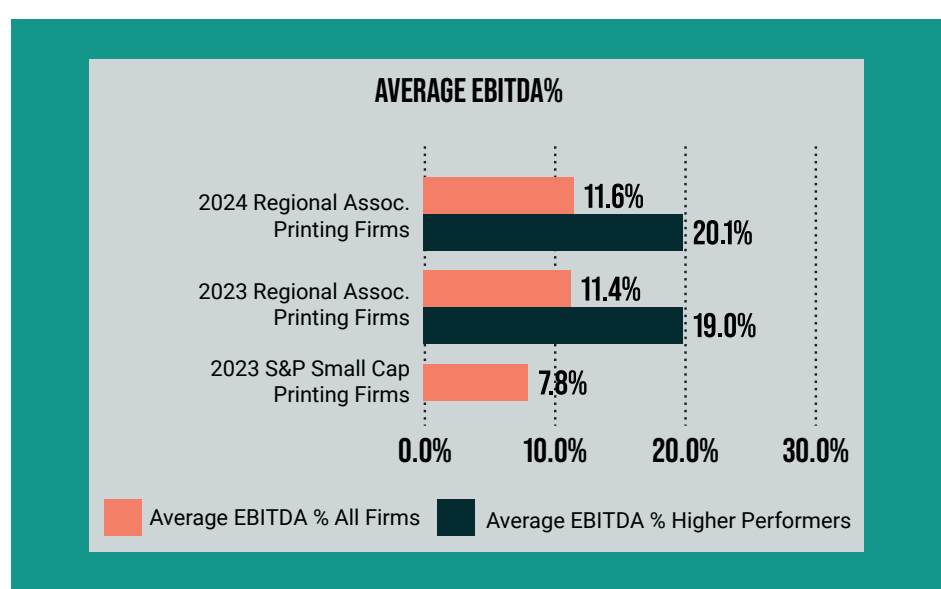


DATA SUGGESTS REGIONAL PRINTING ASSOCIATION MEMBERS OUTPERFORM NON-MEMBERS



Our recent financial benchmarking surveys suggest that regional printing association members produce higher earnings-before-interest-taxes-depreciation-and-amortization (EBITDA) than national industry averages. Indeed, our averages indicate that our respondents – all holding regional association membership – reported 46% higher EBITDA than the 2023 S&P Small Cap average for firms in the commercial printing industry.



However, we acknowledge that our sample size was relatively small. Also, it's possible that higher-performing firms were more likely to complete our survey – or join an association (correlation does not necessarily mean causation). Yet, those performance differences prompted us to look at industry associations from a broad view.

What association benefits help members' success?

We found that there are thousands of industry associations (reflecting many industries) in the United States. Also, a recent study indicated that almost half of the industry associations in the United States reported membership growth. All this raised an interesting question: What unique performance-enhancing benefits are firms receiving from regional printing associations? Why is joining a regional printing association a smart move?

To address this, we explored some contemporary articles, sought thoughts from regional printing association leaders, and applied our experiences. Here are some of the association membership benefits we found:

- **Keeping up with industry trends** – Yes, many printing industry reports are available. However, connecting with other association members and leaders may give you a more accurate and current view of what's happening at firms like yours in your region.
- **Networking** – A crystal ball for diving into the future is your network. Regional members often know what is coming locally well before it appears. Further, by networking with other regional association members, printing firm leaders may develop a source to discuss ideas and problems. Indeed, I have seen effective peer groups developed among regional printing association members. "Networking" is a common term, but we like "relationship building."
- **Provides a voice for printing firms** – If a member is concerned about a regional legislative issue or other issues (such as supply chain problems), they can voice their concerns to association leaders. Their association leaders appreciate being alerted to relevant problems, and association leaders may address an issue of concern. We've seen that occur multiple times over recent years. This is especially relevant to regional printing associations.
- **Regional legislative updates** – Related to the point just above, regional printing associations can keep their members updated about potential legislative changes that could affect member firms regionally, but not nationally. This may help members prepare for coming changes before those changes are dropped in their lap.
- **Training opportunities** – Training employees is a challenge, especially for

small businesses with limited resources. Regional printing associations provide employee training material and programs. Regional travel and registration costs are often lower than for national training programs. Further, developing employees by connecting them to regional association training programs conveys the value a firm leader has in teammates. This enhances retention and positions the company to compete in the labor market for new employees.

