



LATIN AMERICA
PRICE, QUALITY OR
SERVICE? ALL 3?
PAGE 19

EUROPE
GETTING THE
PRICE+QUALITY
FORMULA RIGHT
PAGE 18

AFRICA
STAFF
CONFIDENCE
KEY TO BUSINESS
SUCCESS
PAGE 16

RUSSIA
DEMAND FOR
QUALITY
SUPPLIES GROWS
PAGE 09



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PAGE 06

—Ray Stasieczko warns status quo is killing us
and we must embrace the future now.

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IMAGING WORLD

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EDITORIAL

For all of the 30 years I have been in this industry—as a cartridge remanufacturer, head of a trade association and as a publisher and event organizer—the tension between quality and price has existed.

In this edition I went to industry leaders across the globe: in Africa, Latin America, the USA, Europe, Russia and Australia. Each of them has come back with a different perspective, albeit each is valid.

Even our resident cartoonist, Berto from Chile, pokes some fun at us on the quality vs price theme for this month.

We have put the dynamic, controversial, outspoken Ray Stasieczko on our front cover. In my view, he has had to wait a long time to grace our front cover. His daily views on his “At the End of the Day with Ray” channel have garnered him a large audience across the imaging devices and supplies sector.

As with others writing in this edition, Stasieczko challenges the industry to listen to the customer and not to remain in the status quo position: “but we have always done it this way.”

Each of the writers in this issue have become experts in listening to their customers and I commend each of them to you. Your business depends on it.



16 | LETTERS FROM AFRICA

Staff Confidence is the Key to Business Success



17 | MY WORD

Are you a Walker, or Just a Talker?



18 | KEEPING UP

Getting the Price+Quality Formula Right



19 | LATIN LETTERS

Price, Quality or Service? That is a Good Question



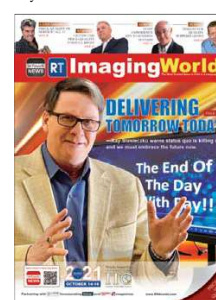
20 | THE LISTS

Berto's last laugh over price and quality



06 | FRONT COVER STORY

Xerox: Between the Digital and Physical Worlds



Ray Stasieczko talks about how to embrace the future



After years of planning and negotiation with government authorities and the imaging supplied industry, RT officially opened its new RT Building on January 18, 2021 with staff moving into the top floor of the 20-storey tower in Zhuhai, China.

FEATURES

04 Giving the Shirt Off Your Back for Quality, Price and Ethics

—Darren Turner

The value that customers hold in products isn't limited to a low-price tag or even the product quality at the risk of poor labour conditions or environmental damage.

10 The HP Trojan Horse to Capture Your Customers

—Ray Stasieczko

What they're forgetting to add about 'knowing your customers' is what they really mean: "It's important for us to know your customers."

14 2021 – A Call for Leadership

—Brad Roderick

Hopefulness and confidence about the future or the successful outcome of something.

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Giving the Shirt Off Your Back for Quality, Price and Ethics

We understand quality as 'the standard of something as measured against other things' or basically ... how good something is.

While I'm sure the word price is rather self-explanatory to many of you, value is often confused and conflated with price, when, in fact, it refers to "the worth of usefulness that something has."

Quality oftentimes determines the value of a product in the mass market and to the customer.

However, the value that a company has for its own products: the quality of them, the morality of their labour line and the environmental impact of their product are frequently an overlooked aspect of what amounts to the

market value, or price.

Take for example the clothing company Patagonia...

The company's origins go back to Yvon Chouinard, who started a low scale climbing equipment retailer around 1958.

He would eventually branch out, joining forces with Tom Frost, where the duo created simple and versatile climbing equipment and scaled the heights to become a top American climbing supplier.

However, the climbing pitons—these are pegs or spikes driven into a rock or crack to support a climber or a rope—they were producing at the time ravaged popular climbing routes and rock faces. So,

Chouinard decided to leave the piton business and switch to aluminium chocks.

His 1972 "Clean Climbing" catalogue featured the aluminium design and led to a surge in customer support.

Clearly, his customer base supported the push for environmentalism which led to them valuing his product over regular pitons.

Today, as a massive clothing retailer, Patagonia upholds its traditional environmental values, producing sustainable clothing, albeit with a larger price tag...

A high percentage of Patagonia's clothing is made from fully recycled polyester, nylon, and wool. They have pushed innovations in clothing design,

 Darren Turner

using organic cotton since 1996 without environmentally harmful formaldehyde.

They use a waste product of the food industry (chitosan) for their odour reduction technology and employ a technique called 'slow washing' for their wool, which produces no harmful greenhouse gasses as do other chlorine washing techniques.

In addition, Patagonia preserves good labour conditions, with much of its supply chain being protected by the FLA worker code, whilst the Fashion Transparency Index ranked it in the top 10 in 2020, with 60% transparency.

So, what does this mean?

Patagonia is undoubtedly one of the world's leading clothing retail companies. However, it is considered particularly upmarket when it comes to pricing.

Take for example their "Men's Capilene® Cool Lightweight Shirt."

With little branding and design, the appeal of this shirt is clearly the quality, which is valued by Patagonia at a hefty US\$55 (£40) price tag!

Many of you may be wondering why a consumer would decide to purchase a Patagonia shirt for this amount of money when you could buy a very similar looking one from ASDA for US\$5 (£3.50).

However, the difference in the price between the two of these is not just the material quality of the Patagonia shirt, which will last longer and retain its original look and comfort over the ASDA alternative, but it is also the ethical quality that Patagonia values in its own company.

