

Welcome to the industry, rookie.

Taylor Palmer | Ariva | Marketing & Purchasing Assistant

As a 20-something year old that went straight from a university classroom to a cubicle located in the heart of the paper and print industry.

I understand how overwhelming it can be to get a handle on a business that seems as old as time itself (literally the origins of paper can be traced back to 220AD).

In my first week, I recall thinking that I would never be able to understand the differences between Cougar Super Smooth 70lb text and McCoy Matte 100lb cover, let alone the differences in digital and conventional offset printing. I quickly realized how little I knew about something that I had interacted with for my entire life; paper and print. Now, after almost a year in the industry I wouldn't consider myself an expert, but have learned enough to survive and continue my development. How did I do this, you may ask? Well that's what you're about to find out. Pay attention rookies, because this post is for you.

Take an interest

For seasoned vets this will come as no surprise but, first thing is first; take an interest. You are never going to be successful at anything you are not interested in. Now, I understand to some millennials this industry may not seem as sexy as others, but it definitely provides opportunities for you to be creative, strategic and influential if you are willing to look for them.

Continue your education, read and question everything

The only way to learn is to ask questions;

- Want to know the difference between Flexography and Rotogravure? Ask.
- Want to know why novels aren't printed on a high gloss sheet? Ask.
- Want to know the difference in Aqueous and Eco-solvent inks? Just Ask!

If you are as lucky as I am, you will find yourself immersed in an environment where there is no shortage of people willing to help out and pass their knowledge along to you (and when in doubt Google it). It's also a good idea to get familiar with what's going on in the industry; visit different websites and blogs, read up on FAQs, industry articles, or you can even join industry related groups on social media and participate in the conversations.

Seize opportunities

Experience everything, seize the opportunities and do your best to get the "big picture" of this business; from pulp to print. Ask your colleagues and managers for an invite to trade events, paper mills, customer calls, and facility tours. Try to pick up some finished samples as well; I regularly jump at the opportunity to get my hands on a printed sample from one of our customers. Looking at the finished product can contribute to the big picture of the industry, from pulp to print.

You will survive

Starting a career in any industry can be a difficult task; it can seem especially daunting when you are a millennial starting in a business that has been around for millennia. Though with that being said, with right focus and drive we will be able to thrive in this industry like all of those successful veterans who came before us. Fear not my fellow rookies, we will survive.

Taylor, a Ryerson University graduate, has been in the print and paper industry for just over a year. He is currently a member of both the purchasing and marketing teams at Ariva Mississauga.