



Products that don't come with tech reps: "I don't care how great it is ... if I have a problem with it, I want someone to come in and help me, and they won't be able to do that."

-Paul Saddler

allow ... unrestricted air-flow. Proper cooling prolongs lamp life."

3. *Keep an eye peeled for trouble signs.* "Check for pitting or corrosion of the electrical contacts. Check and tighten or replace the lamp mounting clips and or springs to ensure good contact. When you insert lamps into the clips, apply pressure only at ... ends, never to the quartz tube between them. If there is a filling tip, make sure it points up or to the side, never down. (If the mercury or other additive metals collect in that tip, it can cause trouble.)"

From "Longer Life for Arc Lamps," *Mar/Apr '97*, p. 52.

Q. You'd like some product-buying guidelines. Are there any simple, pass/fail tests that can be applied to determine product suitability?

A. We've heard of several, but they apply not to the product itself, but the salespeople who represent it:

Test #1: Availability. Screen Tech Designs' Paul Saddler (Columbus, Ind.) tells prospecting vendors offering samples via phone, "Don't send it. Have your salesman bring it by." No salesman in the area? No sale. "I don't care how great it is ... if I have a problem with it, I want someone to come

in and help me, and they won't be able to do that."

Assuming availability, Davis Int'l helmsman Jim Davis (Rochester, N.Y.) offers three additional tests:

Test #2: Knowledge. "The rep demonstrates understanding of what you do and how you do it before trying to sell you anything. Even a tech rep who has a long history as a printer will have to ask a lot of questions and 'walk around in your shoes' for while."

Test #3: Aptitude. "Your rep should be able to guarantee that he (or someone) knows how to use the product and will be there to teach you how to use it, when it arrives."

Test #4: Commitment. "Give your business to suppliers who will be in your corner 'as long as it takes to make it work.'"

From "Paul & Scott Saddler ... Make Obstacles into Opportunities" and "In-plant Printers and Outside Reps," *May/June '97*, pp. 26 & 52, respectively.

Q. Your job quotes assume a given price for materials, so you sometimes get hurt by unanticipated price hikes. Are there any safeguards against such losses?

A. In early 1995, screen printers of paper substrates absorbed the shock of several unanticipated price hikes. One printer suggested a purchasing strategy that may help those who can anticipate future quantities.

"What we've done is try and consolidate our purchasing," says Frank Cutrone Jr., president of Coyle Reproductions Inc. (City of Commerce, California). He established long-term relationships with a select group of suppliers, locking in year-long contracts for material purchases. The tactic has allowed him to avoid the worst of the price increases.

"We give them a blanket P.O. for the year that tells them we're going to buy 50,000 pounds of whatever. This doesn't lock us into one set price, but they know that we're going to be a substantial buyer, and we get treated a little bit better when the price increases come around."

That's not to say Cutrone escapes completely. "But from what we've seen in the market, they haven't raised [our prices] quite

as much as they could have. As a result, we're able to remain competitive."

From "Payback Time on the Paper Trail," *May/June '95*, p. 58.

Q. You're looking for your first automated graphics press, and you're determined not to let price blind you to a wise decision. Are there any guidelines for what — besides cost — are the important factors?

A. Price should not overshadow other considerations, but, says Mike Young (Liberty Screenprinting Machinery, Dekalb, Texas), it is one of the four critical areas that should be considered:

- *Suitability.* "As a rule of thumb, screenprinting machinery (together with drying/curing equipment and handling accessories) ought to have at least 10-15



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percent greater built-in capability, in respect to tolerances and output, than a plant actually needs. [The press] should meet not only present needs, in terms of speed, size, output and registration ... but ... potential needs."

- *Reliability.* "The single most important factor ... Breakdown time is downtime in its worst form. Therefore, machine simplicity, durable construction, and the support histories of machines in the field should be evaluated."