

Sprouts! The Seeds of an Educational Message

By Rebecca Kanan
RS&R News and Asay Media

Seeds. Plant them. Watch them grow.
Leads. Follow them. Help them prosper into relationships.

Whether you are increasing business or growing flowers, you need to pay attention and create the right atmosphere.

Sharon Quercioli has figured that out.

The mastermind of Sprouts! Making Ideas Bloom, whose 100% recycled linen paper contains seeds that will produce plants for the recipient, has a long history with the remanufacturing community and a depth of knowledge about how to market to the industry.



Quercioli, as a former vice president of sales at Static Control Components and a three-time president of her own corporations, is considered by many a marketing genius.

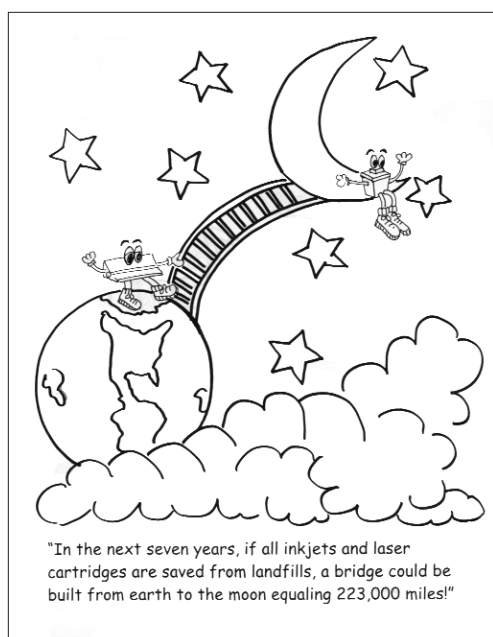
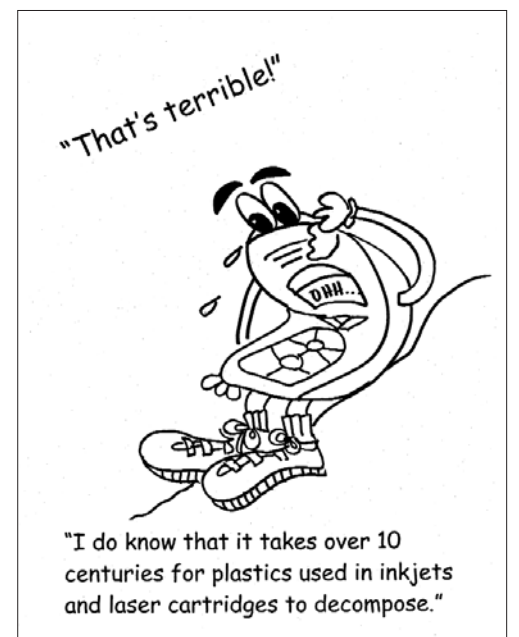
“Since I know this industry so well, I know what it takes to be successful,” she says. “If they (companies) have something like Sprouts! that makes people call them, it gives them an opportunity to talk about their collection program or quality products.”

In other words, companies and individuals can open the conversation with a seed-embedded greeting card, book mark, business card pop-out, or other offered item, and proceed from there to discuss business matters. Because the paper itself is recycled and recyclable, it attracts attention. The flowers that grow after the recipient soaks and plants the seeded paper will continue to make the sender memorable.

This is much the way Sprouts! itself began.

“What ended up happening was . . . I had some business cards with pop-outs in shapes that you plant. When I sent a package out for my other business, I would include one,” said Quercioli. “People would call and say, ‘You have the most unique business cards!’ Then I sent out Christmas cards and people started wanting them.”

Now she’s preparing a special publication highlighting the virtues of cartridge recycling: a coloring book. That’s right—a book aimed at the youngsters who can be influenced into good habits early on in their learning process.



“I created this coloring book because I had dealt with childrens’ charities and schools” and knew that cartridge collection “is a great fundraiser for schools,” says Quercioli.

She introduced her ideas in paper at the World Expo 2004, through Static Control’s booth, and says she was overwhelmed with the response. “It was huge! And I didn’t have a distributor program in place yet (to fill large orders). Everything we have was handmade—the paper, everything.” It only took a short time to get that worked out. Now, she says, “Business is blooming.”

“I did the research to start this company. At first I was running Sprouts and my other business (Imagine Achieving Excellence) in the same company, with five people,” says Quercioli, whose introduction to remanufacturing began in 1987 in Chicago with a company named Technique—America’s Cartridge Specialists.

Now, after selling Imagine Achieving Excellence in December 2004, Quercioli focuses her energies on promoting Sprouts! and coming out with new products, especially for the remanufacturing community. She has introduced a whole line of postcards, pop-out cards, individually packaged pop-outs with the message on a tag, and greeting cards for all occasions.

When Quercioli designed her first cards for the cartridge industry, she included images of cartridges on a wreath, in a sleigh, with a snowman and a Santa, along with two other arrangements.

Those ideas grew into the logical extension for this industry: the coloring book, which will be available soon. She introduced a prototype at the International Imaging Technology Council (I-ITC) show this Spring and again was surprised by the impact of her product.

The book features “cartridge characters” talking about recycling and providing evidence about the benefits of cartridge return programs. Being aimed at children doesn’t diminish the book’s effectiveness with general consumers and professionals.

In August, Quercioli will take her new book and designs to World Expo in Las Vegas. Meantime, she can be reached at 561-840-8089, or by email at sharon@sproutem.com.

