

## To begin...

As a preamble to this letter, I would first like to introduce myself in a few lines. My name is Cédric Dumont, I'm 22 years old and I'm in my first year of engineering studies at the Grenoble INP school, Pagora. I don't have an ordinary background, and that's also what characterizes me. Unlike the majority of the students at Pagora, I did not attend a preparatory class. I opted for a professional path: BTEC National, HND and Bachelor degree. I completed these diplomas in two very different companies: one specialising in signage, adhesives and group internal communication, and the second, a traditional printing company specialising in digital printing and finishing work. I then joined Grenoble INP-Pagora on a contract basis, and spent my first year working for another company specialising in the production of self-adhesive labels, packaging and printed electronics. Unfortunately, I did not validate my year, but try to validate it this year. This rather atypical career path has allowed me to discover the multitude of possibilities offered by our sector, ranging from very varied printing processes, to the most diverse methods of processing, not to mention the freedom to create and imagine that graphic design offers. I have now been fortunate enough for 7 years to be fully involved in this industrial sector that I am passionate about. This is why I would like to express my ideas in this letter, in order to make this sector attractive and allow other young people to develop as I am doing at present. I wish you a good reading.



Today, the graphic industries sector is an aging sector, and too little known to people. The trades of this one are however part of the oldest that make up our civilization. As early as 1450, a certain Gutenberg was already working on a way to print texts and revolutionize the world of art. Since then, thanks to an event situation, many creative minds and many other inventions, progress has continued to grow, adapting to the spirit of the times. This revolution has therefore opened up to the whole world! It is now possible to communicate with other cultures, in several languages, which makes it possible to deepen other knowledge. While these facts date back several hundred years, they are still valid today.

Printing and graphic design allow us to open up to the world, and in the universal language of imagination and creativity, to communicate with other people, while being open to their ideas. However, in our world, full of contradictions, the printing and graphics sectors are no longer as attractive as they used to be. Students who are not necessarily familiar with the graphic industry sector do not see the many opportunities that this market offers. From traditional printers to communication agencies, packaging manufacturers and adhesive printers, the possibilities offered by the graphic industries are numerous, yet still largely unknown. But what can we do about it? What could we do to revive the growth of this sector and become more attractive? How can we present these various jobs to students, to the outside world, to this bubble of colour? That's what we're going to try to see next! On your marks, get set, print!

## Interventions

First of all, it is important to know that in France, every year, the number of companies operating in the graphic industries market decreases. This is due to the fact that small and very small companies are being taken over by large groups to form a single entity. On the other hand, the number of people employed in these groups is also declining. This can be explained by the excessive discretion and lack of information available to us when we are studying. Very often, when we finish our middle school years, and have the first important choice of our lives to make, namely high school orientation, we are sorely lacking in information. We are very often in a purely theoretical cursus and have never yet met professionals or industrialists. The choice we have to make is therefore made by default, and is oriented towards a very general curriculum.

That's when a first solution comes into play! We don't have enough information to make a choice that will guide us towards our future profession. If professionals in the graphic industry sectors became more visible to young students, it would allow them to discover a world totally unknown

to them. When we enter high school, or higher education, we have access to various databases: career fairs, apprenticeship fairs, meetings with professionals... But these meetings often take place after our choices of orientation have been made. The fact of presenting a profession, combining production, creativity and originality, to a young audience could indeed arouse the curiosity of students! As the first diplomas in the graphic industries are a brevet d'études professionnelles (BEP) as well as a baccalauréat professionnel (vocational baccalaureate), it is advisable to start these diplomas as soon as you enter high school.