Whilst ASDA's George brand claims that it is working towards more sustainable cotton and materials,

Patagonia has already established and is open about their environmentally sustainable practices and innovations in material and production impact, which is reflected in their price.

The \$55 to \$5 also poses the question of labour practices. If Patagonia is selling a plain, non-branded shirt for £40, and are open about the ethics of their labour supply chain, how are companies like George able to produce such a low-cost t-shirt if they are employing similar ethical practices?

So, even with a higher market price, Patagonia still has a massive customer base and attracts people who are willing to spend more money to support higher quality and sustainable practices.

This means that much of Patagonia's product value lies in their practices and the connotations of environmental sustainability that the company promotes.

At My Total Office Solutions, we have similarly employed these practices of sustainability, which make up a large portion of our attraction to customers.

Many of our solutions use refurbished technology, such as copiers, printers, multi-function devices and laptops, whilst also utilizing a selection of recycled cartridges. Which helps us reduce plastic waste and ensures equipment is repaired and reused wherever possible.

Customers are happy, because they receive fit for purpose equipment with lifetime warranties and savings against previous costs, whilst knowing they are also helping the environment.



We further offset both ours and our customers' carbon footprint through our 'Plant a Tree' scheme, ensuring that one tree is planted for every technology solution sold. Which is operated in conjunction with our mental health charity partner Shiva Trust.

In summary, the value that customers hold in products isn't limited to a low-price tag or even the product quality at the risk of poor labour conditions or environmental damage.

Fair and ethical practices can equally attract willing buyers and increase the market value of products as we have seen with Patagonia.

Whilst the reduction of waste materials and use of refurbished technology, as we practice at My Total Office Solutions, can cut down the cost of production to achieve price savings for customers.

...along with the clean moral conscience that comes with environmental sustainability. ■

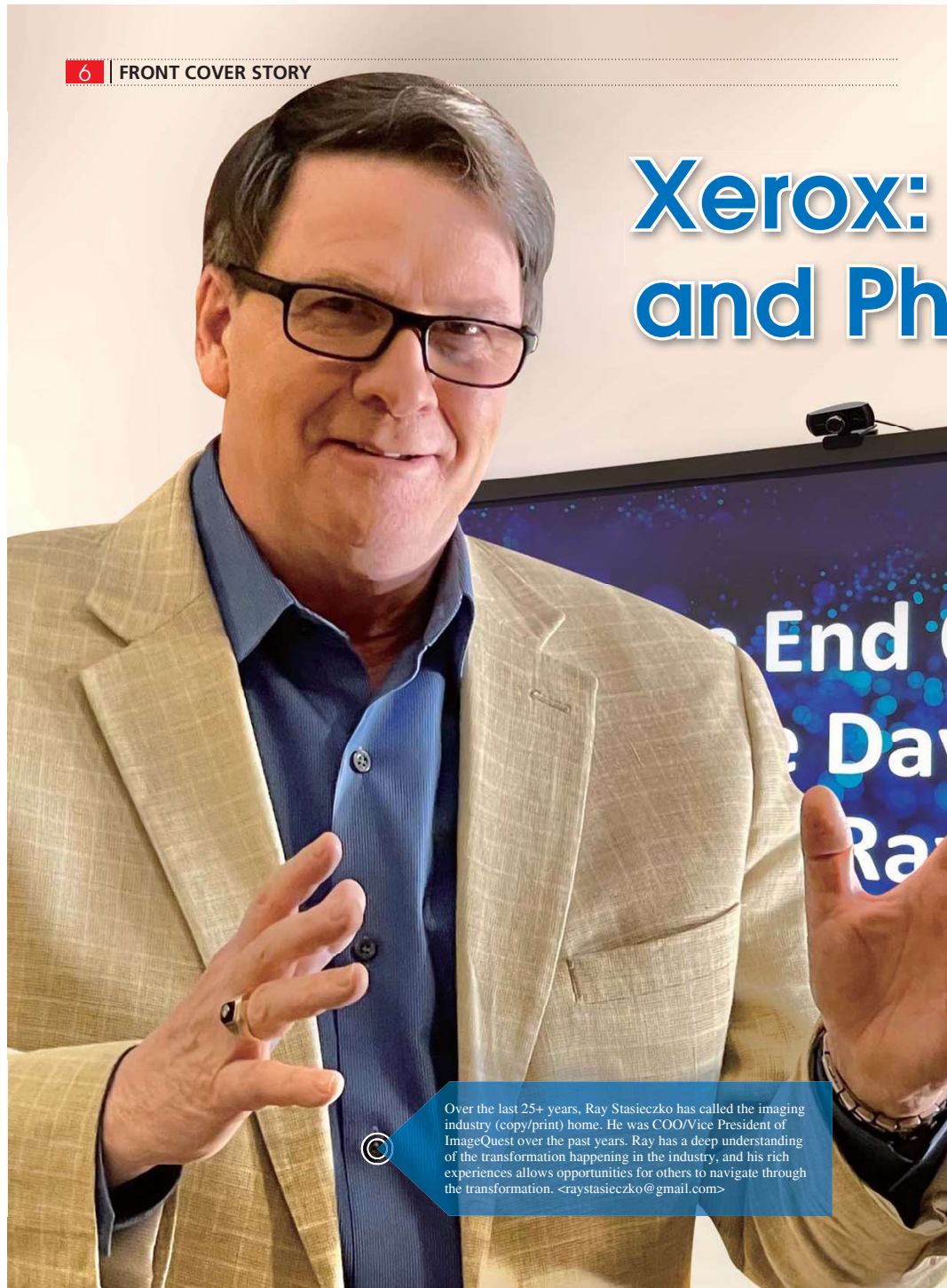


Darren Turner's story began in 2003 when he opened a retail store in the UK selling printer supplies to home users & small organizations. Since then he has moved into a business unit, grown his team and continued to adapt to match his customers' changing needs.