- **Leadership and strategic knowledge** – I have spoken at regional printing association events and seen multiple speakers provide printing firm leaders with relevant, helpful and actionable knowledge.
- **An ongoing expansion of knowledge** – I receive multiple regional printing associations' e-newsletters and journals. Those communication channels provide members with knowledge relevant to the industry as a whole and, additionally, region-specific knowledge.
- **Group buying options** – Multiple regional printing associations provide members with group buying options. Multiple company involvement reduces prices. This may include insurance, freight, health insurance, credit cards, 401k programs and others.
- **Business acquisition, merger or selling options** – If you are considering one of those options, regional association leaders may connect you with other companies that might fit what you're seeking.
- **Enhanced supplier relationships** – At regional association events, I have seen leaders of a printing firm and one of their suppliers step aside and engage in conversations that appear more profound than they have in busy business environments. These conversations may develop more strategic alignment between a printing firm and its supplier.
- **Strategic partners** – Firms may find potential strategic partners through regional association membership and networking. For instance, consider a printing company that has an opportunity to publish perfect bound books for a potential customer, but they don't have the needed bindery equipment. And the potential revenue from those books does not justify acquiring that bindery equipment. Through engagement with a regional association, that company might identify a potential strategic partner to work with in landing that business...working together. Physical proximity enhances the partnership's profitability.

Yes, there's a long list of potential benefits from regional printing association membership. Multiple benefits mentioned above directly connect to "regional" printing associations with knowledge of the local industry players. I have seen and experienced these benefits for more than four decades. However, to leverage the potential benefits, you must do more than join the association – we learn others' skills and character by connecting with them, not merely sharing a cup of coffee – though that may be a good start.

Members who join a regional association AND participate in its offerings and activities are better positioned to compete than those who fly solo. Engage in association activities to get all you can from your regional association membership. Our findings suggest regional printing association members are nearly twice as strong as commercial printing firms in the S&P Small Cap. For the above and many more reasons, YES, regional printing association membership is a SMART move!

YES, REGIONAL PRINTING ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP IS A SMART MOVE!

Source: Dr. Ralph Williams Jr., Associate Professor of Management and Dr. Greg Nagel, Professor of Finance, Jones College of Business, Middle Tennessee State University. If you have questions or comments, please email Ralph at ralph.williams@mtsu.edu.

FUTURE WORKFORCE

ARIZONA COLLEGE STUDENTS GET IMMERSSED IN PRINT DURING SO CAL VISIT

On Thursday, October 17, seven students and three teachers from Scottsdale Community College's Visual Communications Program (including Peggy Deal, the Program Director) drove to Los Angeles for an incredible field trip that likely changed the course of many of these students' careers. Paid for by the Arizona branch of the R.A.I.S.E. Foundation, a non-profit dedicated to fostering graphic communication careers in educational institutions, and hosted by Cathy Skoglund, PIA's Director of Member Services for Southwest States, the whirlwind three-day trip exposed the students to a broad swath of the graphic communications industry.



Day one began at PIA's offices

The group arrived at PIA shortly after the Americas Print Awards live zoom ended. After seeing the set and discussing video technology with PIA's videographer, they were taken to a room in which winning entries from the past few years were on display. "They really enjoyed examining and 'playing with' all of these amazing print pieces," Cathy shares.

Next stop: The International Printing Museum

Later that afternoon the group arrived at the International Printing Museum in Carson. Mark Barbour, the Museum's Executive Director, gave them a personal two-and-a-half-hour tour of the museum's extensive collection of antique printing machinery and graphic arts equipment. "Between the presses, the typesetting equipment, the book arts displays and everything else that's packed into that incredible museum, the students (and teachers!) were in high heaven." Cathy reports.

Day two was all about plant tours

Friday morning began at Inventive Label in Placentia, where the owner, Kyle Putzier, gave the group a personal tour. The students learned all about flexo

and label printing, and saw a wide variety of complex techniques that they had not seen before.

After that they headed to Inland Group in Anaheim, where the owners, Kathy and Steve Urban, treated the group to lunch and a facility tour. "The students got a close look at Inland Group's pristine shop," says Cathy, "including their offset, digital and large format presses. Plus, Kathy and Steve generously made an acrylic desk name holder for each of them."

The final plant tour of the day took place at Advantage ColorGraphics' 350,000 square foot facility in Anaheim, where much time was spent with their Landa press. This was a real highlight, as the original impetus for the trip had been some of the students' honors projects on Landa.

"By coincidence," Cathy relates, "the Landa guy was there, and we got to walk inside the press!" In addition to learning about Landa Nanography, the group also saw and learned about everything from offset and web to envelope printing and converting, and explored Advantage ColorGraphics' extensive paper room.

Continued on back.

FUTURE WORKFORCE

Continued from front.

To finish out the day Cathy took the teachers to dinner while the students explored the shops and restaurants at Downtown Disney.

Day three featured visits to two events

It was a busy weekend in the L.A. print community. On Saturday morning the group went back to Advantage ColorGraphics for PIA's annual Surplus Paper Drive. They were able to reserve a few pallets of paper and some other supplies for the school; Mark Barbour offered to deliver these to Scottsdale on his next trip to the area with the Museum on Wheels.

Then they returned to the International Printing Museum, where the annual LA Printers Fair was in full swing. "It was incredible!" Cathy exclaims, "And the students absolutely loved it. They had demos going on all their historic equipment, there were numerous booths, they got to make personalized lead slugs, and much more."

