



PGSF Career Guide

Career Opportunities in Print & Graphic Communications

Where creativity, technology,
and innovation intersect to offer
endless career opportunities.

Summer 2025



**Print and Graphics
Scholarship
Foundation**

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Print is a Big Business... and Growing!

DID YOU KNOW there are more print-related businesses in the U.S. than McDonald's AND Subway COMBINED? Print-related companies employ more than 800,000 Americans. The global print market is near \$1 trillion in annual production! **WOW!**



Where Creativity Meets Innovation

Join the Fast-Growing World of Printing and Graphic Communications!

The printing and graphic communications industry is an exciting and dynamic field, offering a world of opportunity for students looking to start a rewarding career.

With over 431,000 professionals currently employed in the U.S. alone, the industry is thriving and rapidly evolving. As technology continues to transform the way we produce and interact with printed materials, there is an increasing demand for skilled individuals who can blend creativity with technical expertise.

Whether it's in graphic design, production, marketing, or technology innovation, the printing and graphic communications industry provides a diverse range of career paths with endless potential.

For students and their families, entering this field means more than just a job—it's the start of a long, fulfilling career with plenty of room to grow. With advancements in digital printing, 3D printing, and sustainable practices, the industry is on an upward trajectory.

New professionals can expect to thrive in a field that offers stability, growth, and the opportunity to make a tangible impact. From hands-on roles to high-level strategic positions, the printing and graphic communications industry is where creativity meets innovation, offering countless opportunities for success and long-term career fulfillment.



The most impactful piece of knowledge I have gained over the past 18 months of working as a graphic designer is that you will never stop learning new things in the industry. Having the mindset that there is always something to improve on helped me constantly keep on top of new trends, changing technology, and taking critique on my work. The learning doesn't stop after you graduate, so be prepared to continue the learning process.

Miriam Wagner

2023 Graduate, PGSF
Scholarship Recipient

A Career in Print and Graphic Communications Is More Than You Know

Print and graphic communications touch nearly every part of our daily lives.

Understanding the role print manufacturing plays is the first step in seeing how this industry can help you reach your career goals.

Print manufacturing is a broad and thriving field filled with opportunity. It goes far beyond graphic designers, creatives, or pressroom technicians. Print helps brands connect with their audiences, share the latest trends, and deliver critical information—even life-saving messages.

Print and graphic communications are all around us—in every package you open, every store you visit, every classroom you learn in... even on every M&M you eat!

Just open your eyes. Take it all in!



Thoughtful

Print and Graphic Communications are:

Colorful



Digital



Creative



Scientific



Data Intensive



Sustainable



Mathematical



Print on the Brain!

Research shows that interacting with print and paper affects our brains differently than using digital devices. Print engages multiple senses, which encourages longer interaction and creates stronger emotional responses and lasting memories. Physical advertising, in particular, activates areas of the brain linked to value and desire, making it a powerful tool for communication and influence.

Career Opportunities

The following pages highlight a variety of career pathways and salary ranges available in the graphic and print communications field. Categories include Creative, Technical, Mechanical, Administrative as well as Business & Marketing positions. Each position listed includes salary information—some as annual figures, others as hourly rates, depending on the nature of the job. Pay and benefits can vary based on your location, the size and type of company, and your level of experience.

As technology evolves, so do the opportunities within organizations that produce visual media. Many skills and interests in this field often overlap in a single role or open doors to new career paths. The potential for growth, creativity, and income continues to grow. With these skills, you can create a wide range of products—signage, posters, t-shirts, banners, books, brochures, trading cards, packaging, stickers, mugs, and much more!



Creative

Prepress/Desktop Technician

Prepress technicians prepare digital files by retrieving graphics and text, adjusting them for print reproduction, gathering client approvals and ensuring they meet printing specifications. They may also create plates and run digital presses.

Average \$25/hr

Range \$13-\$53/hr

Prepress Digital/Art Director/Designer

Responsible for the overall visual style and images for a project. Includes creating visual concepts, graphic design and preparation of digital files for printing. Can include photography, illustration and color management.

Average \$28/hr

Hourly \$10-\$89/hr

Prepress Manager

The Prepress Manager ensures the graphics and design of a project are prepared to specification and formatted correctly for output.

Average \$76,490

Range \$35,986-\$138,375

Graphic Designer

Combining art and technology, working with images, graphics, text and color, designers create visual concepts and problem solve to communicate ideas that inform, inspire and captivate consumers.

Average \$60,000

Range \$40,000-\$80,000

Illustrator

An illustrator creates drawings for physical and digital products, used in publications, greeting cards, calendars, packaging, and digital illustrations.

Average \$60,000

Range \$40,000-\$80,000

Art Director

Responsible for the visual styling and communication of all promotional materials, art directors coordinate and collaborate with a team of creatives, often across multiple areas, to strategize, manage, meet with the clients through initial concepts, designs, and final project deliverables.

Average \$100,000

Range \$67,000-\$130,000



I think that current students should know that no matter what part of the industry you go into, there are people who want to help you succeed. It will take some time to get used to, but the print and prepress people really value being able to pass knowledge around and network. Using that to your advantage is a great way to help grow your career and self confidence in a new role.

Megan Brown

2023 Graduate, PGSF Scholarship Recipient

Technical

Mail Specialist

Responsible for the preparation and processing of direct mail projects. Manages quality and ensures compliance with postal regulations. They operate mailing equipment, manage and process client data, and may also be involved in printing and finishing tasks related to mail pieces.

Average \$27/hr

Range \$14-\$40/hr

Plant Manager

Involved in job production from files to delivery of finished product. Customer interaction and knowledge of production processes required.