He has developed a 'fit for purpose' office products and solutions business model that provides certainty of cost and service for small business, charities and schools—thus providing them complete peace of mind.

He has become a trusted advisor for small organizations across the world.





Over the last 25+ years, Ray Stasieczko has called the imaging industry (copy/print) home. He was COO/Vice President of ImageQuest over the past years. Ray has a deep understanding of the transformation happening in the industry, and his rich experiences allows opportunities for others to navigate through the transformation. <raystasieczko@gmail.com>

Xerox: Between the Digital and Physical Worlds

✍ Ray Stasieczko



Recently Xerox announced its plans towards continuous relevance. First, I will say, "For the past two years, Xerox has been leading in the boldness category."

John Visentin and the Xerox team are not sitting on their hands or wasting time figuring out how many workers will remain remote to determine how many pages will be printed in offices post-pandemic.

Instead, Xerox is focusing on the realities of digital transformation, and they are positioning themselves to navigate their customers through that intersection I describe between the digital and physical worlds – in ways, their competitors still struggle to imagine.

In my thinking, Xerox has excellent opportunities in front of them. I was once extremely bullish on Xerox's attempts at buying HP. After all, one of my past predictions in 2017 was that HP would buy Xerox. As it became apparent in 2019, any merger between Xerox and HP would most definitely only prove successful if Xerox's leadership took control of the combined entity.

Well, we all saw the HP leadership and their board completely miss what I believe would have been an excellent opportunity for two iconic companies. However, today it appears Xerox has put HP's terrible decisions behind them.

We are beginning to see Xerox position itself to accomplish and exceed what they intended with an HP merger.

Soon, I believe the HP board and the HP shareholders will look up and say, "If only we used our imaginations instead of listening to those insecure about their place in the future."

Xerox does not need HP anymore! The global pandemic caused an awareness to all the actors in the entire supply chain of the print equipment, its supplies, and its services industry. However, the most critical awareness is the new realization from the millions of the equipment's end-users that buying large copiers and MFPs for business communication is quickly out of vogue.

Today I think about HP in their obsession with disrupting the SMB and enterprise A3 marketplace by replacing already oversold equipment with more oversold equipment and their noise regarding home printers and the temporary subscription print contracts between \$1.00 and \$11.00 a month. I reaffirm my thinking that HP is stuck in its ink and can't see past paper.

Xerox's announcement of the three separate business units is a step closer towards building what I see as an SMB and enterprise services business model. Xerox is creating what the future could call B2B product service and support.

Office workers may say, call Xerox or, I already called Xerox and reported the Blank. Those reading this with any imagination can fill in that 'blank.'

In the past and still today, people refer to their copier regardless of the brand, as a Xerox; office workers continue to say,



“go Xerox this.” Xerox was a synonym to coping as the Kleenex brand of tissue was to tissue paper.

Some reading this are looking for why what I am describing is never going to be a reality. I have and continue to preach to those who think this way. Stop thinking about how things don't work and instead think about how things can work. It's within possibilities where probabilities become a reality.

Let's think about the three business units Xerox sets up and then apply a little imagination and see what the suborned will miss.

Xerox Finance, Xerox Software, and Xerox Innovation

On a recent, The End Of The Day With Ray! episode, I discussed this latest decision of Xerox and shared thoughts on some of the possibilities I imagine. The link to that episode is <https://youtu.be/ve4fMyb1Pc> :

Now let me discuss Xerox Software business unit. The thing that stands out with this unit is the missing word services. One would assume that Xerox would highlight Service over Software. In my thinking, I see that decision as calculated. As the future gets closer to

the present, the word software will be synonymous with service.

Software is the tool used for reaching the desired outcome, and as the world navigates more through that intersection, I describe between the physical and digital worlds, their service needs will arise, and be resolved in that intersection.

I am incredibly interested in the company Xerox purchased called CareAR. I imagine that CareAR

“Customer experience is determined in the intersection where products meet customers, and that intersection is increasingly becoming digital.”

and Xerox can accomplish what I envision as the first complex service center that will reside prominently in the intersection between the digital and physical worlds. Augmented reality merged with human capabilities will forever change the customer experience.

“Customer experience is determined in the intersection where products meet customers, and that intersection is increasingly becoming digital.”

I look forward to watching Xerox and CareAR as they proceed in the marketplace.

In the near future, Xerox will align itself with hardware manufacturers, as I suggested in 2019 when HP's delusion became apparent. Xerox should align with Lexmark for A4, and continue growing their alliances with Lenovo for computing technologies.

Regarding A3. Over the last six or so months, I have suggested that Xerox forms a relationship with Konica in this regard had with fuji. However, in this relationship, Konica should shed its direct distribution to Xerox as well. That consolidation would provide significant financial benefits to both organizations.

Although we must keep in mind, Xerox has positioned itself to offer all manufacturers a venue to distribute both products and services to end-users as a delivery and services business.

Xerox will go beyond print equipment in my vision, and in the future, the Xerox customer when saying call or I already called Xerox. The reason will be incomprehensible to those who today refuse to imagine the possibilities.

I will remind you, as I always do as I wind up, that status quo is the killer of all that will be invented. Don't get stuck in the status quo. ■



Dr Stanislav Malinskiy

The Growth in Demand for Quality Supplies in Russia

Price pulls you in, quality gets you to come back and buy again.

