



PRINT YOUR FUTURE

HOW TO FIND ATTRACT AND KEEP THE NEXT GENERATION

BEST PRACTICE TOOLKIT
FOR THE EUROPEAN GRAPHICAL SECTOR



This Best Practice Toolkit has been prepared as part of the EU-funded project Print Your Future: Attracting a New Skilled Workforce for Quality Jobs in the European Graphic Industry (hereafter referred to as Print Your Future). The project ran from February 2020 until January 2022.

Print Your Future was designed and co-coordinated by the European social partners for the graphical sector: Intergraf (representing employers) and UNI Europa Graphical (representing workers). The project was funded by the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs, and Inclusion, and supported by four country experts: the Association of Estonian Printing and Packaging Industry - AEPPI (Estonia), Stuttgart Media University (Hochschule der Medien Stuttgart) (Germany), GOC (the Netherlands), and the Associação Portuguesa das Indústrias Gráficas e Transformadoras do Papel - APiGRAF (Portugal). The project was also supported by a technical expert: Spin360. The toolkit was drafted with the support of the British Printing Industries Federation - BPIF (United Kingdom).

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INTRODUCTION

Intergraf and the British Printing Industries Federation (BPIF) have collaborated on this Best Practice Toolkit as part of the EU-funded project Print Your Future.

The toolkit has been designed as a best practise guide for stakeholders in Europe with an interest in finding and attracting employees to the print, print packaging and graphic communications sector, and subsequently keeping them in our industry.

This guide issues advice for raising the profile and attractiveness of our sector, as well as pointing to concrete examples of best practices from across Europe. The guide is not exhaustive, but will give readers inspiration and ideas about how to improve the image of print in particular when it comes to recruitment and employment.

Print is an enormous sector and an important contributor to Europe's economy – both now and for the future.

A fundamental asset of the printing industry is its workforce, and a new generation of print professionals is required to produce the products we all need, and to keep the sector sufficiently dynamic and agile in order to respond to challenges. It is crucial that businesses adapt and integrate new innovation. The lines between print, manufacturing, design, physical and interactive are blurred and standing still simply isn't an option.

To guarantee the enduring competitiveness of the graphical sector in Europe, we must work together to promote the image of print and ensure we both equip and inspire future generations.

HELP IS AT HAND

As trade associations – Intergraf for Europe, and the BPIF for the UK – have a wealth of examples of companies and best practices that have been successful at finding, attracting, and keeping employees in the graphical sector. The aim of this toolkit is to share some of this knowledge and to help raise the profile and attractiveness of the whole industry.



Print communicates, educates, and inspires. Who wouldn't want to be involved in this industry?



**EUROPE'S
GRAPHICAL
SECTOR
AT A GLANCE**

112,000
COMPANIES

640,000
EMPLOYEES

€ 82
BILLION
TURNOVER

(EU27 + UK, Switzerland, and Norway)
Source: Eurostat 2018

HOW TO

FIND

THE NEXT GENERATION

There are lots of places where you can search for new employees, including websites, trade federations, trade unions, schools, colleges, and universities, print fairs, and job fairs. Look around for relevant events in your area which could help you to reach your target group. Cast a wide net: look both within and outside of vocational education and training providers. And remember, people in both older and younger age groups may have the profile you need.

To attract younger generations, it is crucial that you look at engaging potential candidates from an early age. Young people often start making decisions about their careers very early, so try to let them know about the career options that print can offer, and what it's like to work in the industry. Opening up the conversation with young people and outlining the possible career paths is key.

Connecting and opening up to local schools, career advisors and organisations to raise the profile of your business within your community is important. Building these relationships is also a way in for recruitment promotion and raising the profile of the industry as a whole.

