



Nico Herberth

## Instead of Law and Order, Nico Herberth now Ensures Perfect Print Products

**He completed his training as a media technologist for print finishing at [Onlineprinters](#) in Neustadt an der Aisch (Germany) with the maximum of 100 points in the practical exam, shone in vocational school with a grade point average of 1.1 and is therefore one of the ten nominees in the „Young Savages“ category in the election for Printer of the Year 2023 announced by the trade magazine [„Druck&Medien“](#). In a guest blog, 27-year-old Nico Herberth reveals the secret behind his formidable apprenticeship and why postpress fascinates him so much.**

Frankly, I didn't get into the graphic arts industry directly, but rather in a roundabout way. My dream job as a child was to be a policeman, so after secondary school, business school, a vocational baccalaureate in economics and a short period of study, I trained with the police. However, I dropped out after one and a half years for several reasons.

How did you end up in the graphic arts industry from the police force? you might ask. It undoubtedly has something to do with the fact that I have always had a flair for handicrafts. At the time, my father bought an older house. We did a lot of the manual work ourselves. I often helped him – for example, with the construction of a garden shed. Even in my youth, it was important for me to work precisely.

### **Application – interview – apprenticeship contract**

So I looked around on the Internet for technical and craft professions. On the Onlineprinters website, which made an excellent impression on me, I came across media technician for print finishing. I briefly checked the requirements for the apprenticeship advertised on the website, applied and, to my great delight, received an invitation to an interview.

The interview was so positive that I was even more convinced that this job appealed to me. Onlineprinters obviously saw it the same way and sent me an apprenticeship contract by return of post. So I started my apprenticeship in Neustadt an der Aisch in September 2019. My parents were also immediately enthusiastic: they think it's cool that I'm working for a renowned international company and have a job that I enjoy. Since no one in my family has a graphic arts background, I'm definitely the first to work in the printing industry.

### **Fascinating, these huge digital presses**

When I clicked through the Onlineprinters website in search of a suitable job, I was impressed on the one hand by the large number of printed and processed products. Secondly, I was immediately impressed by the fact that Onlineprinters is a modern company in a relatively young market (digital printing) with state-of-the-art machines. During my apprenticeship, I had the opportunity to spend a week looking around our Plant 4, where we print digitally. These huge digital presses are quite fascinating. It's almost like being at home at the computer and printer – only in large format: PDF in, book out. By also producing short (or long) runs, we make it possible for many private customers to produce their own print product.

### **State-of-the-art machines as a motivator**

If you ask me today – three and a half years after I started my training – what I particularly like about Onlineprinters, it's the varied work, for one thing. And I get to manufacture my own product for customers. On the other hand, it's the many state-of-the-art machines, because Onlineprinters is constantly investing in new equipment. For example, in a few weeks we will be the first graphic arts company in the world to put the new Prinova Digital saddle stitcher from Muller Martini into operation.

I think this is also an important signal to the inside world. It underlines our belief in the future of the graphic arts industry. And it acts as a motivating factor for young people to take up a career in the graphic arts industry. And last but not least, it's also the wide range of products – from brochures to magazines, catalogs, notebooks, folding flyers, calendars, election advertising and posters.

### **Practice and theory**

Keyword training: This lasted two and a half years. First I worked on the guillotine cutter, then on the combination folding machine and finally on the stitching machine. During one week, I also had the opportunity to get to know the Presto Digital saddle stitcher from Muller Martini better. During an exciting rotation schedule, I got to know not only the entire production process, but also office work.

In all departments, I was supervised by specialists at the machines – I really had excellent teachers and still benefit from their great know-how today. At the beginning, I always worked in a team. But as soon as I had mastered a machine, I operated it on my own.

Six times a year, I had two weeks of block instruction – in the first year at the vocational school in Nuremberg, and in the second and third years at the [Alois Senefelder Vocational School Center](#) in Munich, which specializes in the graphic arts industry. Of course, we had a lot of theory there, for example about paper production or printing, but we also made a few

products by hand. I can see three reasons why I completed my training with the maximum of 100 points in the practical exam and the vocational school with a grade point average of 1.1.

### **The perfect day**

- First, I always paid good attention in vocational school and also understood most of it. That's why I got an A grade on almost all of my midterm exams.
- Secondly, I prepared very well for the practical final exam. Because I always want to have a perfect product, because I like to work very precisely. In my preparation, I also involved my supervisors, with whom I always asked.
- Thirdly, I was admittedly a little nervous during the practical test on the guillotine cutter, the combination folding machine and the stitching machine, but everything worked out perfectly – in short, I caught a perfect day.

Nevertheless, I was amazed that I achieved the maximum of 100 points. The 1.1 in the school grade, on the other hand, surprised me less. The fact that it came out so well certainly had something to do with two of my strengths: manual dexterity and no false modesty in the face of constant questioning.

Of course, the result of the final apprenticeship exam filled me with pride. I received many congratulations – not only from my family, but also from the company. The bosses at Onlineprinters were delighted and congratulated me. I also received a gift, and an article about me appeared in our employee magazine.

### **Nomination as „Young Wild One“**

I was really speechless, however, when I learned that I was the only media technologist in postpress to be one of the ten nominees in the „Young Wild Ones“ category in the „Printer of the Year 2023“ competition organized by the trade magazine „Druck&Medien“. I had already been featured in the same magazine last year as a top 15 talent in our industry. However, the nomination as a „Young Wild One“ came as a complete surprise to me.

Of course, I'm happy about the nomination: it's a recognition that you've achieved something professionally. Now I'm eagerly awaiting the voting results, which will be known in July. Of course I would be happy to get on the podium. But if I miss out, I won't be disappointed at all. Because the nine other nominees are also outstanding professionals.

### **Starting out as deputy team leader**

Because I like the company, my superiors, my colleagues and my job so much, I'm staying loyal to Onlineprinters. The fact that I was able to start my first job right away as deputy team leader of a nine-person team working in three shifts on the stitching machine is something I consider to be recognition of my achievements over the past three and a half years and of my good apprenticeship qualification.

Although I'm not pursuing a clear career plan, I hope that I can continue to advance in our company. Whether I will one day become a master craftsman or technician is not an open question at the moment.

### **Further processing is particularly exciting**

At the moment, I'm concentrating fully on my current job, which I still enjoy. Holding a perfect, printed end product in my hands for the customer still fascinates me as much today as it did when I joined the company. I find the finishing process particularly exciting, because it is only through this that an exciting magazine or brochure is created from a printed sheet.

Unique, eye-catching, individualized and personalized print products (especially from digital printing) that stand out from the mass-produced goods will always be very important – just like advertising printed matter, packaging and posters. Certain print products, on the other hand – I'm thinking primarily of newspapers – will come under even more pressure.

I myself read news (as an enthusiastic motorcyclist, soccer, volleyball, bowling and billiards player, especially from the wide world of sports) practically only electronically. But what could be better than sitting comfortably in the fresh air and reading a printed book?

Yours,  
Nico Herberth  
Onlineprinters