The volume of procurements of quality supplies continues to grow in Russia, according to the statistics collected between 2015 and 2020.

Russian buyers have recognized the advantages of quality consumables and have moved to buying products of higher quality, even though they are at a higher price.

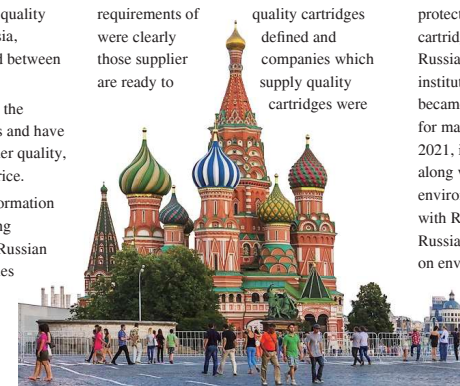
This is supported by several Information Agency “Business-Inform” working vectors. For instance, in 2017 the Russian Association of Quality Consumables Manufacturers and Supplies (AQCMS) was formed (<https://aqcmsrus.ru/?lang=en>). In 2020 the Association consolidated the majority of the Russian market leaders, the suppliers of quality consumables. The active work of the Association included the running of more than 20 video-conferences with the largest buyers of printing devices and corresponding supplies, even during COVID-19 pandemic times. News of those video conferences are published on the AQCMS web-site (<https://aqcmsrus.ru/novosti/?lang=en>).

Together, the Association and Information Agency “Business-Inform” have conducted a number of studies of the Russian market, as well as testing products. The results were presented to the largest Russian buyers of printing devices and consumables. Among other things they were presented with ratings of 50 leading Russian suppliers of cartridges and toners as well as with the results of the testing of products supplied by those suppliers on the Russian market. The buyers were shown the evaluation of prints quality, cartridge toxicity, and possibility of quality cartridge remanufacturing.

Special attention was given to OEM-cartridges whose quality turned out to be lower than expected. As a result of collective discussions, the technical and environmental

requirements of those supplier are ready to

quality cartridges defined and companies which supply quality cartridges were



identified. The research of the market and testing will be continued in 2021.

During the pandemic, the Information Agency “Business-Inform” organized and ran a virtual exhibition BUSINESS-INFORM 2020 (<http://sforp.ru/B12020eng/>). This will continue until April 30, 2021. Suppliers of quality products can procure a virtual booth where it can publish company and product information. All the information presented on these booths is in English and it is translated for free into Russian and distributed among Russian specialists (both among buyers and sellers). The exhibitors of the virtual expo can request their products be tested and compared with products of winners and nominees of the Russian 2020 contests. Such activities during the virtual exhibition allows Russian specialists not only to present the new products by their traditional international partners, but provides an opening into the Russian market for new suppliers of quality products.

One should also note the work of Information Agency “Business-Inform” and AQCMS in the field of environmental

protection. The testing for toxicity in cartridge cases is conducted by several Russian Academy of Science research institutions. The list of “approved” brands became the basis for procurement planning for many large Russian buyers. During 2021, it is estimated 5.4 million cartridges, along with obligatory confirmation of their environmental sustainability and compliance with RoHS requirements, will enter the Russian aftermarket. In 2021 the work on environmental compliance and RoHS compliance will continue.

In the near future, representatives of “Business-Inform” Group and AQCMS Expert Council on Environmental Safety (<https://aqcmsrus.ru/strukturan/3-1-4-ekspertnyj-sovet-po-problemam-ekolo/?lang=en>) will meet with the Ministry of Law and Federal Custom Services to discuss the issues of controlling the compliance of products imported into Russia with RoHS and Stockholm Convention on Persistent Pollutants requirements.

As a result of all this, a cluster of quality consumables buyers in Russia has been formed and continues to grow. With support from the Russian state structures of the initiatives by “Business-Inform” Group and AQCMS, it is expected the process will speed up the number of the buyers searching for quality supplies. ■

Dr. Stanislav Malinskiy

RT Global Partner For Russia
Dr. Stanislav Malinskiy, the general director of BUSINESS-INFORM—an information agency based in Moscow—is mainly active in researching and consulting on the Russian office equipment and supplies market and also has over 250 scientific works and articles to his name. He is chief editor of the Russian catalogs of printers, copiers, MFPs, and supplies.

The HP Trojan Horse to Capture

You know I've been thinking about HP in their quest to disrupt the A3 marketplace with their own A3s.

You know what? There could be more to this story.

I started to really imagine what HP could be up to.

I've got to be honest with you: sometimes I have wondered, what was HP on about when it talked about disrupting the A3 marketplace with their A3s?

Well, I was one of the loudest

... the loudest ... of everyone saying that strategy was delusional. I asked, "HP, what in the world are you doing?" The whole world shifting to A4. Why the hell would you go and disrupt A3 with your A3? Why don't you disrupt A3 with A4?

You know that's what I was thinking. It makes sense. It is logical.

So, I started thinking, "Maybe HP is not really delusional. Maybe they're being opportunistic. Maybe they see an opportunity by fooling everybody about A3."

Let's look at the facts:

1. Amplify: HP's got this massive contract with piles and piles of paper. It looks nice and it's got a nice name called Amplify;

2. BLI Awards: they also won some multiple year awards for reliability from 2018 through to 2021;

Partner Awards: HP has got a little bit of money so they have come out with some fantastic partner program awards. That's great for all those who want a beautiful award in your trophy closet. I think a lot of people sign up with OEMs so they can put a trophy in their trophy closet. They look for the OEM that gives the brightest trophy but that doesn't mean that OEM will necessarily be the greatest partner.

