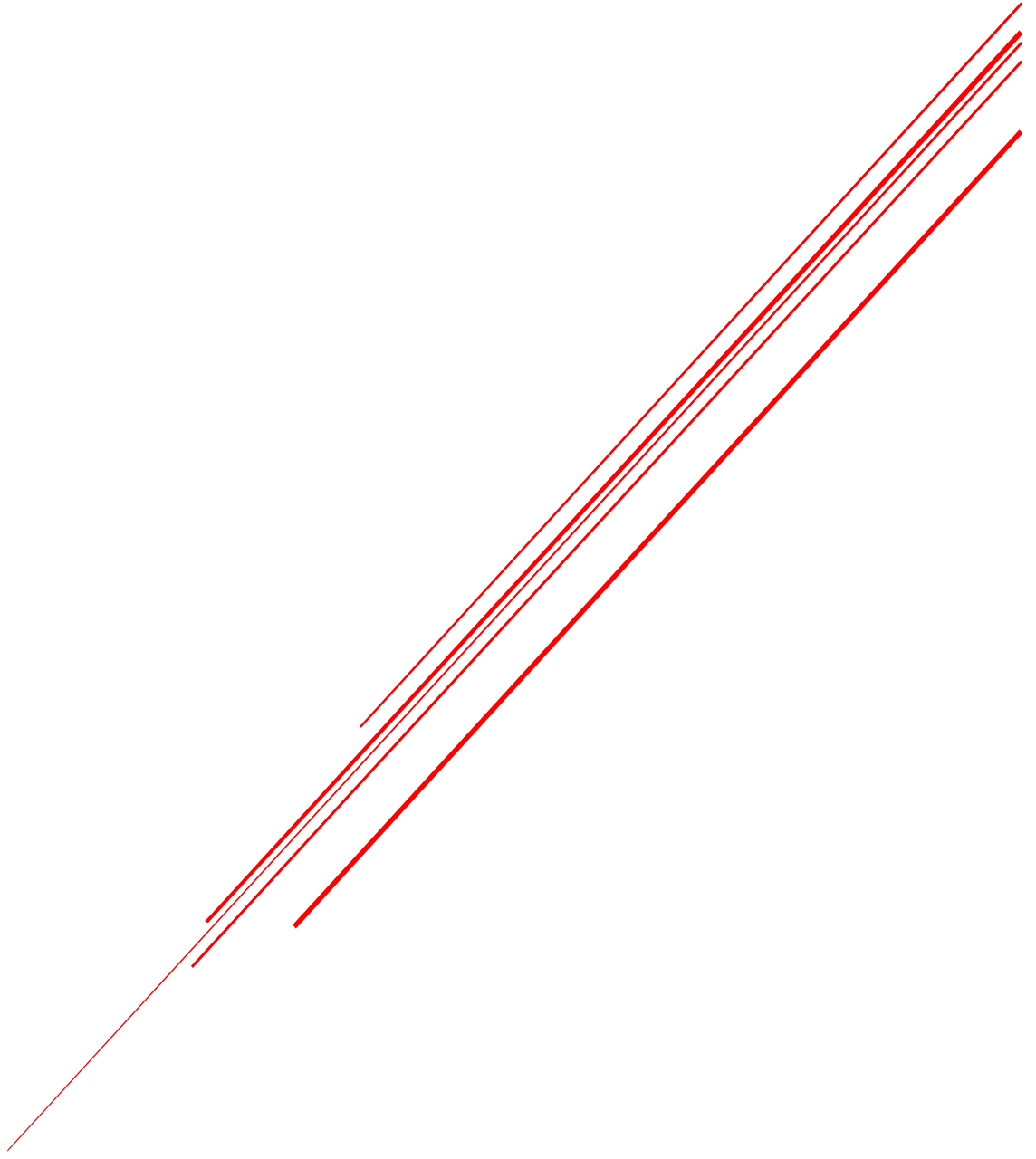# Intergraf Young Talent Reward

How to attract young people to the printing industry?

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Introduction and problematics

The printing industry is a sector in constant evolution, in general thanks to the latest technological innovations. These innovations are the fruit of young and powerful minds, enhanced by high-level schools teaching the subtle art of what is printing. Therefore, we need to attract young and skilled people to the printing industry to keep this development going. In the following work, I will expose my point of view concerning this issue, and how can we work this out, together. *Disclaimer: This paper is only a glimpse of my ideas. They need to be developed, and probably modified to fit the reality of the industry.*

But first, what does it mean "to be attractive"? An attractive industry is an industry that create economic value and, thus, has an efficient economic capital. Basically, that means that the printing industry must show their involvement by investing in their capital. However, this is not the easiest part and it can be somehow difficult for small companies. This is why we should focus on other solutions.

