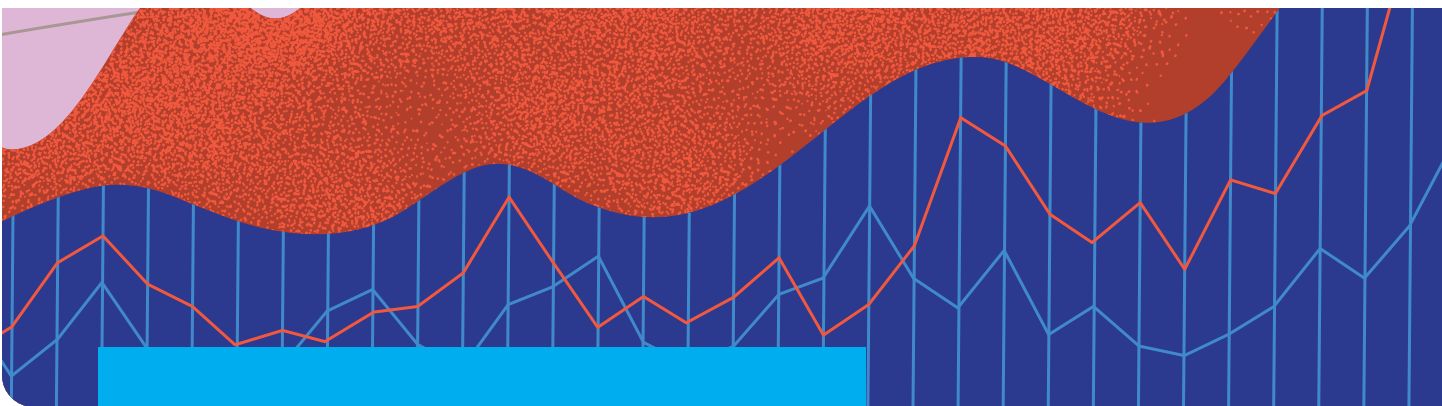


# Strategies for Driving Wide-Format Growth

 **NAPCO**RESEARCH



**Wide-format**  
Impressions

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# Business Development Strategies

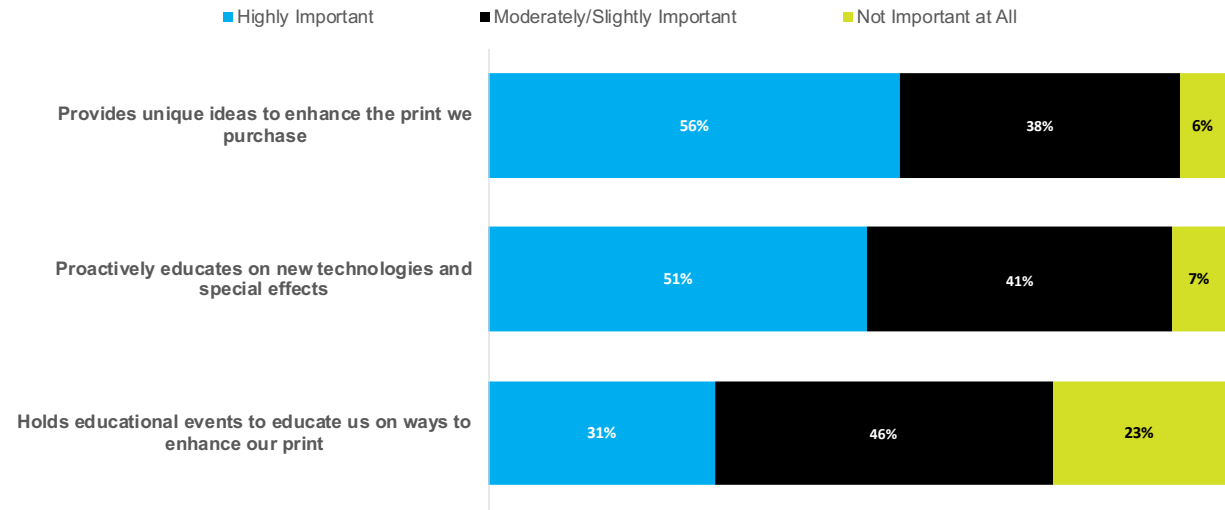
## Drive Wide-format Growth and Profitability

Business development activities are essential for all businesses, as they attract sales prospects, nurture existing customer relationships, and position organizations as thought leaders. In the simplest terms, business development can be summarized as the ideas, initiatives, and activities aimed at improving an organization and its brand perception.

Wide-format sign and display graphic providers are pursuing many business development paths to grow sales, improve profitability, expand business operations, form partnerships, and enhance market positioning. Ongoing NAPCO Research surveys and reports identify these efforts as an essential component for building a successful sign and display graphic operation.