Collecting Data from Dealers About End-Users

I want you to think about HP and another



Your Customers Ray Stasieczko

important word: data collection.

As I talk to dealers around the USA they tell me more about that HP Amplify contract. They say that HP is wanting to know a lot of information about their customers. "HP wants us to give a lot of data," they tell me. And they don't really like doing that. There's one thing I know about independent dealers and that is they like to stay independent. Otherwise, they could just go and work for HP.

They don't want to work for HP. They want to own their own company. They want to provide products, supplies and services to end-users on their

terms. That's why they are entrepreneurs. They don't want some over-reaching OEM telling them what to do all the time... or taking their data. Sooner or later, that data could end up in HP's hands.

I could imagine when you go to the HP conventions, the executives stand on stage and say, "It's important to know your customers. It's important to know your customers."

What they're forgetting to add about 'knowing your customers' is what they really mean: "It's important for us to know your customers."

HP A3 are they Delusional or Opportunistic?



Of course, they could never say that at the convention. The dealers would want to know, "What do you mean by 'you want to know our customers'?"

At the end of the day, that Amplify contract looks more and more like: they want to know your customers. I have an issue with that and I call it the Trojan Horse Model.

The Trojan Horse

Is HP thinking about these A3s as being like the Trojan horse?

Think about this. HP wheels the giant A3 Trojan horse device into your customer's office. But inside are all the A4s. Inside is 'e-commerce capabilities'. That Trojan A3 horse is just sitting in that office, taking its time, collecting some data for HP. They are getting to know your customer and you don't even know about it. And they're in there selling supplies to your customers for their other programs that are outside of the contract. They're doing all kinds of things.

HP is just waiting for the time when those A4s, that have won all the reliability awards, and have so few parts they don't need the dealers to deliver them. The devices will be set up by

simply pulling them out of the box and plugging them in.

Guess what? A lot of them can do that right now.

So that's the question: Is the HP A3 obsession really a Trojan horse to get inside those resellers accounts?

Just think about it because there are other manufacturers you can do business with. If you need A4, just call Lexmark, for example. It's that simple and I know they are not over-reaching. There are plenty of A3 manufacturers out there and you don't need to date the one that is going to disrupt the industry—especially when you know the industry's going from A3 to A4.

That ought to tell you right there they're not the smartest partner to deal with.

Just my opinion.

Let me ask you to think about it: in a competitive environment in a consolidated industry, do we really want to have a Trojan horse at our customer's office?

I will remind you, as I always do as I wind up, that status quo is the killer of all that will be invented. Don't get stuck in the status quo. ■



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2021 – A Call for Leadership

✍ Brad Roderick

2020 was a year unlike any that we have ever previously experienced. Almost everything changed in some significant way. The US unemployment rate rose by over 10 percentage points to 14.7%. Worldwide, 88% of organizations either required or encouraged workers to work from home. Countries locked their borders and most travels came to a screeching halt. Entire industries such as airlines, leisure facilities, oil and gas drilling, auto parts and equipment, and restaurants were suddenly decimated.

Enter 2021. By early February 2021, the US Congress had allocated \$4 trillion for COVID relief, massive funding that future generations will have to pay for. The US Capitol came under siege, not from a foreign power, but from within. COVID continues to mutate and usher in increased uncertainty just as vaccines are rolling out. Less than sixty days into the new year, Texas is crippled by cold weather, and other areas of the country experienced record temperatures. Possibly worst of all, there is a complete breakdown in trust, something that will not be easily regained. Almost as a singular voice, nations are saying, "We no longer trust anyone."

I believe that our customers, employees, families, and the gang down at the donut shop are all looking for one thing; real leadership. Leadership that begins with a vision. A vision grounded in:

- Lesson 1. Optimism
- Lesson 2. Reality
- Lesson 3. Serving

Optimism

The Oxford dictionary defines optimism as "hopefulness and confidence about the future or the successful outcome of something."

Hopefulness, confidence, future, success; these all sound good to me. I am not talking about a mystical power of positive thinking, mantras, or declaring good things and just expecting them to happen. Rather, I am referring to a vision of a future state that is better than today's current reality. Whether you are a business owner, salesperson, manager, friend, or parent, isn't that already part of your job? To help others see a better future and encourage them to move into that future? Think of the leadership of Martin Luther King, he had a vision, one that was of a better future, he shared that vision and invited others to join him. We are called to do no less.

The pessimist says, "I just lost 90% of my managed print business because no one is in the office anymore." The optimist says, "Wow! The landscape just changed. I know that I can figure out a way to not just survive but to thrive in this new world."

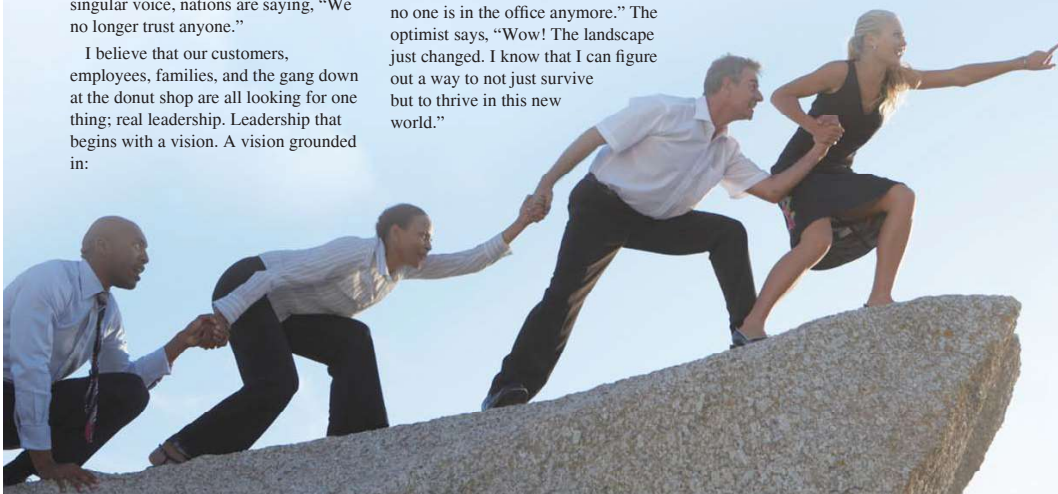
Reality

"Either you deal with what is the reality, or you can be sure that the reality is going to deal with you." – Alex Haley

