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## Jos. Berning Printing adapts to Internet age

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**QUEENSGATE** - With a history that dates to 1883, Jos. Berning Printing Co. has seen many changes in the local business climate, but none more challenging than recent events that threaten the entire industry as trends move toward Internet communication instead of traditional print.

Fourth-generation owner and company president Mike Berning said his company, located on Dalton Street near downtown, has made every effort to adapt and evolve with the changing marketplace and has seen a payoff in customer retention and continued growth.

"We have to be is really, really good at what we do," he said of the competitive conditions printers face.

Despite the continuing challenges, Berning said his company has managed steady growth over the last several years and posted revenue of \$3.4 million in 2008. He said he hopes to duplicate that figure again this year even with the economic slowdown.

"There have been a lot of changes in our business, and not all of them have been good," said Berning, great-grandson of founder Joseph Berning, a former vice mayor of Cincinnati who opened his printing business in the rear of a Vine Street grocery store. "But you have to adapt and change with the times."

Berning's father, Richard, doubled the business to \$2 million in revenue during his tenure from 1976 to 1998 by adding new equipment and paving the way for digital printing. Mike Berning took over in 1999 and his brother Steve and sister Kim Berning Fishback both also work at the company.

Berning said he has learned some valuable lessons watching some of his competitors go out of business after many successful years.

Running an efficient operation is a priority, he said, as jobs can vary in size and scope; but if you have too much equipment or too many employees during the fat years it can take a toll during the lean ones.

"I think one of the biggest mistakes you can make is to have too much excess," he said. "We run a lean shop."

Relationships are another top priority, he said, not only with customers, but with employees.

He said he takes pride in the fact that most customers talk to him directly about their jobs and he still makes sales calls regularly.

"People like to call and talk to me," he said. "I think they appreciate that."

Many of his customers have been with him for decades, he said.

He said he also treats his employees like family and as a result sees very little turnover.

"These people are my friends," he said. "We do birthday cakes, company cookouts. They really do care about this company."

The level of personal attention his customers receive is what Berning said differentiates him from some of the big online printers that take business away from smaller shops.

"It's a family-owned business and he takes care of his clients," said Daniel Graff of Graff Designs in East Walnut Hills, who said Berning once took time out of his personal schedule on a Friday night to help correct a mistake on some envelopes when the error was not even the fault of his shop. "The guy bends over backward to make it right."

Lisa Sanger, founding partner with Sanger & Eby in the West End, who has done business with Berning for 18 years, said printed material is still an important component of any company's communications.

"I don't think it will ever completely go away," she said. "Our clients still feel a need for tactile information."

"Printing is not a science. It's an art," said Graff. "He does it as well as anyone."

## Additional Facts

Jos. Berning Printing Co.

**Address:** 1850 Dalton Ave.,

Queensgate

**Phone:** 513-721-0781

**Web site:** [www.josberningprinting .com](http://www.josberningprinting.com)

**Employees:** 15

**Owner:** Mike Berning

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