Trips like this expose students to the wonders of print

Many students enroll in programs like Scottsdale Community College's Visual Communications Program thinking they want to be graphic designers. But if we open our facility doors and take the time to

educate them about what we do, a whole world of career opportunities opens up to them.

As one student put it in a thank you card that she sent to Cathy, "My life is changed by everything I got to see."



HUMAN RESOURCES



In the two years since ChatGPT was first released, generative artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots such as ChatGPT have had a profound impact on many fields. What many PIA members might not realize is that "interviewing for a job" is on this list.

Your job applicant may be using AI to:

- **Apply for the job.** If you request a cover note as part of the application process, assume your applicants did not write these themselves.
- **Prepare for the interview.** Yes, job candidates have always used lists of common interview questions as part of their preparation process. What's different now is that they can also use AI to prepare a list of ideal answers to these questions – customized based on their level of experience, the industry and job, etc. Then it's simply a matter of memorizing and practicing these ideal answers.
- **Answer questions during the interview.** If you offer virtual interviews, there's a good chance that ChatGPT is sitting in on the interview, too.

"We actually caught an interviewee doing this," says Kristy Villanueva, PIA's Director of Member Services for Southern California. "An image of the candidate's screen was reflected in their eyeglasses. We were able to see that they had

ChatGPT on while we were asking them questions, and they were simply reading ChatGPT's answers!"

From the employer's standpoint, the problem is that this can defeat the entire point of the interview. When you interview a job applicant, your goal is to assess their skills, experience, personality, etc., to determine if they're a good fit for the job. If all you're hearing is artificial, AI-generated answers, you're basing your hiring decision on a mirage. What you see is not what you're going to get.

How you can overcome this issue

Luckily, there are ways that you can get past this problem and truly get to know your job applicants. Here's what we recommend:

- **Hold all interviews in person.** This keeps AI out of the room!
- **Ask questions that speak to their personal experiences.** The old standard interview questions, such as "Where do you see yourself in five years?" or "Why do you think you are a good candidate for this position?" no longer work. Instead, focus on questions that AI cannot answer. For example:
 - Tell me about a time when you were required

to meet the needs of another person.

- Describe your preferred approach to working with others.
- Share an example of how you have performed under pressure.
- Describe a system you have used to organize your work.
- Tell me about a time when you were required to lead a team or project.

An important thing to note here is that these types of questions are all very open-ended, and do not lead the interviewee to any particular answer. For instance, if you ask about a time they led a team or project, you're not saying what type of team or project. It's very broad, so you are able to see how they perceive that question and what answer they give.

- **Use ChatGPT yourself.** If you really want to use some of the "old standard" interview questions, pretend you're a job candidate and ask ChatGPT to prepare some ideal answers based on the position, our industry and the level of experience the job requires. Then see how closely your actual candidates' answers match what your new buddy ChatGPT suggested.
- **Use a behavioral assessment such as the Predictive Index.** At PIA we have all job candidates take this surprisingly accurate two-question assessment before we bring them in for an interview. We've found that the PI Behavioral Assessment improves our hiring process by helping us to understand the candidate's workplace behavioral styles. Discounts are available for PIA members.

Need help with all of this? Kristy would be happy to share some additional creative interview questions with you, as well as provide more information about the PI Behavioral Assessment. You can reach her at kristy@piasc.org or 323.728.9500 ext. 215.

MEMBER BENEFITS

THIS MONTH'S FEATURED BENEFIT: MANUALS & WRITTEN PROGRAMS

There's no reason for you to start from scratch when you need a standard item that every other printer needs, too. That's why PIA provides an array of time-saving sample manuals and written safety programs, available for download when you login to the www.piasc.org website (you can create an account using your PIA membership number). Options include a Sample Employee Handbook, Safety Toed Shoes Policy, Safety Checklist, Injury & Illness Prevention Program, Forklift Regulations and more.



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EVENTS CALENDAR

For full list of events, please visit www.piasc.org/events

2025 LABOR LAW UPDATES
Thursday January 16, 2025
11:00AM - 12:00PM PDT
bit.ly/2025laborlaw

PAPER MARBLING WORKSHOP
January 18 or 19, 2025
9:00AM - 3:00PM
International Printing Museum, Carson, CA
www.pirtnuseum.org/bookarts

OSTS FREE WEBINAR:
Properly Managing a Cal OSHA Investigation
January 20, 2025
10:00AM - 11:00AM
bit.ly/OSTS-webinar

PRINT EXCELLENCE AWARDS
Call for Entries Deadline
Friday, February 21, 2025
www.piasc.org/printexcellence/

SPOTLIGHT EVENT

EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR NOMINATION DEADLINE
Friday, January 31, 2025
Download form from "Member Resources" section at www.piasc.org

Each year the PIA Executive of the Year award honors an individual for being a long-term major contributor to the graphic arts industry in the 13 Western states that PIA serves. Know someone who fits the bill? Nominate them today!

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