"When you argue with reality, you lose – but only 100% of the time." – Byron Katie

The best leaders share a vision while acknowledging reality. They don't simply put on rose-colored glasses or bury their head in the sand and walk around saying, "everything is going to be ok." They recognize and confront reality. I have a friend that has underlying health issues and is very concerned about COVID-19. Now, I could simply say, "Hey, don't worry about all of this COVID stuff. Come on over to the house. There is nothing to be concerned about." But that's not his reality (for the record, it is not mine either). Until he is comfortable, all I can do is find other ways to stay connected. Ways to have conversations about a better future that is on the horizon.

The head-in-the-sand restaurant owner says, "None of this social distancing



stuff is real. Everything is going to be back to normal any day now." The realist says, "I don't know how long this will last but I bet if I came up with a great curbside menu and I reach out to our customers, I can actually turn this into a new opportunity that even if people do start coming back, will provide an entirely new stream of revenue. Maybe I should hand out \$5 off as thank-you's for our curbside guests."

Simply pretending something is not real or important doesn't make it so. We must recognize reality while remaining optimistic. This brings us to our third lesson.

Serving

"A life of significance is about serving those who need your gifts, your leadership, your purpose." Kevin Hall

"Our rewards in life will always be in direct ratio to our service." Earl Nightingale

"He profits most who serves best." Arthur F. Sheldon

More than just inspirational, these

quotes are visions that when lived out, allow us to lead others into a better future. And isn't that what we are all after. The parent who wants a better future for their child. The business owner desires a better outcome for her employees and her customers. The salesperson enters the gap between where their customer is and where they would like to be.

None of us have ever been where we are now. We do not know all of the answers but we can ask one question that will help unlock the reality of tomorrow, "Will I wallow in the challenges of the present or will I combine optimism with the reality of the current situation and set out to serve others?" The key lies in my vision for my future. I can either share my misery or my hope. Either way, misery or hope, I carry others into that outcome.

Leadership Questions to Consider for 2021

What does my vision of the future look like?

What is the gap between the present

reality and the desired future state?

How can I serve in that gap to help others live a new and better reality?

As painful as this season has been, maybe we can use our experience to become more human, share more hope, more encouragement, and enjoy new ways of helping one another. Now that's leadership worth following. ■



Brad Roderick is a revenue generation thought-leader in the imaging supplies and solutions industry. He speaks, blogs and writes articles focused on creating and delivering value to B2B customers. As Executive Vice-President for TonerCycle/InkCycle, Brad sets sales and marketing strategy for the company across all channels and is responsible for the entire "customer experience" from products to partnerships. You can reach him at <broderick@inkcycle.com> or find him on Twitter @BradRoderick.



Stuart Lacey

Staff Confidence is the Key to Business Success

If you simply offer the cheapest prices then, not only will your products be thought of as inferior—because they are ‘cheap’—but, what is even worse, your company will be tainted too.

The relationship between the price of a product being sold and the customer's perceived quality depends predominantly on the person doing the selling since he or she is the primary interface between the two entities.

It is critical the salesperson is obviously knowledgeable but, maybe, more importantly, believes fundamentally in the product itself. He or she should have such presence and assurance in the way they speak to and present themselves to the customer that they create a perceived ‘need’ to be associated with the salesperson and, as such, the company and their prospective products.

This is certainly not easy to achieve, but unless your sales staff can carry themselves with confidence the customer will never distinguish you as being any different from the other suppliers offering cheaper products, no matter how good your offering is. As such, a focus on quality and confidence when presenting is primordial.

Obviously, the starting point is to have products that, in some way or other, offer an advantage over your competitors creating an added value (including brand image, technology and IP position). This is fundamental to the positioning of your company and your products and cannot be underestimated.

But how do you position this “exceptional offering” when you are having to compete with so many other manufacturers offering ‘similar’ products?

If you simply offer the cheapest prices then, not only will your products be thought of as inferior—because they are ‘cheap’—but, what is even worse, your company will



be tainted too. Both will be tarred with the same brush!

A customer will always pay extra for what is perceived to be a superior offering but it is up to the salesperson to nurture this proposition. He or she should, at the very least, spend time positioning the company, talking about all the positives, explaining what differentiates your company from everybody else. This is elementary as far as sales are concerned. In my opinion, this is the key to differentiating you and your products from other competitors.

And if the customer still only wants to have the cheapest price then let them go. You do not need this business. It is likely to cause you more harm than good. Anybody customer who is so price-focused does not care what you have done to create such an awesome offering. Neither are they interested in any or all the investments you have made. Every time they return they will keep asking for lower prices.

What is the point in chasing that business? None!

The continued downward spiral leads ultimately to throwing away all the investment made trying to create exceptional

products because you must now reduce the build quality in order to meet the new lower price expectations. It's suicidal!

But do you have commercial-minded sales executives or just ‘order-takers’? Do you have ‘hunters’ or ‘farmers’? Do you have salespeople in their position simply because they are extremely polite and speak English.....?