HOW TO EDUCATE STUDENTS

It is a good idea to supply schools and career advisers with information about both the industry and your company. Unlikely as it may seem, not everyone is aware of the printing industry. Here are some tips for engaging with students of all ages:

- Ask to present to schoolchildren about your company and the industry. Show young people how the printing industry works and what it is for. Remember that the needs of students are different at different ages. Think about how younger children can play or be creative with printing. Give them a hands-on experience of print.
- Liaise with your local trade union to showcase the career perspectives in place in the graphical sector from the workers' point of view.
- Present to students on writing a good cover letter or CV for work experience or give them interview tips.
- Use or build online tools to help students register their interest in print to create a network that supports the sector's needs.
- Allow groups of local school children to visit your premises for a site tour. Try to engage with their parents or carers too - they can help young people get interested. Make sure you have follow-up materials that summarise what they have learned.
- Employability is key to career decisions. Make sure to show schools, parents, and students the many career opportunities the printing industry has to offer.
- Create a strong connection between the industry and students/schools, such as through study visits, internships, events in-house and/or at schools, or workshops with guest speakers.



GET NOTICED AT EMPLOYMENT FAIRS AND OTHER RELEVANT EVENTS IN YOUR AREA

The most important thing is to engage with your audience. Make sure your stand creates an emotional connection with visitors. Have a 'tactile area', where people can touch and feel print.

Be sure to take the right employees with you. Select the internal team that is most likely to be able to answer the sort of questions that may be asked. Don't have a huge team standing around with nothing to do.

- Plan out marketing materials and booth literature. Look at your upcoming campaigns and events. See if any exhibition stands can be re-used for banners, stand pop-up banners or giveaways in future. Make sure you have clear messaging on your stand, and don't overwhelm visitors with everything you do.
- Prepare clear objectives for the teams and plan for how they will follow up on generated leads. Don't leave it too long. Send a thank you the next day. Create a marketing or leads pack that can be sent as a follow-up with all the key information to take away.
- Promote your presence at the show during the live days. Create a hashtag and make sure your teams update while attending. Get involved with the event hashtag to maximise exposure of your location. Let people know what you offer and drive them directly to your stand.
- Track your stand engagement. There are many tools that can help with sign in and direct follow-ups after an exhibition.
- Bring details of job vacancies with you. Have leaflets printed for potential employees to take away with them as a reminder of what you do and offer. Provide contact details to follow up.
- Give the floor to workers to explain their passion for printing and for your business, and (if relevant for your company) to workers' representatives to explain the good working conditions.
- Explain that the professional experience that workers get in the graphical industry is valued by the company. Also, that workers can build a career in the graphical sector, but also in other parts of the industry because graphical skills are also needed in other industrial sectors.
- Review and feedback on your performance for future events. How many generated leads? What was successful and what wasn't? What could you have done more efficiently?

Is the event a virtual one?

Everything above still applies, but you will have to be even more creative! Make sure that interested and interesting people have the chance to touch physical products. Printers produce products that tap into people's emotions. You can utilise this unique quality.



**Print delivers
outstanding
value and return
on investment**



HOW TO

ATTRACT

THE NEXT GENERATION

To attract and retain talent, you need to build an employee-focused company culture. Today's workers demand a good work-life balance, clear career expectations and opportunities, and a value-driven environment. Ensuring that you are offering your current staff this kind of culture will help you to attract new people. One important tool that can help to build this culture is continuous communication and social dialogue in the company.



SHOUT ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS

It is important to promote your business in any way you can. As well as advertising on jobs boards, create ads for yourself that communicate what you have to offer. These are likely to encourage twice as many views as a posted job. Here are some more tips for promoting yourself:

- Share your ads on different social media platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, or Facebook. Look for local groups and business groups. Make sure you use the right channels for your target audience's age and location. To increase the reach, use hashtags along the lines of #apprenticeships #jobs #youngcareers.
- Ask your existing staff to share their experiences as case studies via your communications channels, and/or their own social media. They may know peers looking for work who they can share job applications with. Using the knowledge and strength of your own employees is the new marketing.
- Use inbound marketing such as blogs, events, search engine optimization (SEO), and social media to create brand awareness. This will help to attract new business and employees.
- Shout about what you are proud of and give people reasons for wanting to work at your company. For example, being local and engaging with the community, showcasing progression opportunities, having strong collective bargaining principles, showing your best products, and paying competitive wages.
- Consider what your interview process will look like. It could be a telephone or virtual interview, followed by a face-to-face and a shadow half-day. This gives potential employees time to really understand your workplace environment and the depth of the work involved. It also makes them feel more welcome because they have already had the chance to develop relationships.
- Use videos to promote yourself, especially those with testimonials. Show what young people in the sector and your company think of print. Include those who have fallen into it and those who specifically trained for it. Demonstrate the creative and interesting parts of the sector, including new tech, and the variety of jobs available for different kinds of skills. Make sure you're honest about the sector and what you can offer.
- Take part as a company in activities and events where your potential future employees could be – like hackathons, or other team challenges (e.g. relating to sports, or the environment).

