

Frick Builds Empires Via M&A, Operations



RAYMOND A. FRICK JR., a 1999 PRINTING IMPRESSIONS/RIT Printing Industry Hall of Fame inductee, has made a name for himself in, among other areas, mergers and acquisitions and direct mail.

EVERY TIME there was an executive meeting at Lehigh Press and the topic of direct mail came up, Ray Frick's name invariably would follow.

And why not? Frick had constructed a direct mail empire at two very high-profile commercial printing giants, Banta and Quebecor, taking both companies to the top spot in the market. Bill Love, chief financial officer at Lehigh Press, remembers Frick's name being bandied about during those executive meetings, and the theme of the discussions wasn't how to best the man or imitate him. Lehigh Press wanted Frick, and in May of 1998, they got their man.

"To me, it was a real coup by John D. DePaul [Lehigh owner] to get Ray," Love says of Frick, a 1999 PRINTING IMPRESSIONS/RIT Printing Industry Hall of Fame inductee. "If you had sat down

and wrote a resume for what we needed at Lehigh, he fits the description perfectly. He was the No. 1 guy in the direct mail marketplace. But we got a lot more than that. We got a guy who is a leader."

In Frick's first 12 months at the helm as president and CEO of Lehigh Press, direct mail sales increased 20 percent. But beyond dollar figures and percentages, he has developed a professional niche that crosses into a multitude of industry segments, including consolidation and the art/science of sifting through lists of prospective partners and finding those parties whose characteristics are favorable to acquisition.

During his previous four years with Quebecor as COO and president of commercial, book and new markets, Frick spearheaded the deals that landed Eagle, Sayres Communications, Petty Printing and American Signature. He also played a role in a small technical documentation acquisition in Germany.

Frick was heavily recruited by Lehigh Press and found something very familiar about the independent printer—a change of pace from his recent positions with major national corporations.

"Lehigh was kind of a homecoming," Frick says. "I had known and admired both the company [and DePaul] for 25

years. I'm having a particularly rewarding career, and I feel fortunate to have been affiliated with great companies. Lehigh is a very special and rewarding experience at this point in my career."

Raymond A. Frick Jr.'s career began in 1968, shortly after graduating from the University of Maryland with a master's degree in international relations. He joined DuPont in 1968 as an industrial marketing research specialist and later moved to sales, a position he held until 1975.

His next tour of duty was a three-plus year stint with the R.R. Donnelley & Sons book group, where he also worked in sales. He remained there until 1978, when he joined the cast of Brookshore.

That began a 10-year journey that would see him migrate from vice president of sales and marketing, to executive vice president and, finally, president. He played a vital role in the installation of a number of webs with both sophisticated in-line finishing systems and sheeters, and the development of high-resolution ink-jet imaging on-press. He was also a forerunner with the installation of a 10-unit full-size double web press with a highly advanced double finishing line. It was at Brookshore that Frick received a taste of the soon-

to-be growing industry trend of merger and acquisition, as Banta assumed the reins of Brookshore.

Building a Reputation

Frick remained at Banta in the role of direct marketing group president until 1994, when his whirlwind career dropped him off on the steps of another heavy hitter—Quebecor. That set the stage for his current vocation with Lehigh.

"I've never sought a position since my first entry-level job at DuPont. I've just been extremely fortunate to be repeatedly recruited," Frick notes. "During the Banta years, as president of the direct marketing group, that was a business segment leader role. I was occupied principally with operations, building the direct marketing group."

Frick completed the Danbury Printing acquisition while still at Banta in March 1994. Quebecor actively and aggressively recruited him over a period of time, and the move took place in late 1994.

"This was a considerably broader role," Frick notes. "I had been responsible for just under \$200 million in direct marketing sales [at the time of his departure]. The Quebecor/COO position grew into a billion dollars of responsibility—a broader

bandwidth position with intensive transaction experience in the fast-paced realm of acquisitions."

By the end of his tenure with Quebecor, he had become responsible for 25 facilities, 7,000 employees, and a billion dollars in sales and profit/loss responsibility.

