About the Print and Graphics Scholarship Foundation

The Print and Graphics Scholarship Foundation (PGSF) was founded in 1956. It administers the largest scholarship and fellowship program for students pursuing technical, undergraduate or graduate degrees in Graphic Communications. Each year, PGSF administers over 200 scholarships and fellowships, ranging in value from $1,000 to $5,000. Since its inception, PGSF has helped over 7,000 students. These scholarship and fellowship programs are made possible by donations from individuals and companies involved in Graphic Communications.

For additional information, visit www.pgsf.org.

Your Future in Graphic Communications

Graphic Communications companies feature competitive starting wages and salary packages. Nearly all have comprehensive benefit packages for their employees—97% offer health plans, and a majority offer retirement savings plans. The hourly wage for production personnel averages higher than those in automotive repair, retail, and health aides.

Ongoing demand for printed products and constant advances in technology have stabilized the number and variety of careers available in Graphic Communications. The following examples illustrate just some of the possible career paths in an industry that employs thousands, and touches so many lives daily.

For more detailed information about the following job titles, see the reverse side of this booklet or visit pgsf.org/career.

- Blindery Operator
- Copywriter
- Customer Service Representative
- Department Supervisor
- Educator
- Engineer or Scientist
- Graphic Designer
- Illustrator
- Lean Manufacturing Coordinator
- Mail Data Specialist
- Marketing Specialist
- Material Coordinator
- Photographer/Videographer
- Pre-Press Technician
- Press Operator - Conventional
- Press Operator - Digital
- Print Buyer
- Production Manager
- Project Estimator
- Sales Representative
- Social Media/Web Specialist
- Wide Format Specialist

Educational Opportunities

Over 120 schools offer post-secondary Graphic Communication programs, covering everything from internships to one-, two-, and four-year degrees. Workers can also gain knowledge by joining industry associations and participating in in-house training. Continuing education is important as new processes and methods are introduced.

The Graphic Communications industry needs bright, talented, hard-working people. Customers’ ever-rising expectations and increasingly complex projects require individuals with a variety of skill sets, including verbal and written communication, math skills, computer literacy, critical thinking and problem solving.

Joining the Graphic Communications Field is a wise career choice. Our industry is interested in all individuals who want a solid career path and want to make a good living.

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Graphic Communications is a broad term for all of the industries involved in reproducing an image. The image - be it words, a photograph, or illustration - is reproduced on paper or a variety of other media so that the message has a widespread audience.

Graphic Communications touches our lives daily through advertising, catalogs, product packaging, magazines, and signage. As America’s most geographically dispersed manufacturing industry, it is a major force in the economy of nearly every state, and is projected to remain strong for the foreseeable future.

Jobs in the field are highly skilled, creative, and innovative, and range from prepress through to production. Employees are needed in all areas as current workers retire and new technologies are implemented. Career opportunities include positions with printers, manufacturers of offset presses or digital devices, and companies that serve as vendors to the graphics industry.

Overview

Not every career in Graphic Communications can be listed here. There are simply some skills that are asked about most often. The educational requirements for these careers vary according to the type of work, size of company, and level of responsibility. For more information about any of these careers in Graphic Communications go to pgsf.org/career.

Blindery Operator

The blindery is a blending function, which can include cutting, folding, gathering, collating, trimming, die-cutting and binding. Blindery operators must be knowledgeable about the production process and have a keen eye for detail.

Copywriter

Copywriters create technical, creative, marketing or journalistic copy. A copywriter should have a good command of the language and be concise and accurate.

Customer Service Representative

The customer service representative, or CSR, is a liaison between production and the customer. A CSR should be knowledgeable about the production process and be able to communicate effectively with customers and internal personnel.

Department Supervisor

A department supervisor is responsible for the personnel in that area of the company. They may make recommendations for equipment and personnel and are responsible for the performance of their area. Normally achieving this position will come after serving for some years in a production role. Leadership and communication skills are required.

Educator

An educator presents an accurate picture of the current state of the industry. Teaching positions are available in high schools, community colleges, and universities. Opportunities also exist within the industry itself, such as training programs that are available to clients.

Engineer or Scientist

The engineer designs machinery, and the scientist conducts research in areas such as ink formulation, papermaking, health and safety standards, and quality control. Many of these positions are found within companies that serve as vendors to the graphics industry.

Graphic Designer

The designer establishes the style and layout of the printed or digital piece. Materials are created utilizing computerized design programs. Designers should have an eye for detail, color, composition and typography.