For many of the leading manufacturers today this is arguably the weakest part of their infrastructure—sales. So many times in the past few years I have been horrified to witness how some of the leading aftermarket companies, many with exceptional positioning in the market, do not have the commercially-capable staff.

The aftermarket today is light years away from the early days of remanufacturing the CX or SX cartridges (for those of us that can remember) but how to sell and how to position a company is unchanged. If you want to have a long term, sustainable future there must be a balance between a quality offering of products and a fair market price. This goes without saying.

Do you really have the right people presenting this message to your customers and differentiating you from all the other players? ■

Stuart Lacey

South Africa-based Lacey is a 30-year pioneer of the office equipment and supplies industry and is keen to introduce key global suppliers to the big buyers across the African continent with RT VIP Expo one day intensive events in Nigeria, Tunisia and Ethiopia. Please contact stuart@delace.co.za



James Douglas

Are you a Walker, or Just a Talker?

Are you just ‘talking the talk’ or are you ‘walking the walk’ when it comes to quality products?

Are you cutting your own throat?

It's just us talking here. So, let's be honest about your business. Are you just ‘talking the talk’ or are you ‘walking the walk’ when it comes to quality products?

A lot of talkers claim they deal with quality products. In my travels, I see a lot of talkers. Talkers don't last as long and either close, sell or never reach their full potential. Worse still, while they hang around, they damage the aftermarket.

Over the last 40 years, I have dealt with a lot of retailers and I know that the ones that are honest with their customers offer the best products. They are not only more confident: they feel better about their day-to-day activities and tend to have much more successful, valuable, long term businesses. The image projected at the shop counter can make the difference between a good store and a superstar store, but it all comes down to the user experience when the customer hits the print button.

No matter how good a salesperson you are, or think you are, the customer makes the final decision. But the retailer controls how the public views the aftermarket. If you sell lower quality products with higher failure rates because your buy price is a bit lower from another supplier then you are damaging sales for everyone. YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY FOR!

It is a cold reality that if retailers choose to buy and stock cheaper cartridges, then their distributors are forced to supply cheaper cartridges. The downward spiral is hard to



break. Retailers should support and demand the best.

Don't get me wrong, I think there is a place for a cheap product. I see no issue in educating customers who complain as to why you are more expensive than another retailer. You recommend a particular product because it is the best, however, if they want a cheaper product you can offer then something different. This is the only way to compare “apples with apples.” The customer can then make an educated choice about the quality they prefer. If they choose a cheaper product and they do have a problem later on with it, they will know that by spending a little more they can get a better-quality product and still not have to buy the OEM product. And it will create customer loyalty at the same time.

So deep down, do you know, I mean do you really know that you are sourcing the best possible cartridges? Or are you tempted on price when offered a toner at a few dollars less.

If you are tempted to source and take a cheaper toner then you have become a “talker” having to “talk” up the quality. Being honest will generate repeat sales—the key to long term success.



Let's be realistic. You need to hold onto as many of those customers for a repeat sale as possible. To do that you need to minimize any problems the customer might experience. If the customer is so happy with the print experience you supplied, they will recommend you to others. That multiplier effect is the target.

Think about the long-term big picture. Who is your ideal customer? What do they want? What do they need? Once you have

that sorted out, examine your business and check to see if you have the products and services in place to become the go-to source for those customers—not for the here-and-now but for years to come. Does buying ink and toner for a few dollars less than the best serve your long-term business objectives?

My ideal customer cares about quality and service first. Those customers are more loyal and stable. It's a hard area for a competitor to attack.

There will always be someone else selling cheaper products. They don't have the best products, so the price is the only way to compete. If a cartridge does not work, the price is irrelevant. ■

James Douglas

James Douglas is an award-winning entrepreneur based in Sydney and has become a trusted supplier of imaging components and products and advisor for retail businesses across Australia. He is a recipient of the Excellent Service Award for his tireless efforts in personally driving to visit, train and mentor each and every one of his customers, providing them with dedicated support to remanufacture and sell high quality, non-infringing aftermarket supplies to their customers.



Steve Weedon

Getting the Price+Quality Formula Right

Price pulls you in, quality gets you to come back and buy again.

What a rip off!

A frequent cry said out loud or privately inside our heads when considering almost any type of purchase that does not add up. The truth is none of us wants to be ripped off. A rip off is the judgement we make when the price is too high, or the quality is too low. We make the decision very quickly and move on.

What we want is a bargain. What we want is the highest quality at the lowest price. Now that is a deal. Of course, it is rarely found. It may not even exist. The psychology of a buying decision is complex depending on any number of factors. We keep looking for the elusive highest quality at the lowest price until we find compromises that meet our personal needs.

In most cases, when we are buying a commodity product, we compare prices for what is the same product. We shop around and feel good when we find the exact same item cheaper at one store than the other. Coppola Claret is a nice wine, one of my favourites, usually sold at \$19.99 a bottle at high-end grocery stores in the US like Harris Teeter or Publix which are on every corner. But I found out that the same wine at Walmart was on offer for \$12.99. The same bottle, the same label. "They must have priced it wrong," I thought. But it tasted the same and I went back for more several times before the price changed to \$16.99. Still cheaper, so I kept going back for more.



Price pulls you in, quality gets you to come back and buy again.

Very few get away with selling poor quality for high prices for long.

Ratner was a chain of high street jewellers in the UK selling low-quality trinkets that returned Gerald Ratner huge margins. His ego got the better of him and at a black-tie function where he was receiving an award and giving a speech. He said as much only to wake in the morning to read the front-page headline: "Ratner Says He Sells Crap at High Prices." He disappeared from the high street and went flat broke.