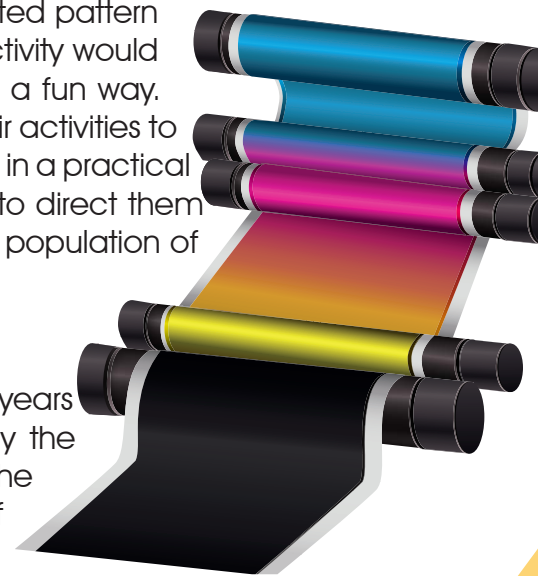
Therefore, it might be a good idea to schedule a few lectures by professionals from the graphic industries in college classes, especially in the ninth grade, when we have to choose our orientation. Although these professionals are in the best position to talk about their profession, students who have obtained, or are in the process of obtaining, these diplomas could also come to testify and present their studies. I am aware that school programs are busy and time is sometimes short. But the future of students must be a major concern for teachers. In addition, these interventions could take place in the context of «workshops» for student orientation. The opinion of a person fully involved in our sector can only be beneficial to all. The persuasiveness of a player involved in this sector is multiplied tenfold, and has nothing equal to the sometimes sharp opinion of a person not working in the world of the graphic industries. This is a solution that is accessible, that requires a certain overcoming of function, but that will be clearly enhanced if knowledge of the sector increases.

## Graphic Art Week

During my early years as a student, I had the chance to discover some activities through organizations called «week of...». By going through Taste Week in elementary school, to Innovation Week, or Learning Week during my high school years, I was able to discover these themes that were unknown to me until then. Based on a similar model, a «Graphic Industries Week» would be a great way to promote our sector. The idea would be to enable students to discover the many different jobs in this field of activity, but also to find out how they are worked. Numerous educational or professional establishments have production facilities that are very representative of our business: communication department, printing or finishing workshop, laboratories for inks, flexographic plates, offset plates, or even exhibition halls for our products. These places, which are very representative of the graphic industries, would be the scene of educational visits for classes of students unfamiliar with our sector. These could even become «fun» visits, allowing students to create their own product. The simplest and most explicit example in my opinion would be the realization of a garment (or textile accessory) in silkscreen printing. Only a screen would have to be insulated and this would allow the transfer of the insulated pattern directly onto the textile, in the colour desired by the student. This activity would be an ideal way to discover many stages of the graphic chain in a fun way. Many structures would also have a definite interest in promoting their activities to schools. Students' interest increases when they learn about the trade in a practical way. The interest aroused among young people would be a way to direct them towards a diploma in the graphic industries, and thus increase the population of our sector.

## Drupa

As all players in the graphic arts industry know, every four years the largest gathering of graphic arts players takes place, namely the DRUPA. It brings together global players and brings together all the technological, material and innovative advances in the world of printing and graphic arts. Intended for companies wishing to enrich their means of production or simply to discover new advances in the sector, this grouping is the global showcase of our sector. Every year the leaders of the sector are present and compete in ingenuity to showcase their latest innovations. How can you not be amazed at a press that can produce a huge print in just a few minutes? Or even in front of this



machine that can design a book, bind, hot gild, emboss and shape in the blink of an eye? Or that last marvel capable of printing a finished product with a touch of electronic ink allowing the functionalization of this product? No one will remain insensitive to the charms of these high-end machines...