Buyers of sign and display graphics often select providers based on business development initiatives. According to a NAPCO Research survey of marketers that influence or purchase sign and display graphics, more than half select providers based on their ability to provide customer education and to offer unique ideas to enhance print (Figure 1). A cornerstone of business development programs is customer outreach and education.

**Figure 1: Customers Value Business Development Efforts**



Q. How important are the following attributes when it comes to selecting your printing providers?  
 n=492 Brand owners/marketers that purchase or influence sign & display graphics  
 Source: Adding Value to Digital Printing, NAPCO Research 2020



Successful wide-format print providers invest time and resources in their business development efforts. According to NAPCO Research’s study [Strategies and Tactics Powering Wide-format Sales](#), firms reporting double-digit sales have marketing and business development strategies in place that define goals, incorporate customer demands in marketing messaging, build customer relationships, educate customers, and position their organizations as “knowledgeable industry leaders.”



The research also finds that sales leaders actively educate customers and prospects on how they will benefit from their capabilities. They use samples, case studies, and events to network, strengthen relationships, and demonstrate how their capabilities will meet buyers' ever-changing visual communication needs.

## POWERING BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT WITH CONTENT

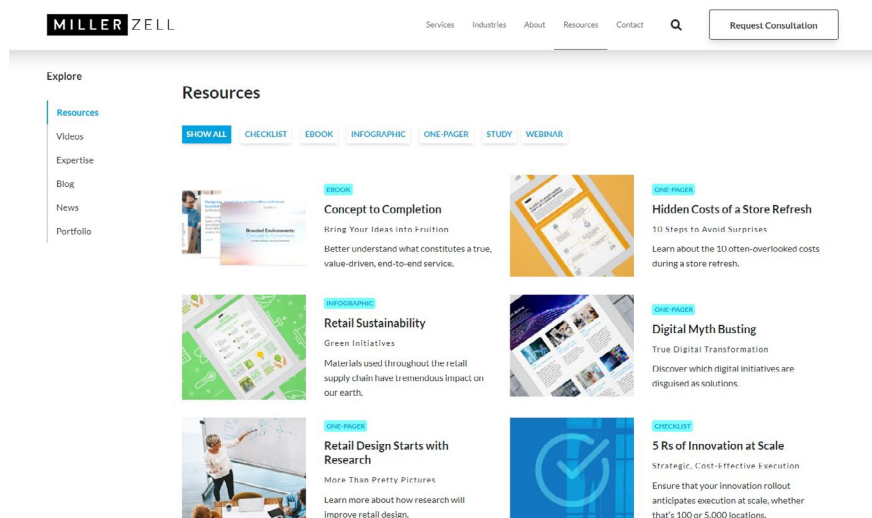
A successful method used by organizations to support business development efforts is creating and sharing information customers and prospects value. Wide-format providers have embraced this practice as a way to establish market credibility, elevate brand awareness, and demonstrate expertise.

According to *Strategies and Tactics Powering Wide-format Sales*, sales growth leaders invest in a variety of customer facing content that combines digital, print, and social media. When asked how they promote and attract customers, the top methods among companies that reported double-digit annual sales growth included websites (87%), social media (76%), and email marketing (58%). Other essential promotional and business development tactics are internet advertising (47%), SEO (42%), sponsorships (39%), signage (34%), and direct mail (34%).

Attracting customers requires showcasing and promoting expertise through a variety of channels. The first thing most prospective customers do when researching a provider is visit their website or social media pages to learn more.

Wide-format sign and display graphic providers' websites and social media pages offer many examples of how companies are educating customers and prospects on opportunities. For example, [Miller Zell's](#) website features many resources and tools to support customers' and prospects' use of sign and display graphics to create engaging customer experiences (Figure 2). The Atlanta-based company develops and implements end-to-end retail solutions — design, printing, installation, strategy, store design — and its website reflects that expertise.