At first sight, nobody is born with special abilities to work in the printing industry. Nowadays, young people want to do "something different". They want to discover new things, to go outside from the written paths defined by the traditional education system. But this is not easy. They are generally afraid of it because of their family or their teacher reactions. To attract young people, we have to show them that it is safe here in the printing industry, and that they can do a lot of stuff, which go out of the ordinary. Today, if you listen to the students, you will notice that most of them want to be doctors, surgeons or lawyer for instance. They all have this idea in mind even if they are not necessarily attracted by this sector. The main reason is the living conditions according to the salary. The studies to achieve this are well known for their difficulty but it does not change their mind. For my concerns, the printing industry was not even an option three years ago. And I think that this come from the lack of knowledge I had of this industry. Unfortunately (and hopefully), we cannot change education programs to make our industry part of the fundamental basis to learn.

That is why to attract young people, we need to improve our communication and to work on our image culture. If the young generation does not know about this or if they do, consider it as a "second choice", that's mainly because of both communication and image culture. On the one hand, we have a very old industry with many clichés coming with it, and on the other hand, we have a huge lack of communication. What an ironic situation for the graphic art industry! Therefore, if young people have this feeling about the printing industry and that no one is here to change their minds, you can try whatever you want it will not work. Our society is based on clichés and we have to deal with it: this is how the system works. However, it is possible to counter this initial handicap.

Solution #1.1: Increase awareness

Considering communication in general, I think that even for students who are already in printing related schools, young people are not really aware of what does it mean to "work in the printing company". Thus, nobody has a good idea of what they will do after their studies. We should improve this point by creating for example infographics or even seminars about this (as done in Grenoble INP – Pagora during the 1st edition of the Pagora International Day, in partnership with, among others,

Intergraf). There is a lot of stuff to speak about! This might help to have a better knowledge of what is done in our own industry. Every 4 years we have the opportunity to go to the Drupa, but we need something local and regular. Make people dream of coming to work in the printing industry: what are the employment possibilities, how can we evolve in the printing industry, how we can access to this or that job: we need to clarify all this.

The first step is to increase the awareness of our sector among young people. What I propose first, is to invest more time (and thus money) in organizing small regional and national workshops about the printing industry. Workshops are the best option if you want to raise awareness about what you are doing. It can be very basic for children in primary school: for instance, some workshop on color science. It can be even more powerful (and maybe free) if the trainers, coming from a printing company, works with huge partners who are our clients. It is a way for them to promote their company and to support the printing company. This kind of partnership is also a good way to attract people to participate to these workshops! In addition, this idea can be adapted in all the steps of education, from children to adults going through teenagers.

Solution #1.2: Use and valorize our own young human resources

The second step is changing the whole society sight towards the printing industry: the image culture is one of the most powerful tools after religion and money in this world. This is not the easiest part but, in my mind, the most effective one. Have you ever heard about NordVPN? Of course, you do. If not, you just have to know that a tremendous communication campaign has been settled to make your mind think about this company each time you only hear the word "VPN". Here is my second idea: create a European communication campaign. But this will not be a basic campaign in which you just throw your money to do nothing. Actually, you are using the same process with this "Young Talent Reward": Use the new generation already in the industry to create a massive communication flow. Our students, coming from engineering schools, technician schools or even faculties, have a lot of knowledge and they just want to use it! This is what I feel everyday: "I want people to know what I am doing and what I am capable of". We have to use this motivation to let them creating their own image! This will certainly take a little bit of time to set this up but our industry brim with skilled and talented people. A multidisciplinary graphic contest can even be organized regrouping the design students, printing students and more! It's by contesting that you become stronger: innovation is based on this huge contest that life is, and this is exactly what we need: innovation.

Solution #1.3: Use smartly Social Media and online influencers

To change young people minds and therefore, in a long term, the whole society one, we can rely on what have been common on the internet the past decade: online influencers. Some French famous Youtubers already posted some videos about the printing industry. And young people are watching them: it's an easy access to information nowadays for the new generations. The only question here is: Why not? The industry is looking to improve its communication and to give a good image of what it can offer to young people + videographer on social media (Youtube, Twitch, …) are looking for different, unusual and innovative topics = considerable communication potential.

I will not describe here the fact that we have to use social media to promote our industry. It is something that became almost compulsory for every company to have at least one social network to keep in touch with its community. It is a good idea to post regularly photos or short reports of what is done in your company to boost your image culture.

Solution #2: Open our doors to curiosity

Now, imagine that despite all these efforts, the printing industry is still struggle to attract young people. Well if the youth does not come to us, we have to come to them. This is a work on our own openness to the students. The idea is to be open to curiosity and we can even propose to schools or high schools the possibility to visit our companies. Students do not know what they really want before 18 or even 20: giving them a first view of what is the printing industry, and what they can do in it, is the best way to attract them in the graphic art studies before they graduate from high school.

Moreover, there are huge variety of possibilities to access the different jobs in the printing industry. In France, there is more than five ways to work in this industry! This is the perfect match between a growing sector in need of young skilled workers, and students who do not really know how to proceed in their life and which path to take. If they feel that they are supported by a whole European organization, they are more likely to work with us.