Average \$123,268

Range \$46,125-\$246,000

Scheduler, Production Planner, Traffic Manager

Understanding and use of software for scheduling and job tracking. Works with all production managers, customer service and sales.

Average \$68,831

Range \$32,109-\$165,230

Customer Service Rep/Planner

Plans jobs for production from prepress to packaging of product, shipping and mailing.

Average \$57,917

Range \$24,600-\$107,625

Job Estimator

Understanding required of all production equipment and materials required to produce job along with current market conditions.

Average \$62,506

Range \$30,750-\$141,923

IT Manager/Administrator/Tech

Responsible for integration and operation of all hardware and software for the company including equipment.

Average \$108,381

Range \$37,318-\$230,625

Mechanical

Hourly Production Positions

Press Operators

Printing press operators set up, operate, and maintain printing presses to produce various printed materials like magazines, posters, packaging and large graphics. They produce print design files, manage color, handle materials, and oversee press performance.

Press Operator Sheetfed-60" Wide Format

Average \$23/hr

Range \$15-\$36/hr

Press Operator Heatset / Web

Average \$20/hr

Range \$12-\$51/hr

Bindery & Finishing Operators

A Bindery Operator operates and maintains machinery to bind, fold, and finish printed materials like books, catalogs, boxes and more. They ensure final products meet quality standards by using equipment to cut, fold, glue, trim, and bind printed sheets.

Bindery/Perfect Binder Operator

Average \$22/hr

Range \$15-\$39/hr

Bindery Multi Competency Operator

Average \$23/hr

Range \$10-\$38/hr

Pressroom Manager

Responsible for operation of press equipment to meet production schedules and efficiencies. Works with maintenance for preventative measures.

Average \$85,845

Range \$43,050-\$154,775

Post-Press/ Bindery Manager

Implements the finishing part of the job and works closely with mailing, logistics and fulfillment to ensure all ship as scheduled.

Average \$85,845

Range \$43,050-\$154,775

Maintenance Manager

Maintain production equipment and sometimes facilities. Must have a working understanding of equipment and electrical. Works with contractors.

Average \$81,698

Range \$30,750-\$149,714

Administrative

Purchasing Manager

Sources vendors for materials and procures needed materials for the plant. Works with sales, customer service, and production management.

Average \$62,611

Range \$34,645-\$131,200

Human Resources

Assists with finding and hiring new employees, works with current employees as a resource for healthcare, 401K if available, misc. employee issues.

Average \$87,384

Range \$31,564-\$240,875

Safety and Environmental Health Manager

Sets and enforces all safety requirement for equipment and building. Monitors environmental requirements for materials and files reports.

Average \$73,030

Range \$29,405-\$128,125

Mailroom/Fulfillment Manager

Works with CSR and the customer to gather list information and determine the best production method for efficiency and timing.

Average \$72,377

Range \$35,875-\$105,606

Administrative

Shipping/Receiving Manager

Generates shipping paperwork and schedules required for shipment method. Receives and documents all materials delivered to the company.

Average \$65,104

Range \$31,775-\$107,625

Accounting Specialist A/P or A/R

Generates customer invoices and reviews received invoices for accuracy. Works with Estimating, Purchasing and Finance Manager.

Average \$49,858

Range \$19,966-\$107,967

Business & Marketing

General Manager, COO, Vice President

Responsible for all aspects of the business, with a focus on business development, finances, and company growth

Average \$190,401

Range \$26,650-\$615,000

CFO, Controller, Finance Manager

Knowledge of processes and costs associated with the business necessary to provide detailed financial reports to management.

Average \$129,884

Range \$31,980-\$897,900



My experience as a graphic designer in the print industry has been both exciting and educational. I work on many different types of projects, from stickers to brochures to large wall graphics. With each project I work on, I push myself creatively and learn new things about project management and the printing industry.

Emma Sietsema

2023 Graduate, PGSF Scholarship Recipient

VP Operations

Responsible for all aspects of company operations with an eye on profitability. Researches technology improvements.

Average \$138,458

Range \$49,381-\$256,250

Sales Representative

Establishes, develops and manages a customer base. Collaborates with all departments in the company.

Average \$140,244

Range \$30,750-\$799,500

Business Development/Marketing

Marketing for the company and works with sales to create promotional pieces to drive new business.

Average \$101,654

Range \$41,000-\$312,625

PGSF is Here to Help!

The Print and Graphics Scholarship Foundation (PGSF) is a not-for-profit organization that offers undergraduate college and technical school scholarships, educational use grants and graduate fellowship assistance to individuals interested in graphic communication careers.

PGSF works with a wide range of programs to attract younger generations to the industry. We use a variety of communication and community building avenues to inform students as well as their community, parents, school administration, instructors and advisors, of the wide variety of career opportunities available. Individuals currently working in a different industry and looking to pursue a post secondary education in print, packaging or related industries are also eligible for financial assistance, even attending school on a part time basis.

Our educational use grant program is open to institutions and instructors directly engaged in Graphic Communication, Visual and Design Technology and Print-centric educational programs. High schools, trade schools, junior and community college associate programs, four-year colleges, and universities, along with Masters and Doctorate Degree programs can apply.



PGSF Offers **over \$550,000** annually in scholarships for students looking to further their education!

Key Dates for Students, Parents and Educators:

Every Year
Scholarships Open

Nov 1

Scholarships Close

May 1



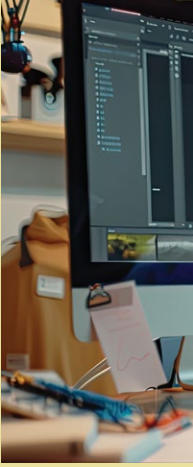
Learn more
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