This showcase, as radiant as it may be in the professional world of graphic arts, is not necessarily exported in all minds... Taking place over ten days, the 2000 or so exhibitors from 52 different countries bring together more than 400,000 visitors every four years... But very few students! What a paradox when one knows the influence of this event and the interest it arouses among professionals! Why not dedicate one day of this event to students in training for diplomas in the graphic industries? This would help to raise their interest, and would also allow them to see the developments in the sector. This event cannot be addressed to all students, but it could at least



bring together students in training in the graphic industries, and on one day, be dedicated to carrying out demonstrations and exchanges with the students. The DRUPA professionals are the people best able to answer the questions of young people. Both technically and in terms of the career they achieve. The training of printers and graphic designers is very much oriented towards the graphic chain, means of production and production flow. A broad view of the solutions that are developing around the world could provide a better understanding of how companies work, but would also generate interest in the evolution of the sector.

As the training programmes were carried out a few years ago, the evolution of the means of production would be all the more obvious to the students. To attract the attention of a young audience, there is nothing better than to present them with the best, and therefore, the DRUPA seems to be the ideal place to amaze and attract students, but also to encourage them to continue their studies and raise their level.

## Social networks & media

In a sector that is constantly evolving, how can we not take advantage of social networks? These networks, which bring together more than 90% of students, make it possible to promote just about any subject, while being sure to reach a wide audience of all ages and backgrounds. The presence of advertising and information on social networks such as Facebook, Instagram or Twitter would make it possible to reach many more people, in particular a more «young and connected» audience. We often encounter advertisements for various sectors, brands or products, but rarely advertisements that highlight a specific industry. By implementing a system of advertising publication on social networks, the graphic industries would be seen as an innovative sector, a precursor of this kind of communication method.

More than social networks, the media are now a must for a successful communication operation. We have access to a multitude of magazines offering news from the graphic industries. These are often intended for companies in the sector. It might therefore be interesting to produce a «newspaper» for schools. It could also be declined in digital format, and would propose various headings, more entertaining and less oriented towards entrepreneurship than those already existing. This support would promote our sector, while highlighting the possibilities it offers: a product would be designed, then adapted to the means of production, printed, shaped and finally delivered. In addition to promoting the sector through its content, it would be a perfect example of the techniques used to produce this type of work. The content would be aimed at a younger audience, and therefore less oriented towards the professional world, and would therefore focus on more playful subjects (interviews with graduates, presentation of techniques, paper samples, gilding...). By declining this support in digital format, the newspaper would become accessible to all, and would allow the sector to reach students in a more comprehensive way.

## Innovation Competition

Finally, in order to make sure that we draw attention to our sector, the establishment of an innovation competition could be a good idea. Indeed, rewarding an individual who helps create innovation in the graphic industries sector would make the sector more attractive. It is well known that people's motivation to create, imagine or think is multiplied tenfold when in the end there is a reward. This would make it possible to make both sides winners: on the one hand competitors, creators, designers ready to show imagination, creativity and motivation to win a prize and make the fruit of their work visible, and on the other hand an industrial sector, in full expansion, looking for a second wind to regain its splendour and regain new momentum. As Intergraf is doing here, giving students the opportunity to make their voices heard through personal production is a great example of communication. As for me, I discovered Intergraf thanks to the proposal of this work, and I think that many actors in our sector should be inspired by this kind of initiative.



## Valuing, communicating, listening...

Today, getting closer to young people seems to me to be of prime importance. Indeed, we are at a pivotal time in our history. The end of 2010 marks a turning point in generations. Current and especially future generations are now ultra-connected and no longer have the same view of the world as before. It is therefore necessary for the major players in our sector to look at these new generations .

First of all, as the title indicates, it is necessary to add value to our sector. Not by putting forward techniques that are certainly very viable but outdated, as many people in the graphics industry do, but rather by showing how this sector can adapt to the new world. How this sector can adapt to new issues, how this sector can adapt to new trends. The environment, brand image and ecology are all major issues that we need to focus on right now. We in the graphic industry are one of the largest consumers of environmentally unfriendly materials: inks, chemical components, non-recyclable materials. This aspect, not very glorious, tends to disappear. The environmental issue is in everyone's head and understood by everyone. We are moving towards a more respectful and «eco-friendly» production. This turning point in the world of paper and graphics must be promoted in the eyes of all. Too many people are unaware of the efforts made by companies in the sector to change and move towards respectful production. The adaptation of the sector towards a greener activity can only be well perceived by a new generation, ultra-concerned by these issues.

