

## SEVEN SECRET RULES TO SUCCESS AT PRINTSOURCE NEW YORK



**By Massimo Antonio Iacoboni, President, Printsource New York**

As you get ready for your first Printsource, it is our pleasure to provide you with some suggestions and guidelines that we believe will enhance your selling experience and your satisfaction with the show.

We have found that the best perspective you can have when organizing your collection is that of the designer you are trying to sell to. In other words, put yourself in the buyer's shoes.

Designers will have to sift through hundreds of designs during a very short period of time, so you should strive as much as possible to make their job easier. Also, don't forget that buyers will often feel conflicted about what they have to buy. They will appreciate your knowledge of the current trends to help them feel secure they are making the right choice.



**RULE # 1: It is better not to show a single print, but instead work with groups**

We recommend having at least 100 designs (preferably more) for your first show. Your collection should be comprised of “themes” that reflect the season’s major trends. As an example, looking at photographs of the New York and European fashion collections will help you understand what apparel buyers will be looking for.

We recommend that you refer to magazines such as *Collezioni*, *Textile View* or similar, which feature extensive coverage of the runway shows. Also, if you can afford it, there are many trend forecasting services (which can be expensive) that will offer you guidance in selecting the most important trends.

**RULE # 2: Don’t try to be a jack of all trades**

Pick a few areas/markets that you feel best represent your strengths. For some of you this might be home décor, for others the gift market, or perhaps a specific area such as menswear, within the wider market of fashion fabric. Try to find your own voice.

We don’t mean to say that you should specialise in just one area, but don’t pick too many either. Make conscious choices and put your energy into standing out

in those areas. Virtually every major retailer and manufacturer shops our show, so try to define who your customer is. It really also helps to look at what they are already doing, so you need to get your detective hat on in advance.

**RULE # 3: Although buyers do shop for trends, they will also be looking for staples, such as florals, stripes, checks etc.**

You should always have groupings of these items available, preferably with a subtle new twist.

Don't go overboard with your creativity: would you wear that print you just designed, or buy a product with that pattern on? If not you, who would? Make sure you really think someone will wear or use a product featuring your work. It is not enough to be good on the computer. Buyers won't buy a print because it shows your skills. They will buy it because they think it will help them move merchandise off the shelves, and they have a lot of merchandise to move!



**RULE # 4: If you specialise in vintage swatches, you must also think of trends, and merchandise your collections accordingly**

It often helps to merchandise swatches in groups that can work together, such as designs for a blouse and skirt ensemble, or for different products within an interiors collection, with similar but different prints. Thinking this way will also help you sell more than one print at a time, as you will have already done much of the work that a buyer would have had to do for herself.

### **RULE # 5: Always ask prospective buyers which products they manufacture before you quote your prices**

Several studios that cater primarily to the home furnishings market and exhibit at Printsource work with a dual pricing structure depending on whether the client is from the apparel or home field.

Designs for apparel usually sell at around \$550/\$600, designs for home around \$1000. The difference in price can be justified in a variety of ways, including:

- The size of the artwork
- The fact that the design is or is not in repeat
- The length of the rights granted (i.e. typically, 5 years for apparel and 50 years for home)
- The techniques involved in the design, such as layering, applique, embellishments, laser cuts, and hand painting as opposed to computer generated work.

In most cases, selling a design to a company for use in one market does not prevent the studio from selling the same design to a non-competing company in another market, such as stationery or gift. If you want to know more about this and have not yet taken Module 3 of The Art and Business of Surface Pattern Design 'Monetising your designs', we would recommend it!

### **RULE # 6: Illustrations and graphics are very popular in the children's, young men's and junior markets**

When working in these categories, make sure that your color palette reflects the current sensibility. It helps to look at what consumer magazines in these areas are reporting about, and work with a palette that reflects youthful trends. An "illustrator" approach to prints can also work very well in toddler and layette. Remember, the most important thing is to decide WHO YOUR CUSTOMER IS!

### **RULE # 7: Remember that part of your job is to make your client's job easier**

What can you do to accomplish that? Buyers need positive reinforcement about the choices that they are about to make by buying your work. What added value can you offer them? An insight into a competitor's approach? Expertise in a specific sector? Think of what your strengths are, and focus on them now and then in conversations with your clients.

**NEXT PAGE: HANDLING TRANSACTIONS**

## **HANDLING TRANSACTIONS**

Clients are usually invoiced at the time of purchase. You want to request a business card and attach it to the invoice.

You may also want to have a line on your invoice stating:  
ACCEPTED BY \_\_\_\_\_ and have the buyer sign it.

Clients normally take the artwork with them at that point. Many studio's invoices state "Payment Net 15 days" but most companies have their own payment terms and generally pay within 30 days. Sometimes it takes longer to get paid.

Many studios do not take payment by credit card, but with the new, smart phone based apps such as SQUARE, accepting credit cards has become easier than ever.

If someone doesn't have a business card or they are a small vendor you may ask for a personal check and hold it for 30 days while they process your invoice and send a company check.

You can also ask for a reference from another studio with which the client has a payment track record. If that studio is at Printsource you may go and ask them. Another option is to hold their designs for a day or two until they can FedEx a check.

Nobody pays cash. All designs that are CAD will come with a disk in the format of the program used. Some buyers don't know the difference between Illustrator, Photoshop and other hi-end programs, which can lead to trouble when the designs are put into use. It's up to the buyer to ask questions about the files and not make assumptions.

© Printsource New York, Inc. All rights reserved.

**NEXT PAGE: SAMPLE INVOICE**

**DESIGN STUDIO 123**  
200 West 15th Street  
City, State, Zip Code

INVOICE # 000000

DATE:

Tel. 234-5678  
Email: sales@studio123.com

COMPANY:

DESCRIPTION:

\$

\$

\$

\$

\$

\$

\$

TOTAL DUE \$

**TERMS**

1. Receipt of Artwork. Client acknowledges receipt of artwork specified above.
2. Time for payment. All invoices are payable fifteen (15) days net. The grant of work rights is conditioned on receipt of payment. A 1.5% monthly service charge is payable on unpaid balance after expiration of period of payment.
3. Adjustments to invoice. All sales are final. Client agrees to request any adjustments of accounts, terms or other invoice data within ten (10) days of receipt of invoice. These terms incorporate article 2 of the Uniform Commercial Code.
4. Client acknowledges it is solely responsible for any and all loss, theft or damage to the Artwork while in the possession, custody or control of Client.
5. Arbitration. All disputes in excess of \$1,500.00 arising out of the agreement shall be submitted by binding arbitration before the Joint Ethics Committee or a mutually agreed upon Arbitrator pursuant to the rules then obtaining of the American Arbitration Association. The Arbitrator's award shall be final, and the judgement may be entered upon it in any court having jurisdiction thereof. The client shall pay all arbitration and court costs, reasonable attorney's fees and legal interest on any award or judgement.

SIGNATURE