In a recent survey conducted by the technology company First Insight, it is reported that in Europe 53% of shoppers believe that quality is more important than price. Only 38% of people thought that price was more important than quality. Yet Germany, France and Poland are the most price-conscious in Europe. Or are they more conscious of being ripped off than the rest of us?

Value comes into play when assessing price and quality. Value is perceived.

It may be a logo, a recognised brand or the little yellow "made in China" stitched-in label. It may be the materials used or construction quality. Nevertheless, our thought processes weigh up the pros and cons to reach a decision on "value" for money. We wait for "the SALES," queue all night to get that QLED TV at half price because its perceived value is compared against its regular price. We do not

question quality because it is the same product, but 50% off. However, is it worth staying up all night for, waiting to rush in and grab it before someone else beats us to it? Most of us prefer to stay in our warm bed and pay the full price.

It's not Price versus Quality so much as Price, Quality and perceived Value. Not in any particular order. It depends on what we want to buy, at what time, our mood and how much we have in our pocket.

Marketers have been trying to get the formula right since time began, it's not so easy to get right. ■

Steve Weedon

Steve Weedon is an award winning CEO who has held senior management positions at various OEMs as well as Katun Corp, Static Control Components and Cartridge World. He was the original founder of The Recycler Magazine and of trade shows in Europe. He is currently CEO at Print Rite Europe Ltd, Print Rite Pelikan Germany. Contact Weedon at <steve@prinrite-eu.com>



Gustavo Molinatti

Price, Quality or Service? That is a Good Question

We must prepare for an aggressive campaign of products and services to win over customers.

One of the foundation stones for the aftermarket is offering alternative products to the original with similar functionalities, but at a lower price. Add the seasoning you want, but without this premise, our sector could not have developed as it did. However, many Latino companies have looked to gain market share with price wars with even more aggressive offers. It is a dangerous strategy, particularly when you consider the impact it causes on the quality of products and services.

Price, quality or service?

I dig into my chest of memories to find an old and useful marketing dogma that ensures that the three legs of the stool can never be offered: quality, service and Price. Either you provide quality and service and therefore the price will not be good; or you provide price and quality with some sacrifice with the service; or, finally, you provide service and price, but your quality will less than what the market will accept.

Is this logic too elementary? Maybe. But I challenge you to think of any random company or business (even the OEMs themselves) and you will see that I am right.

Starting from the premise that the compatible product (whether new or remanufactured) is cheaper than the original, the price should not be the strategic factor for the aftermarket, but rather quality and service are the two pillars necessary to stay in the game.

Many will ask—ironically—who is the Aftermarket competitor? This is a question that we have debated hundreds of times on every continent. Certainly here in Latin America. Despite knowing the answer should be a unanimous "the OEM brands," in practice it never happens.

For OEMs, the pandemic was a major headache, blowing up all of their business plans, product launches and strategies. Insiders admit the magnitude of the penetration of the aftermarket with their customers and they will not stand idly to wait for their market share to be taken away.



We must prepare for an aggressive campaign of products and services to win over customers, in a market today that has been atomized into millions of home or remote offices.

These are some key points the Latino businessman should evaluate in his strategic planning for the times to come:

- Product improvement

Instead of lowering prices and putting quality at risk, it is preferable to improve quality and differentiate yourself from the aftermarket competitors for performance and innovation.

- Expand the portfolio of products and services

The pandemic accelerated consumer behavior change, with expectations of more quality, more convenience, more speed, more options, more value, all at the same time.

- Customize and segment to give each client what he is looking for

Solutions must be offered tailored to each client. If you have customers who only care about a low price, offer them a low-priced product option. But do not stop offering products and services of higher quality and price to more demanding customers who have these expectations.

- Optimize the shopping experience and delivery logistics

Another factor that accelerated growth during the pandemic is online purchases. I am sure that most of you experienced in the last months the problems in the payment processes, errors in the deliveries, lack of fulfillment times and even scams. Today the consumer expects simplicity, speed but reliability, even knowing that he will be paying a higher price for such value.

- Offer scalable, mobile and secure solutions

Some estimates say that half of the workforce will remain in a hybrid mode during 2021 and that about 20 percent expect to work completely from home. Hybrid remote work is certainly here to stay, at least for a while. Any business strategy for the office that does not consider and prioritize this condition will have a difficult road ahead.

Until now, 2021 is considered a year of transition and if your company has "survived" to this point it means you are doing your job well. Now you need to "thrive" as well. Smaller aftermarket companies have always held the power in being able to adapt to change. It's just a matter of being prepared. ■

Gustavo Molinatti

Molinatti is based in Buenos Aires, Argentina and is publisher of *Guía del Reciclador*—the Spanish language magazine first published in 2002 for the Latin American printer cartridge aftermarket. He has organized more than 20 technical and MPS training events in several countries and is helping RT bring VIP Expo events to Brazil, Argentina, and Perú. Please contact <info@guiadelreciclador.com>

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DID YOU KNOW?



Cost of Quality (CoQ) is an analysis tool to help you define the resources and activities you used to prevent poor quality, to appraise the quality of the products and services and to analyze internal and external failures. This allows you to maximize potential savings by implementing process improvements.

(Source: <https://bit.ly/2OcdQ5b>)

TOP 3 NEWS



HP Has stepped up its campaign against the use of third-party supplies saying aftermarket chips may be a gateway for hackers



Distributors voice mixed reactions over new Italian reman laws



Russia has given the green light for Pelikan New-build cartridges to find distribution partners



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