Frick took an immediate shine to Lehigh Press, which is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, and felt it was a natural career progression. He is particularly excited about the company's four-pronged growth platform that features direct marketing

listen to him."

"Ray puts in long days; crams three days of travel into one. I've been very fortunate in my career to have been associated with Ray. My success is definitely connected to him."

Bob Feige, director of production for the National Geographic Society, has dealt with Frick for 20 years and sees a customer-oriented executive whose expertise, knowledge and industry vision are well respected.

"Ray gets involved with his business; he doesn't sit up in his ivory tower," Feige

and service intimacy. We hope, as a private company, our response to the uniqueness of individual customers is a little more personal."

A part of the reason Frick has remained in commercial printing for more than 30 years is the industry's ability to change, evolve and reinvent itself, yet in many ways retain a grass-roots, old-school image.

Unique Industry

"I find this industry unendingly exciting," he says. "It's large, diverse, fragmented, always evolving and ever

A member of the Web Offset Association's board of directors, he has spoken to PIA groups on various topics such as direct mail printing and in-line finishing.

Frick finds it advantageous to travel the globe in search of how to build the better mousetrap. He keeps tabs on technological advances in Europe and Asia with visits to overseas print shops. He finds the idea sharing to be much more free-flowing than domestically, for competitive reasons.

Next year, Frick will attend his fifth consecutive DRUPA exposition. He always finds the international experience to be a rewarding one on many levels.

"Invariably, I come away with a renewed sense of focus, fresh ideas and questions about the realm of the possible in terms of on-press print production, as well as an array of value-added services, both in prepress and finishing-wise," Frick points out.

Frick already has the future mapped out for Lehigh Press, augmented by a five-year strategic plan that includes both focusing on organic development and business acquisitions. The theme is recurring: the renewal and revitalization of the company. One goal is to remain private and independent, and provide a choice for the customer.

"At this stage of my career, I am occupied with the desire to make contributions by focusing on attracting great people to our company and to the industry, in general. It's important for the senior figures of the industry to be active in providing opportunities for the next generation of human resources."

"Commercial printing is more than just a business—it's an art, a craft, a science and a technology. Much of our \$160 billion industry remains custom, specialty, job shop, non-contract, highly transactional, very relational, fragile and even perishable. Ours is a unique industry because of these dynamics."



—**RAYMOND A. FRICK JR.**
CEO & PRESIDENT, THE LEHIGH PRESS

materials, book components, digital prepress and a facility in Puerto Rico for pharmaceutical printing.

Those who have worked closely with Frick over the years underscore the leadership and team-building value he brings to the company. Paul Palmer, Executive V.P. of Lehigh Direct (the direct mail division of the company) has witnessed Frick in action while working with him during stints at Banta and Quebecor, as well.

Consistent Winner

"Ray is a consistent winner. I've seen him build companies into successful, well-oiled machines," Palmer notes. "His communication skills are impressive, and he knows how to motivate people. You can't help but feel better after you

remarks. "He makes sure his business functions like a well-oiled machine."

Having served roughly one-third of his career with privately held companies and two-thirds with publicly traded corporations, Frick has a unique vantage point when it comes to recognizing the similarities and differences in which they conduct business.

"With giant, public companies, it's increasingly clear that they're managing business to optimize earning per share," he says. "This is the inevitable imperative of the ownership of public printing companies by institutional investors and private investors. Privately held, middle-market providers like Lehigh endeavor to balance economic results with a high degree of customer flexibility

changing. It's more than just a business--the printing industry is an art, a craft, a science and a technology. Much of our \$160 billion industry remains custom, specialty, job shop, non-contract, highly transactional, very relational, fragile and even perishable. Ours is a genuinely unique industry because of these dynamics."

But, it is not an industry without flaws. Frick is concerned that, while the fiscal parameters of consolidation have been largely mastered, the delicate and more complicated process of effective integration has not been fully realized. It is the human element in consolidation that compels Frick to speak on the topic at various industry functions, including the annual Merger & Acquisition Conference this past April.

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