



Rolf Steiner

## The virtual.drupa 2021 as a Digital Take-Away

**Rolf Steiner (54) has worked in the graphic arts industry for 29 years and has been managing director of [Vogt-Schild Druck AG](#) in Derendingen, Switzerland, for two decades. He writes in the following blog why he misses drupa in Düsseldorf so much as a beacon in the printing industry and why he compares the currently running [virtual.drupa 2021](#) with a take-away service.**

I have attended five drupa since 1995. The first two times I was in Düsseldorf for my then employer Muller Martini – then three times for Vogt-Schild Druck AG, of which I have been Managing Director since 2001. Unfortunately, I had to pass on one occasion for health reasons.

Drupa is not only very important for me, but also for our company. Five years ago, we visited the trade show for four days with a team of seven. In addition to me, the production manager and department manager were also there, as well as people from the sales office and the prepress/IT system department. We thus represented a broad range of employees from the most diverse areas of our company. The fact that we have to travel all the way to Düsseldorf for each event doesn't bother me. Because it's worth it to me to invest this time.

### **„You find before you look“**

For me, the motto at drupa has always been „You find before you look“. It's like when I'm strolling through a trade show with my wife, happen to run into something and buy it. At drupa, I „buy“ time above all to be inspired and to think.

I also see an analogy with print products. Unlike digital channels, where people often search specifically for a topic, they should surprise their readers with content they weren't expecting. And there's a second analogy: When I'm at a trade show, many senses are addressed: seeing, hearing, feeling – just like when I have a book or magazine in my hands. I always discover something new. In this respect, drupa not only communicates trends, but also opens up new horizons.

### **A big family in a small world**

And of course I meet people – lots of people. In addition to the purely technical information from the many press manufacturers and system suppliers, the many conversations are indispensable at drupa. Ultimately, the graphic arts industry is like a big family in a small world. People meet again and again, and small talk is part of it – at the trade show booths („may I show you something?“) as well as during lunch in a drupa restaurant or in the evening in Düsseldorf's old town. It's like politics: conversations outside the plenary hall are often more valuable than debates in the parliament.

But as important as the exchange of opinions with employees, supplier experts or professional colleagues is: I also love strolling through a trade show all by myself, marveling and letting what I see take effect. You simply have to like drupa. Of course, I always make a plan for what I want to see at the trade show. But half of my time is not structured; I decide spontaneously what I want to see.

### **Inspire young professionals for our industry**

When I occasionally hear that huge trade shows like drupa have outlived their usefulness, especially in an industry like ours that is no longer booming, and that they are too expensive for the suppliers and for the visitors, some of whom travel from far away, then I can only share these concerns to a very limited extent. Of course I understand this from the manufacturers' point of view – even more so as a former Muller Martini employee. Nevertheless, I am convinced that large trade shows like drupa will continue to have their justification and importance. Because nowhere else can you find so many experts with whom you can exchange ideas about the most diverse facets of our industry.

For me, there is another most important aspect – that of training and continuing education. It is important to inspire young professionals for our industry. And in my opinion, a trade show is the ideal place for this, because it awakens and promotes fascination for the printing industry.

### **We need this beacon**

However, I am definitely of the opinion that the big monster installations such as huge web offset presses or all kinds of folding machines are no longer needed at drupa. That's why I like the Hunkeler Innovation Days in Lucerne so much, where I can get a quick overview of the latest technology from countless suppliers in a compact space. Of course, a booth is only interesting if one or the other machine can be seen – because a monitor with a simple Power-Point presentation is not enough for me.

If you ask me what I and our industry would miss if drupa no longer existed, my answer would be clear: everything! We need this beacon and, if it were to cease to exist, we would simply run the risk of our industry being forgotten.

### **Our industry must not be forgotten**

With all my enthusiasm for the on-site event, I naturally understand the drupa organization's decision – no doubt also for financial reasons – to offer an alternative trade show format in the

form of virtual.drupa 2021. Because it is clear, as already mentioned, that our industry must not be completely away from the drupa window for eight years and thus forgotten. It's similar to a restaurant owner who offers a take-away service during the lockdown. He doesn't do big business with it, but at least his customers don't forget him.

Still, how much of virtual.drupa 2021 I'll be looking at is still up in the air. I'm still struggling through the program. Besides, I have a lot on my plate at the moment. That's the problem with webinars: When I go to drupa in Düsseldorf, I log off from the company and my day-to-day business for four days. Online events, on the other hand, are a distraction from day-to-day business. I always have the feeling that I should actually be doing something more important. Anyway, I find that there is currently webinar overkill. That's why I only attend a few and only pop in when I expect to get real added value. I'd rather see people live – because humans are analog, and machines are analog too.

### **Our customers need personal advice**

I recommend that my employees attend the virtual.drupa 2021 events that are relevant to their area of work. Especially for our employees who – for example in prepress – deal with software, presentations on the screen are definitely valuable.

In this respect, the digital transformation naturally does not stop at our company. For abstract, emotionless meetings where no creativity is required, a ZOOM call without a long journey makes perfect sense. And the digital workflow has, of course, also been an issue for us for some time. But virtual contacts also have many disadvantages. For example, customers need personal advice in our store, because they don't buy products off the shelf – which brings us back to the human factor.

In this respect, I hope that this is the last digital drupa – I would like to experience two more trade shows live in Düsseldorf in my professional career!

Yours

Rolf Steiner

Managing Director Vogt-Schild Druck AG, Derendingen (Switzerland)