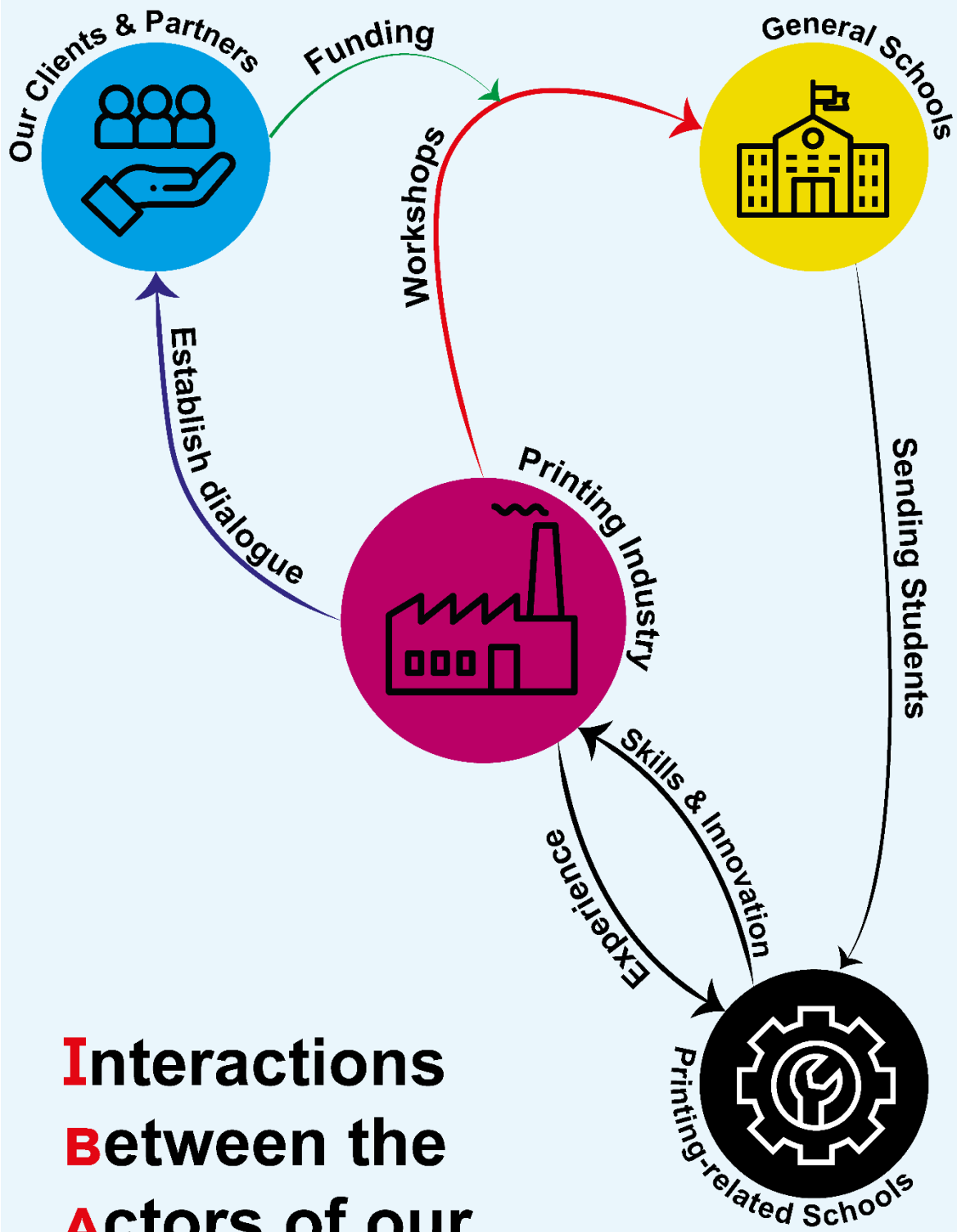**Solution #3: Feminize and diversify the work environment**

Nowadays, something important in all the jobs in the world is not only the gender equality but also diversity. And the industry isn't really good at it for the moment. Therefore, if the printing industry tries to feminize a little bit more its environment, making it more respectful and tolerant, this will surely help attracting young generation. Careful, this does not mean that it is not the case today. But working on this may improve the image of what **was** a men's job.

Conclusion: Open the field of possibilities and let's move on!

To sum up, our industry has a lot of strengths and skilled people, but for too long we have ignored our abilities and we have not enough used our expertise. But it's never too late! We have to focus not only on one solution and wait to see if it works or not. We must proceed gradually, but strongly, at each step to transform all our industry. We must not forget to work on different scales of time to make these efforts sustainable. The children of today are the students and workers of tomorrow; the workers of today are the tremendous and precious source of knowledge: we have to work for the present as well as for the future over 1, 5 or 10 generations, because that is how our image will evolve in the society's mind.

On the last page of this paper, you will find a very simple infographic that expose the "IBAS method". I tried to give a global view of what I imagined concerning the interactions between the actors of our sectors.

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