The penultimate part of this paragraph is one of the most important nowadays. In a world where the media are omnipresent in everyday life, and where the means of communication are innumerable, communication is a major part of doing something well. In an ultra-connected world where communication media are multiple and varied, it is essential for our world to be better known, to stand out from the crowd and to stand out from the crowd. I do not mean by this a denigration of the other sectors, but rather an emphasis on our strengths, our contributions, which, taken together, can only be beneficial to anyone who will use them. Today, the means of communication are mostly produced by players in the graphic industries. When people walk past these same media, they are taken aback by the product, brand or service being promoted. But at no time does the printer, papermaker or graphic designer get into the consumer's head. Very often, the designers of these means are inscribed at the very bottom of the support, and are not necessarily the most visible or put on the front of the stage. In order to be better known, more visible to everyone, it would be interesting to succeed in being more visible on these supports. A sentence, a slogan, a logo, are as many ways to be recognized and identified. When we see a well-known logo on a poster, book or digital media, we are directly referred to the brand that corresponds to it. By having a logo, explicit and direct, the graphic industries would take a new dimension by standing out from the others, and would instantly be in everyone's head at the sight of this visual identity.

Last but not least, the last point of this part is listening. The changes taking place around the world are not just a social revolution. They also constitute an environmental, economic, professional, or even societal revolution. Like all the inhabitants of our beautiful planet, we are struggling to adapt to change. Sometimes we even have difficulty adapting to new demands, new ideas, or new ways of thinking. Yet nothing is more enriching than the opinions and ideas of the people around us. This is why it is necessary to listen to the grievances, requests and ideas of those around us, but also of the people who will be part of our lives, temporarily or not. Asking each person for an opinion would necessarily take too long. But often a group opinion emerges. With today's mailing means, it is not complicated to carry out an e-mailing campaign. Each quarter, a campaign could be addressed to schools, on a specific theme, to gather the opinions and ideas of the generation of tomorrow. These would allow us to adapt our ideas and activities to the concerns of the population. This listening is essential if we do not wish to miss the demands of tomorrow's players. As the social situation in France is one of the most tense at the moment, we directly understand the importance of listening in the societal climate. It is necessary to evolve, to give a voice to those around us, and above all, to understand the demands of each one in order to offer a service adapted to all.

### To finish...

To close this letter, I would like to address a point that is essential for the development and attraction of our sector. Through my professional experience, I have had the chance to rub shoulders with people from various backgrounds, all with different points of view and all enriching. Nevertheless, a general idea has increasingly emerged in recent years: the graphic industries are not a sector of the future. This idea came back to me several times and surprised me a lot. How could the major players in the graphic industries not believe in the growth and development of our sector? How did this vision of decline come to the minds of the majority of employees? I think it's sad... Sad not to believe in this art that has been present and continues for many years! Sad not to see the multitude of opportunities offered by the new technological advances that appear every day! Sad not to see the potential that this industry has in the future! Sad not to believe, dream, imagine the possibilities of tomorrow! We are fortunate to be the main players in an industry that lets minds express themselves. If we, the main players, do not believe in our possibilities, in our projects, how can we hope to convince the players of tomorrow? It is necessary that each one of us realize how lucky we are, and then pass this luck on to future generations! The work we have to do is not only for others, but also for ourselves. We are the first links in a long chain. To be strong, this chain must start with strong links. This last point is essential if we are to pass on to future generations. A person's power of persuasion also lies in the conviction and belief that person has. As I said before, we are extremely fortunate to be part of the graphic industries sector. It is up to us to pass on this opportunity, and the first thing to do is to believe in our industry.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter, and I really hope that my ideas can make your minds bloom, bright ideas to make our sector more attractive than it already is.