Illustrator

The illustrator creates artwork to complement the written word. Most illustrations are now created using computerized software. An illustrator should have precise artistic talent as well as a knowledge of composition and proper use of the tools of the craft.

Leban Manufacturing Coordinator

Leban Manufacturing Coordinators develop an action plan for Lean implementation and work with management to identify, develop and implement continuous improvement projects. In addition to analytical and cognitive skills, knowledge of Six Sigma, project management and software are required.

Mail Data Specialist

The Mail Data Specialist oversees direct mail project, data cleaning and manipulation, statistical reporting and analysis, and utilizes mail list management software. They are a key to the relationship between clients and effective use of mail resources. Necessary skills include project prioritization, self-motivation, maintaining confidentiality and a high level of accuracy.

Marketing Specialist

Marketing Specialist analyzes how the company can do business more efficiently. They are responsible for promoting the work of the company through multi-channel campaign. Individuals should be creative and stay abreast of current trends and technologies.

Material Coordinator

Material Coordinators are responsible for the logistics of receiving, imaging and distributing materials throughout the production facility. Much of this work is done using mechanical equipment, but some manual labor is required.

Photographer/Videographer

The photographer/videographer produces the images or videos required for a variety of digital and printed materials. They must have proven creative talent, ability to direct a photo shoot and familiarity with current technology.

Pre-press Technician

The Prepress Technician performs a variety of functions that are key to the production and delivery of a printing job. Duties include pre-flighting, scanning, file repair, trapping, imposition, outputting of proofs or proofs, and finishing files for production.

Press Operator - Conventional

The conventional press operator runs multi-million-dollar printing processes, putting “ink on paper”. They must know the mechanics and technical workings of the machine, possess good manual dexterity, and have quick on their feet to produce a top-quality product efficiently.

Press Operator - Digital

Digital inkjet or toner-based digital devices are common in nearly all production facilities today. Operators require technical skill, color knowledge and the ability to move from one job to another. Hardware and software advances are nearly continuous in this area.

Print Buyer

The print buyer contacts various vendors, such as designers, writers, and photographers, to get bids on a specific project. They coordinate production to stay within budget and ensure a quality end product. A print buyer must be organized and detail oriented.

Production Manager

The production manager organizes traffic flow for production, making sure that each piece of material gets where it should go at the proper time and in the proper sequence, from the time the job enters the plant until delivered. Production managers should be well-organized, able to plan ahead and troubleshoot.

Project Estimator

The estimator determines the most efficient method to produce a project in their plant once they receive all specifications from the client or print buyer. They use their analytical skills, production recommendations and predicted project resources are the basis for the firm’s bid on a job. Qualifications for this role include an analytical mind, comfort with computer programs and a good grasp of numbers.

Sales Representative

The sales representative seeks out business for an organization on its behalf. They work with clients to determine their needs, and then create solutions to ensure a smooth sales process, excellent client satisfaction and learning skills, knowledge of products and services and, ultimately to learn new things and resilience are all important characteristics of a professional sales representative.

Social Media/Web Specialist

Primarily is often coordinated with digital channels. The specialist may coordinate web, social media and print resources, manage database files, update websites, write blogs, post to social media, and perform other tasks related to electronic communications.

Wide Format Specialist

The production of wide format, or digital, imaging is offered by many producers throughout the industry. Wide format printing is accomplished with digital inkjet or toner devices and typically finishes to produce banners, flyers, postcards and much more. Wide format specialists must be flexible and creative to handle a large variety of projects.

Past PGSF Scholarship recipients, Featured on the cover:

Hannah Brown: 2013 graduate of Western Michigan University; Digital Lab Coordinator at Schattdecor, St. Louis, MO.

Colby Kibbe: 2012 Master’s degree from Rochester Institute of Technology; Project Manager at EFI, Houston, TX.

Hope Carroll: 2010 graduate of Virginia Tech; Assistant professor at University of Wisconsin-Stout, Menomonie, WI.

Nikita Tuma: 2012 graduate of Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University; Owner of Letuchski Designs, Tallahassee, FL.

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With recent technological advances, products and services have expanded well beyond the core printing model:

- Creative Design
- E-Commerce
- Fulfillment
- Retail Display Design
- Web Design/Hosting
- Mailing

• Commercial Printing
• Digital Imaging
• Magazines/Catalogs
• Financial/Legal Printing
• Books
• Advertising
• Label/Tag Printing
• Screen Printing
• Postage/Labeling
• E-Commerce

[all under NAICS code group 323]