

Printing Impressions

PK Graphics — Clubbing the Competition

Add a note...

SUFFERING SEEMS to be one of the leading prerequisites to becoming a successful artist. In many ways, the same could be said for business success.

Miguel Paredes should know, as he is both an artist and a businessman. And his company, PK Graphics, has blossomed into a \$20 million performer in just eight years with an annual growth rate of 25 percent. But now that the suffering has receded on the business end, Paredes has encountered a new problem—getting sufficient rest.

“My goal is to sleep,” Paredes, president and CEO, quips.

That’s no surprise, given his exhaustive undertakings. Paredes is a media empire unto himself. His Miami Beach printing establishment is just one facet of the overall picture of Florida-based holdings:

- There is PK Graphics Broward, a satellite office in Ft. Lauderdale.
- This summer, Paredes unveiled a pair of PK Graphics Express boutique storefronts in South Beach and Miami.
- A production facility is located in Pompano Beach.
- Earlier this year, he debuted Paredes Publishing, which offers high-quality giclée reproductions.

PK Graphics has grown considerably, from having four employees just seven years ago to 144 workers today. Originally a brokerage, PK now boasts a pair of six-color Heidelberg Speedmaster CD presses with UV printing capabilities that produce items such as tickets, business cards, flyers and posters.

Working the Club Circuit

A good chunk of Paredes’ clientele fall in the entertainment sector, predominantly the club circuit. He estimates PK Graphics services approximately 75,000 nightclubs nationwide. PK’s geographical base is perfect, as South Beach is the Mecca of the club scene. The market represents roughly 50 percent of Paredes’ business; his boundless energy pulsates like that of his clients’ party-all-night businesses.

The other 50 percent of PK’s business is highly fragmented, including work for brokerages. The company provides brochures and catalogs for the real estate space, as well as general commercial items for ‘mom and pop’ retail businesses.

A transplanted New Yorker, Paredes moved to the Sunshine State and immersed himself in the South Beach culture. He opened a studio there and went into the restaurant business with his father.

Around 1990, Paredes decided to learn commercial art, so he assembled a group of artists to design a line of t-shirts with original characters. While the t-shirt business fell apart, Paredes found himself freelancing his artistic services.

“(One company) wanted to create stickers...something new, urban and hot,” Paredes says. “I worked for them for almost a year and started to realize that I was a very good graphic designer. I was self-taught, and continued training myself on all of the Adobe programs and some of the 3-D programs.”

Paredes began shopping his design services around town, primarily to print brokers and nightclub owners. The marketing director of the Groove Jet nightclub, Sean Saladino (now director of operations for PK Graphics), asked Paredes to design the club’s flyers. At that point, Paredes put down his spatula for good.

A funny thing happened when Paredes’ work was distributed in the South Beach area. The flyers grew legs, and a life of their own.

“I put my name and number on the side of the (Groove Jet) flyers. Afterwards, the phone started ringing,” he says. “People wanted to know how much I charged for printing, layouts, etc. I’d caught on and sort of became a broker myself. I began producing my own flyers and advertising. I would fill my backpack, hit the beach and distribute flyers.

“Since South Beach is huge for tourism, the flyers started going home with people. I was receiving phone calls from Idaho, New Jersey, different states. So I created a Website and decided to call it PK Graphics. I thought PK was catchy, like CK (Calvin Klein), DK (Donna Karan) and BK (Burger King).”

Paredes expanded his brokerage with the addition of the Heidelberg presses in 2002. Along the way, he developed a national presence on the entertainment circuit, providing eye-catching products not only for nightclubs, but also for promoters, disc jockeys and music festivals. Paredes attacked the market by offering low prices and a guaranteed 24-hour turnaround, something the competition was unable and/or unwilling to do.

In order to best address the needs of his clientele, Paredes has learned to adopt to a somewhat unique schedule. The printer’s phone frequently rings at 4 a.m., and it’s usually a nightclub promoter calling to discuss a new flyer layout.

The 25 percent growth rate has necessitated expansion for the Paredes franchise. PK Graphics’ headquarters has relocated within the same building to a larger, 7,000-square-foot office, which better accommodates customer service, graphic design, shipping and logistics. PK Broward is also adding 1,900 square feet of space.

The Express boutique walk-in locales provide a modern, chic look in comparison to a traditionally stodgy print shop. With the entertainment and artistic timber of his clients, Paredes wanted to create an appealing atmosphere.

Full Spa Treatment

“It’s not even a print shop; it’s a boutique with vinyl-wrapped walls and beautiful iMacs,” Paredes notes. “Walking into PK Graphics is like walking into a spa. It’s a beautiful place, with music and the whole ambience. It has an interior design look that I’ve created, with artwork on the walls that shows the reproductions we do. Everything is done just right.

“When you visit a (traditional) printing company, you sit on a couch that’s been there for 20 years. You walk through, smell the fumes. That’s why nobody goes to the pressroom in Pompano—I don’t want traffic going through there. I want to open these beautiful places where customers can go in, have some water or coffee, and look at artwork. I’m a New York City boy. I want to come with a new look, a new approach to things.”

As for the publishing arm, Paredes expects it to be a business boon for the printing side, generating ample new business with giclée reproductions—posters for other publishing companies that don’t have equipment. Earlier this year, Paredes secured a job to produce two original pieces of artwork on 12-pt. stock for a hotel chain with more than 200 locations.

Ideally, Paredes will expand the Express boutiques into other states as the company grows its reputation. The success of the first two boutiques will also dictate future equipment acquisitions.

For now, Paredes is willing to work himself into a frenzy. But he might want to add a futon or a cot to the back office. He’ll need to sleep at some point.

“Sometimes I wake up and think: has it really been eight or nine years?” he admits. “It feels more like 20 years.” **PI**

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