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### Would the real printing industry please stand up? James Cryer's commentary

Tuesday, 06 July 2010

By Print21

No owner likes it when their business collapses, but, asks James Cryer, would it hurt for them to stand by their staff to the end?

We all like to claim our industry is a role model of good corporate governance and the last proud bastion of true craftsmanship – the National Print Awards tell us so, and we like to trumpet it from the rooftops. And I think, in fairness, we are a pretty good industry to work for. We all grumble a bit, but anecdotal evidence tells us it can be worse on the other side.

And also in fairness, as employers, we are increasingly recognising that looking after employees almost ranks alongside looking after customers, as the key to our success in the future.

Only this month, Snap in WA, won two coveted awards in the "best employer" category – joint-winner in the Insync Surveys Advocacy Award and runner-up in the Best Small Employer category. And Snap is proud of its initiatives to engender staff loyalty, such as its "Fun-in-the-Workplace" program.

Sadly, that feel-good story was blunted by corporate behaviour of a darker nature – which was occurring at about the same time, here on the east coast. A well-known commercial printer folded (no crime in that, in fact, it's becoming quite popular), after assuring all its staff their entitlements were okay.

The directors then parachuted to safety with another firm, leaving the staff betrayed, bewildered and somewhat disillusioned with the printing industry as a whole.

But, as one letter I received recently from a dejected former employee, stated: "... they promised everything would be paid ... then at the last minute claimed they had no money ... so we have to wait eight to 12 weeks to get our money from a place called GEERS ... so by that you can imagine what I and the rest [of the] staff think of them. So that leaves me with no money and no job? Yep, printing is getting nasty, hard work for not much reward, I'm looking to get out ..."

Very sad. I bet this employee wished the had worked for a company like Snap.



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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 –

As mentioned, it's not a crime to go bust, and as Andy McCourt wrote recently, our out-moded insolvency laws tend to force companies into a quick exit prematurely. However, as proud craftsmen and women, we can do better during the final wind-up by honouring the commitment and loyalty shown by the staff, whose efforts help build the fortunes of the proprietors in the first place.

As an industry, let us be judged by our corporate behaviour, not just by how deftly we can plonk one coloured dot upon another

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

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

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