhaps even the envy of other companies who could only dream about their high-profile reputations.

These were not the companies you'd bet on in the "least likely to succeed" stakes.

So what went wrong?

The definition of an idiot is someone who keeps making the same mistakes after being told the remedy. We as an industry do tend to keep making the "same mistakes". Ideally, as an industry, we should wish to learn from these "mistakes" – not in a gloating sense that "we've survived and they haven't", but in a constructive sense of "what should we be doing better" collectively, as an industry.

Are there any common threads that link these two unfortunate collapses? Maybe.

One of the strengths of our industry, is that it's built upon the rock of the fierce entrepreneurialism of self-made men. Virtually all of our managers are from within the industry. But it can be lonely at the top, so where does a "self-made" MD turn to when times get turbulent and other skills, such as financial, operational or logistical expertise are needed?

If Pettaras and Chippos had the benefit of "outside" directors and/or consultants, would they have made the same decisions that possibly lead to their demise?

I know it's easy to be critical after the event, but are we too parochial in our management structures?

There is, however an answer, and it's on our doorstep. We as an industry are very quick to chuck out our more mature members (yes, the ones who have made all the mistakes and learned from them), and toss them on the scrap-heap.

There is a vast reservoir of intellectual and managerial talent just waiting to be utilised in our industry, if only we could get over this mind-set that all managers have to be under forty. These older, more mature "elders"

Click for SCODIX Options

CMYKhub

GET INTO WIDE FORMAT WITH DES AND ROLAND

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR FUJIFILM GRAPHICS BLOG & BE ENTERED FOR YOUR CHANCE TO WIN AN Instax Mini 50S Camera with Film!

Trade Service of the week

Job of the week

Apprenticeships



Read the latest issue of Print21 magazine

Subscribe for your print copy



can often bring a clearer perspective to the owner's more narrow day-to-day vision and provide an often inexpensive resource or sounding-board to our typically younger leaders. In other words, we have a vast resource available, if only we would make use of it.

In a perfect boardroom setting, there will be a mixture of young and old, daring and conservative and – dare I say – male and female. Our industry desperately needs the mixture, the ying and yang of diversity. Let's start with a unique "talent bank" – only apply if your over fifty, and/or female, and/or have no experience in the printing industry.

I'm very mindful of the excellent example which Dennis Cooper set in offering his services, but there must be many more like him with a wealth of experience to offer.

It would be relatively simple to create such a data bank, and the rewards could be priceless. Any volunteers?

**The industry can't afford to lose talent such as Joan Grace**  
[.http://t.co/DuGDpXtwbC](http://t.co/DuGDpXtwbC)

---

Colin Longbottom heads towards the exit Good man Colin, hope your saddlebags are well loaded for the sunset ride.<http://t.co/d5oamorf2X>

---

If you enjoyed reading this article [Subscribe to the FREE Print21 news bulletin](#)

### Comment on this article

Name

E-Mail (will not be published)

Website

Receive comment notifications?

Comment

To receive notification of comments made to this article, you can also provide your email address below.

Email address

---

[Advertising Enquiries](#) | Copyright © 2012 PRINT21 | Published by blueline media