**Figure 2: Miller Zell's Website Features Many Resources and Tools to Support Customers and Prospects**

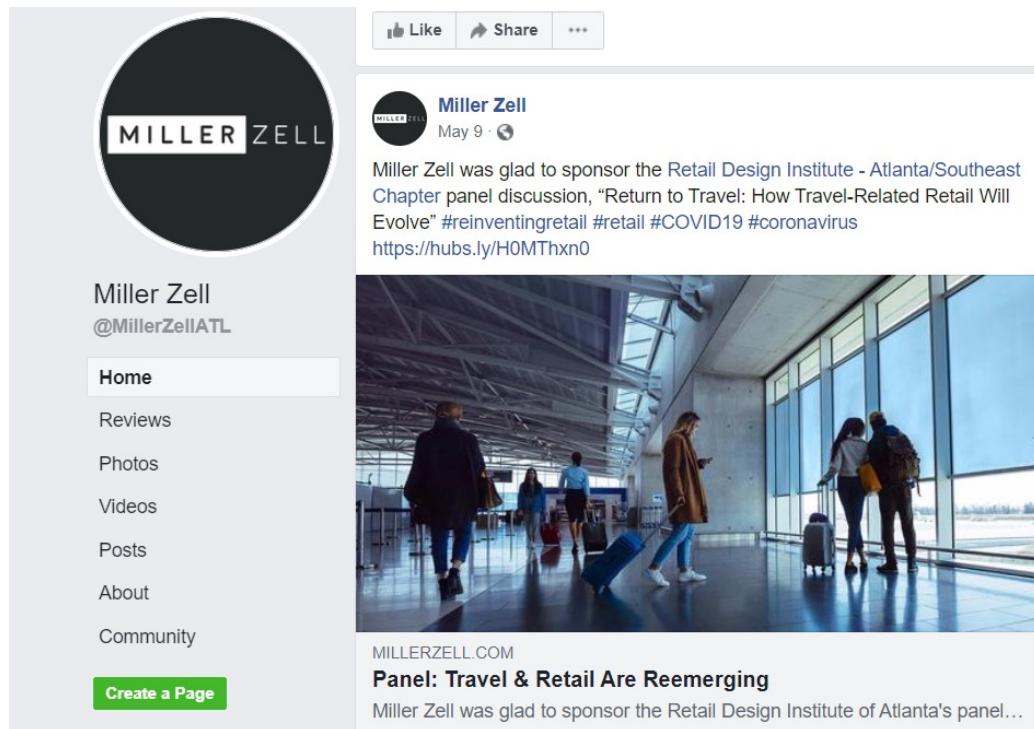


Credit: Miller Zell



Social media pages of sign and display graphic providers also feature business development content and events. Cincinnati-based KDM P.O.P. Solutions Group's Facebook feed features print tips, while Miller Zell's feed reports on events it sponsored (Figure 3).

### Figure 3: Miller Zell's Facebook Feed Reports on Events It Has Sponsored.



Credit: Miller Zell



## CLIENT EDUCATION IS A WIN-WIN

Another core business development tool is hosting customer educational events. Buyers of sign and display graphics participating in a 2020 NAPCO Research survey placed a high value on print process education. When asked what print production areas they want to learn more about, survey respondents' top choices were digital printing technology (70%) and improving color quality and consistency (66%). Other areas of interest include preparing print job files (58%), substrates (58%), print enhancements/embellishments (52%), and combining print with other media (42%). Educating customers on these key production areas can enhance client relationships, while increasing print providers' production efficiency and operational productivity.

## TARGETING THE RIGHT AUDIENCES

A key success factor in any business development effort is targeting and attracting the best customer prospects, decisions makers, and influencers. According to a NAPCO Research survey of more than 1,000 marketers, the primary decision maker for purchasing sign and display graphics are marketing staff (45%), followed by company executives and/or owners (37%). This survey finding highlights the importance of ongoing outreach and communication with these groups.

Marketing staff that purchase sign and display graphics have many job titles. Here is a list of key titles to keep in mind when targeting this audience for marketing, business development, and communication campaigns:

- Merchandisers
- Visual Merchandisers
- Designers
- Purchasing Director
- Purchasing Manager
- Business Manager
- Marketing Director
- Marketing Coordinator
- Marketing Manager
- Store Manager
- Chief Marketing Officer
- Customer Relationship/Loyalty Manager
- Communications Director

# REFERRALS ARE KEY TO BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

According to a NAPCO Research survey of marketers that influence or purchase sign and display graphics, the top reasons they accept sales calls with new providers are referrals from an acquaintance, business associate, or co-worker (Figure 4). Asking satisfied customers for referrals to other companies or introductions to other units in their organization that use print can also open up sales opportunities.

