

# One on One with Steve Mattingly



Steven “Steve” Mattingly is Senior Vice President at North Carolina-based Southern Lithoplate (SLP), where he is approaching almost 30 years of industry service. Prior to SLP, his career path included M&M/Mars; Banking; and Consulting. Mr. Mattingly graduated from the University of Louisville with a Business in Commerce degree.

Mr. Mattingly serves on the NPES Board of Directors and is also a board member at the Southern Newspaper Publishers Association (SNPA) and is an active member of PRIMIR. In his spare time, Steve is a certified professional coach and a certified master diver.

***With a distinguished heritage dating back to 1934, how have your customers’ needs changed over the years, and what business values have sustained Southern Lithoplate (SLP) as an industry leader in your niche market?***

SLP enjoys an 82-year legacy. I had the privilege to transition from consultant for SLP to a full team member in 1991. Today, we continue as a third generation, American owned, operated, entrepreneurial, and privately held, print-centric company. Over time, both customer needs and technology have changed dramatically. SLP has listened and responded: from making WWII war maps on zinc for the U.S. Dept. of Defense on D Street in Washington, D.C., to being the first to manufacture litho sheet with rolled aluminum, to helping lead well over a thousand printers through the digital

CTP revolution in the last decade. Today’s printers require more than quality products; they thirst for prepress and pressroom solutions supported by know-how. SLP’s passion for delivering affordable technology and technical service, coupled with our in-depth know-how, has earned us the reputation as the brand leader in our niche.

***In response to evolving domestic and international market conditions, what are some of the technological changes and challenges that Southern Lithoplate has faced and overcome?***

In 1988, we met as a small team and forged our sustaining mission: “Deliver constant improvement in quality, focus on family and customers first, work and play hard, and fear no one nor any situation—so that all stakeholders enjoy the benefits.” Continuous and balanced investment in our fantastic team of people, in our products, patents, manufacturing, IT, ERP, and CRM technology has been paramount. Parallel to the challenge of technology has been the challenge of print consolidation. This presented the opportunity for SLP’s acquisition of manufacturing assets and patented technologies from DuPont Imperial, Citiplate, 3M/Imation and Konica Minolta.

Our superb team of empowered employees is led by Trip Casson, Chairman & CEO, and Clark Casson, President & COO. Together, they have diligently dovetailed 82 years of know-how into state-of-the-art, PLC controlled, manufacturing facilities, which included significant, recent investments for no process technology in both our MI and NC manufacturing campuses. Combining our manufacturing capacity, rich knowledge of the marketplace, depth of our strategic alliances and our SLP Solutions consulting group, delivered via our ‘direct-to-market’ approach, SLP has a solid, sustainable foundation to support our current and future customers.

***As timely industry market intel is critical for any company’s strategic planning process, how has your involvement in PRIMIR contributed to Southern Lithoplate’s success?***

It has been an honor to support our industry through NPES and PRIMIR dating back to 1992. Circa 2000, as the market was in the early adoption stages of digital imaging, SLP elected to advance with thermal technology as a direct result of NPES research data. Secondly, actively participating in those studies as a task force member provided deep insights into how we should carve out our niche. Definitely the right choice, given that 82% of the U.S. market is indeed thermal.

Most recently, co-chairing the 2011 “*Economic Indicators for Print*” and the 2016 “*Future of Print in the U.S.—Landscape, Implications and Opportunities*” studies, SLP is deploying the knowledge base and direct access to experts to aid us in navigating the unpredictable trade winds of the economy through the next recession, predicted to arrive in Q2 2019 and continue well into the future.

***Looking ahead to the next three to five years, what trends do you see for our industry? Why are you optimistic about the future?***

Acknowledging the findings contained in “*Future of Print in the U.S.—Landscape, Implications and Opportunities*,” it is apparent the USA print market is approaching yet another major structural shift. While print remains the core profit arm for both printers and advertisers, we all compete, knowingly, with the rapid progression of mobile. No one can alter the course of the economy, nor the end user’s move from static print to a digital, interactive world. Just as a caterpillar metamorphoses into a butterfly, print will not disappear, but rather will evolve into a wonderfully vital element of tomorrow’s communications marketplace. As a new member on the NPES Board, we are most excited about the energy and enthusiasm for positively impacting print in the USA. The NPES and PRIMIR Boards’ passion for strategy and collaboration, fueled by entrepreneurial spirit, provides great promise for all our collective futures. ■