Keep in mind that promotion is always better when you include the voices of workers at your company, as well as their representatives if applicable for your company.

Remember that people applying for an apprenticeship/ internship/entry-level role are generally at the start of their career and will require skills development. Be sure to list this in your offering. You need to be as eager to teach as they are to learn. Here are some additional things to consider doing:

- Make careers and career paths visible.
- Offer internship opportunities.
- Showcase the many professions that the printing industry has to offer – from the print shop to the design office. There are lots of jobs and skills needs. Map out different career paths - finance, sales, design, data, IT.
- Create videos about the sector aimed at different audiences like schools and parents. Use different methods - for example, virtual reality.
- Promote print's connections to popular products - books, board games, comics, vinyl sleeves, t-shirts, posters, photos, wall art, and furniture and home decoration.
- Focus on what printed products can do for customers in the digitised world.



MAKE SURE YOUR GLASS IS HALF-FULL

Far too often the print sector is discussed by insiders in a 'glass half-empty' way. Not only is this unhelpful, it's also inaccurate. The graphical sector has much to offer. Let people know what you are proud of and show the next generation why they should want to build a career in print. Be proud of your industry, your company, your people, your values, and the unique products that you deliver.

HOW TO GET REFERRALS



Good help isn't hard to find when top talent looks for you

Jim Molis, business author,
US-based Business Journals.



- Share vacancies and job requirements. Communicate with your employees internally and their unions to make them aware of specific job descriptions and ask for referrals when sending out.
- Use your employees as 'brand ambassadors'.
- Keep your potential employees updated at every stage. Let them know where they are in the process with clear timelines.
- Offer incentives. Aside from money, which is always popular, you can offer experiences, trips, vouchers, gifts, or flexibility. Identify what is relevant for your employee, check its alignment with company goals, and see what you can do about it.
- Publicly recognise when someone in your business refers, and make sure they know you appreciate their effort. Any acknowledgement, ranging from an award to public praise from the CEO, can be meaningful to employees.
- Enhance the experience in the application process. It shouldn't be complicated. Use a platform that allows easy access. Some of these platforms will also allow your potential employees to share on social media.
- Be available. Knowing people requires time and effort, but it is always rewarding and ensures that people feel (and are) seen, heard, and respected.

Any successful programme takes time to develop and adapt, so it's crucial that you ask for feedback internally on what does and doesn't work and be sure to build on what you learn. Survey suggestions can be very helpful in developing a more successful system. Using a variety of initiatives will help increase your referrals.

INCLUDE DIVERSITY

Make sure diversity is a part of your recruitment process. Not actively focusing on attracting women, as well as other nondominant groups, to your company excludes more than half of your future workforce. That's a lot of potential talent to miss out on.

Women are commonly under-represented in the print industry, including in leading roles. Try to make your job ads and postings more inclusive. It's easy to use language that is subtly 'gender-coded' without noticing, and very often job ads are prime culprits in unconscious bias. Aim for gender-neutral language to avoid bias towards a specific sex or gender.

It has been widely reported that gender preferences can be conveyed subtly through words like 'competitive', 'leader' and 'dominate'. These are usually associated with male stereotypes, while words like 'community', 'interpersonal' and 'support' are generally associated with female stereotypes.

If you're looking for more diversity in the workplace, think about what you include in your job adverts. Consider doing the following:

- Paint a picture of what it's like to work at your company, selling the story of the workplace culture and the team dynamic. More diversity attracts more diversity.
- Describe the benefits you offer and the values you truly stand for. This has proven to be much more appealing than long lists of requirements or competencies. Young people want to work for a brand or product that they support.
- Share stories of women and minorities who are succeeding across all levels of your organisation. When people see themselves represented, they are more likely to apply.
- Focus on what the performance objectives of the role are, and what the person is expected to accomplish. Include points that are 'desirable but not vital'. Promoting the importance of training and development within your organisation will help widen the pool of talent.
- Together with workers and their representatives, develop corporate social policies and codes of conduct on topics like health and safety, non-discrimination, social dialogue, equality, etc. Make them known publicly.