**Figure 4: Reasons for Accepting Sales Meetings**



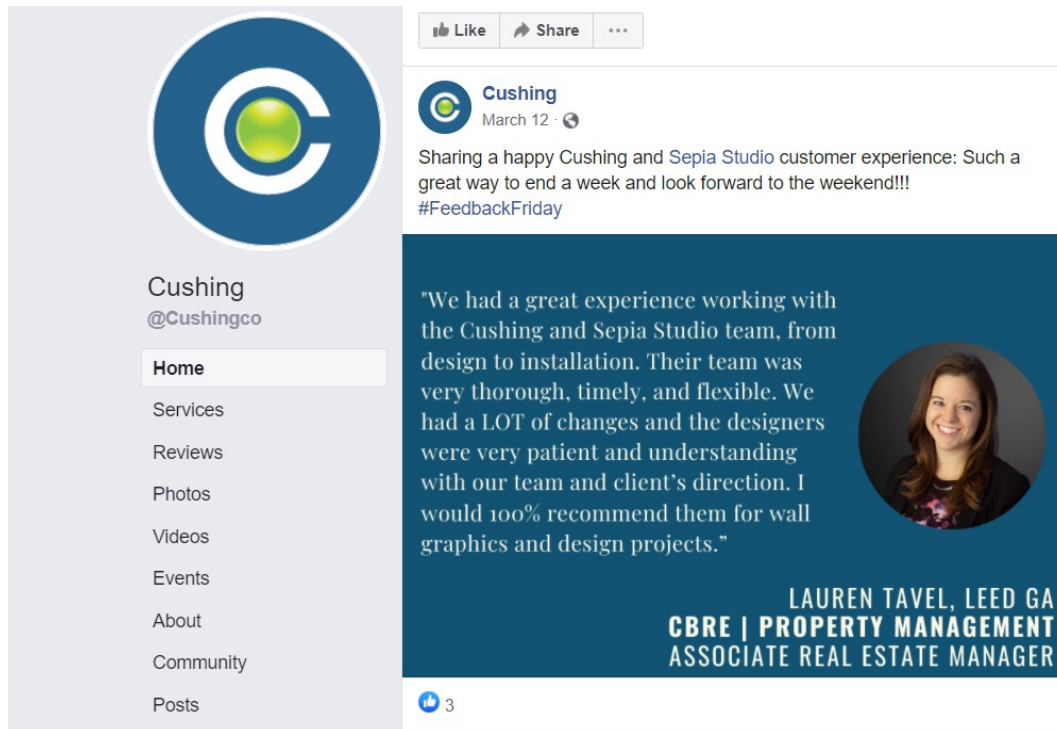
*Q. What would motivate you to accept a meeting with a print services provider you had not previously done business with?*  
*n=1,185 Marketers that influence sign and graphics purchasing*  
*Source NAPCO Research 2019*



Referrals were the most common source of sales leads for providers with double-digital sales gains participating in Strategies and Tactics Powering Wide-format Sales. Referrals are effective because they help bridge the trust gap between an organization and a referred prospect. Asking for a referral can be one of the simplest ways to generate new business. Usually, the best sources for referrals are existing customers, especially after a job well done. Social media is another way to get referrals, and more than three-quarters of respondents reporting double-digit sales growth use social media to attract customers.

Another effective type of referral is customer testimonials. The goal of customer testimonials is to resolve any prospective customers doubts. Good testimonials are authentic and relatable. Figure 5 is an example of customer testimonial shared online by Cushing & Co., a Chicago-based printing company that specializes in wide-format display graphics. The company recently launched an in-house graphic design service, and the testimonial focuses on that new service.

**Figure 5: An Example of a Customer Testimonial Shared Online by Cushing & Co.**



Credit: Cushing & Co.



## REIMAGINING PRODUCT AND SERVICE OFFERINGS

Business development also focuses on developing new products/services and entering new markets. The recent COVID-19 economic shutdown demonstrated the importance of customer and product diversification, as many key industries that use sign and display graphics — including events, retail, and restaurants — put their businesses on hold and reduced print spending.

During the pandemic, many sign and display graphic providers expanded product offerings to including social distancing graphics, face masks, personal protective equipment, safety shields, printed cardboard cutouts of people to place in the stands of sporting events, and other print products filling new demands. Some companies even added a COVID-19 product tab to their websites.

A key challenge when entering new markets or expanding services is capturing the sales required to justify the necessary investment in resources and expertise. Before investing in technology and staff to expand into new markets, some providers partner with other companies to outsource what they can't do internally. This business development strategy enables sign and display graphic providers to meet customer needs, while gaining valuable insight into what's required and the real opportunity in offering the new service.

The bottom line: there are many business development opportunities for wide-format sign and display graphic providers to pursue. Those providers investing resources in business development efforts are reaping the benefits of enhanced market awareness, better sales results, more sales conversations, customer loyalty, productivity improvements, and profitability.



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**RICOH**

**Social Solutions**

**synchrony FINANCIAL**

**XEIKON**

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# WHO WE ARE

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## **Wide-format** Impressions

*Wide-format Impressions* serves as a resource for senior-level executives, business owners, and managers of printing and signage companies providing wide-format services. It covers industry trends, emerging technologies, and news in the visual communications industry.

## **NAPCORESEARCH**

NAPCO Research crafts custom data-centric solutions that leverage our highly engaged audiences across the markets in which we operate, our industry subject matter experts and in-house research expertise. We partner with our clients to identify their unique business problem and create solutions that enable deeply informed decision-making.

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Contact [research@napco.com](mailto:research@napco.com) to talk with our analysts to find out how we can help you with your research needs.