Print is one of the most sustainable and environmentally responsible industries on the planet



DON'T HAVE A WEBSITE OR SOCIAL MEDIA? YOUR COMPETITORS DO

With the rise in cross-media services provided in the print industry, it is important that you use a multi-channel approach. Many printers are still unaware of the potential of the new digital reality and are not using online channels effectively to market their brand and sell their products. Having a website will also improve the credibility and legitimacy of your business. Your website and social channels will represent your company online, so be sure to:

- Clearly communicate your brand values and mission statement on your website and social media.
- Promote your business vacancies, offering and products.
- Generate a following and get ranked on Google and other search engines.
- Provide content on news, events and collaborations that creates engagement with your brand.
- Promote the benefits of print. Link to existing campaigns like Two Sides¹ and the Print Your Future project².
- Don't just show your machines. People need to see the end product, not the process.
- Show workers explaining their jobs, and workers' representatives explaining the benefits of working as a printer.
- Keep both your website and its content up to date.
- Be active on social media. Share company news, as well as stories about your people and clients.
- Share profiles or testimonials of your existing staff to show how welcoming, diverse, and attractive your company is.

¹ <https://www.twosides.info/>

² <https://printyourfuture.eu/>



HOW TO

KEEP

THE NEXT GENERATION

Strict, hierarchical workplaces are a thing of the past. Interesting jobs and meaningful work matter more than they did. You need to make sure your workforce understands and is part of the bigger picture.

Here are some tips on what matters, and what you can do to make new recruits want to stay with you:

- Money/wages are important but are not enough. Employees need **good employment conditions**, a meaningful **work-life balance**, a fun work atmosphere, team-oriented working, environmental awareness, and development opportunities.
- Ensure that you promote your **ethos and values** in a clear vision and strategy. Young people in particular want to work for a company which shares their values. Promote **sustainability**, for example, and your environmental credentials.
- **Workplace culture** is key and, depending on your company's size or structure, should include breakout and social areas and quiet working spaces, access to office gyms or cycling schemes, flexible/home working (less 9 to 5), a birthday day off or early finish every year.
- Develop a constructive **social dialogue** at company level where all kinds of workers' concerns can be discussed.
- Create a 'culture committee' of employees from across your business to offer advice, organise socials and on-site services – make sure to include younger people and new starters. **Foster creativity** and input.
- Encourage a positive working atmosphere, with **supportive management** and colleagues who consistently help all staff members achieve rather than knocking them down.
- **Involve employees** in decision-making about workplace culture and markets. With their connection to popular culture, young people in particular may have valuable insights into emerging and evolving markets, as well as new ideas, energy, drive, and the ability to think outside of the box. These are all important assets. Use them.
- Make career progression, next steps, and opportunities visible. **Create a vision** of what employees could achieve in the future.
- Make your **environmental efforts** visible by clearly showing that you not only respect the legislation, but that you go further. Re-use, adopt certifications that make sense for your company, and optimise energy use.

SYMPATHETIC SUPPORT VIA MENTOR SCHEMES

A business that is invested in professional growth and development is attractive to the next generation. Mentorships are a good way to support young people in your business. A mentor is not concerned with judging performance, which allows for an open conversation about minor concerns, worries, and the inevitable challenges along a person's career path. Here are some tips on mentorship:

- Pair up an employee with someone from another department or team in the organisation, exposing the employee to new knowledge about the way the business is run.
- Don't make it mandatory but make it a commitment. Empower the mentee to take charge and be co-responsible for meetings and updates. Create a structure with monthly meetings. Suggest the meetings take place over a coffee or in an environment that makes the mentee feel comfortable.
- Remember that mentoring isn't just for new or young employees. You need to ensure your business connects with today's tech-savvy generation to better understand new and emerging tools and technology. Mentorship can be reciprocal.
- Getting your leadership team involved in any type of mentor programme shows it's a priority for your business, and that there is no end to learning and professional development for all employees.



LOOK AFTER THEIR WELLBEING

Employers have a duty of care and must do all they reasonably can to support their employees' health, safety, and wellbeing. This includes their mental health. If your workers are represented by a trade union, this duty should be shared with workers' representatives in a specific joint committee dedicated to health, safety, and wellbeing.

Good management and positive wellbeing at work go hand in hand, and there's strong evidence that addressing wellbeing at work increases productivity.

If staff feel they can talk openly and comfortably about issues relating to work-life balance and wellbeing, problems are less likely to build up. This could lead to less time off for health issues and will improve morale in the work environment. Here are some tips for ensuring your company is a safe place to work:

- Provide a fit for purpose health and safety policy to protect workers, in agreement with workers' representatives if relevant for your company.
- Conduct employee wellbeing surveys to give staff a confidential way of feeding back, so you can assess current concerns.
- Encourage your line managers to have the knowledge and confidence to signpost an employee to more expert sources of support if needed.
- Make sure you have HR qualified support and guidance you can share with employees.

Create a culture of dialogue in your company. When you create workplace cultures where people can be themselves, it's easier for them to talk about their concerns and ideas without fear, and easier for them to reach out for help when they need it.



HELP THEM DEVELOP THEMSELVES

In every country, there is a range of government-subsidised, industry supported, and private training vehicles that businesses can take advantage of. Research the training support options available to you. Some of these will offer flexible and affordable ways to develop new talent or upskill existing staff.

A skilled, trained workforce can dramatically improve bottom line performance, adding value to products and services, and making it easier to compete internationally.

Personal development throughout a career in print is not an age-related issue. Lifelong learning needs to be a reality for all ages to keep people engaged and for them to develop the right skills or knowledge.

If relevant for your company, trade union representatives should be consulted on decisions about training programmes.

GET NEW STARTERS OFF TO A GOOD START

Giving new starters a positive experience at your company is the best way to ensure they stay. It is crucial that sufficient support is given. Here are some tips to help you support your new starters:

- **Induction is key.** Ensure you have a checklist of information. Share fun facts about the business, team organisation charts and some background on what you have been doing so far. Remember that this person has never worked with you and is probably new to the industry. Don't assume they know.
- **Give practical guidance.** Clearly show how things generally are in the work environment so they have a reference point. Provide key contacts, working times of business, time for breaks, date of pay, HR details and company benefit reminders.
- **Meet the team.** Make sure they have an understanding of the different



teams or departments internally and set up a social meeting to help them feel part of the business.

■ **Set objectives and expectations.** New starters will have less of an idea of what to expect than an experienced new recruit. Be clear when giving specific tasks and follow up to make sure they're supported from the start, so they gain confidence in taking responsibility. Communicate the standards and timelines you expect but give them plenty of opportunities to ask for help and address any problems.

■ **Follow up.** Review and put in progress meetings to make sure they feel valued and supported. New starters will need more reassurance than other staff. Following up regularly will help you see if they're going in the right direction and identify where training may be required.

■ **Give full responsibility where appropriate.** While new starters need plenty of guidance, it's important to give them autonomy over their work where appropriate. Allow them to make decisions on what they're doing to give them a sense of ownership over their work tasks, and then work towards developing them to have further ownership.

■ **Involve new starters in your mentor programme.** 'Buddy' them up for both support and to gain knowledge of how different roles in your business work.

■ **Be available.** Make time for your staff.

■ **Involve trade union representatives.** Discuss with them decisions, follow-up, and evaluation.



Satisfied and motivated workers mean higher levels of staff retention



GIVE THEM YOUR EAR

Hold regular one-to-one listening sessions to give feedback opportunities to current employees. This feedback is likely to be very useful in understanding how your employees feel and what you can do better to retain talent. Here are some suggested questions:

1. Which part of your job makes you eager to come to work every day?
2. Which aspects do you not look forward to when coming to work?
3. How well do you believe your experience and talents are being utilised?
4. What skills do you have that you feel aren't being used?
5. What are your long-term career aspirations? Are we helping you accomplish them here?
6. Have you ever thought about leaving? If yes, what made you to consider this?
7. Why did you decide to stay?
8. Is there anything you'd like to change about your job? Are there things you would like to change about your team or department?

FIND, ATTRACT, KEEP CHECKLIST

Here's a checklist of what makes a business attractive. Tick the boxes next to the items you have taken care of or have in hand, and then think about how you can tick the ones you haven't. Using some ink will help you focus on an honest appraisal. If you don't tick many boxes, don't worry, you'll find a list of helpful resources on the Print Your Future website³ to help improve your company's attractiveness.

Checklist

- Are you clear in your mission, values, and culture?
- Have you defined what you are doing on sustainability efforts both internally and externally?
- Do you have a website showcasing the best of what you offer? Is it up to date?
- Have you reached out to local schools, colleges, or universities?
- Do you attend local trade or job fairs to promote your business?
- Do you offer professional growth and development opportunities?
- Do you have a mentorship scheme set up?
- Do you offer wellbeing support?
- Do you offer competitive pay?
- Is your staff (including management) gender balanced?
- Are you collating case studies from current employees to use as promotion?
- Have you applied for or received any rewards or recognition of excellence or achievements?
- Have you promoted your culture on your website or on social media to show your business is a great place to work?
- Has your HR department looked at flexible hours, locations, commute times and benefits?
- Have you mapped out career paths for your employees?
- Do you actively promote new roles internally as well as externally?
- Have you reached out to your local trade association?
- Have you reached out to your local trade union?
- Do you engage in continuous communication under social dialogue?

³ <https://printyourfuture.eu/>

Resources

Print Your Future website (Europe)

<https://printyourfuture.eu/>

Intergraf website (Europe)

<https://www.intergraf.eu/>

UNI Europa Graphical website (Europe)

<https://www.uni-europa.org/>

Association of Estonian Printing and Packaging Industry – AEPPI (Estonia)

<https://etpl.ee/>

<https://www.printinestonia.eu/>

Hochschule der Medien

Stuttgart website (Germany)

<https://www.hdm-stuttgart.de/pmt>

ZFA website (Germany)

<https://zfamedien.de/>

GOC website (the Netherlands)

<https://goc.nl/>

Associação Portuguesa

das Indústrias Gráficas

e Transformadoras

do Papel - APIGRAF

website (Portugal)

<http://www.apigraf.pt/>

British Printing Industries

Federation - BPIF website (UK)

<https://www.britishprint.com/>

PRINT YOUR FUTURE: THE PROJECT

The Print Your Future project took place in the context of the graphical sector's European social dialogue with the aim of helping to raise the attractiveness of the graphical sector, a problem identified in our Work Programmes 2019-2021 (adopted in September 2018) and 2022-2024 (adopted in November 2021). The sector faces internal challenges, including skills mismatches and shortages, demographic change, and a misleading negative image, as well as external challenges, including digitisation, rapid technological development and changing consumer behaviour. It is important that companies remain sufficiently dynamic and agile to respond to these challenges. Securing the availability of skilled workers in traditional and new roles by ensuring that the sector is attractive to young people is a crucial part of the solution. That is where the Print Your Future project comes in.

The Print Your Future project responded to the attractiveness issue by developing various tools and resources to support stakeholders across Europe in promoting the graphical sector to young people and other potential employees, as well as to current staff. These included:

- A **survey** to diagnose potential problems, solutions and best practices in recruitment and employment practices in the European graphical sector;
- A **Best Practice Toolkit** to offer practical advice;
- A **communication campaign** to promote the European graphical sector, including:
 - an informative website showing career paths, job profiles, schools and courses, a new sectoral identity, video testimonials with young people, and photos of young people in the sector;
 - four Young Workers' Days (in Estonia, Germany, the Netherlands, and Portugal) to promote the graphical sector to young people.

The toolkit and communication campaign were informed by the survey results, which showed that the attractiveness of the graphical sector is currently a problem. 82% of respondents considered it crucial to work on restructuring the image of the sector for young people, to create clearer career paths for young people, and to run communication campaigns that speak young people's language. Respondents thought that recruitment was more problematic than employment, although problems were identified in both. So the toolkit focuses on solutions relevant to both areas by offering advice on how to find, how to attract, and how to keep young people in the European graphical sector.



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