

# Four Trends That Shape Print in Today's On-Demand World

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Today's fast-paced, customer-centric culture is unlocking fresh opportunities for print providers, particularly with digital print

**A FEW CLICKS** are all it takes to do nearly anything these days.

As consumers, we've all become accustomed to the convenience and ease of today's on-demand culture. It was only a matter of time before these desires and expectations for speed, personalization, and

quality made their way into the print business. Luckily, new technology is making it possible for the industry to meet those changing customer demands, and in turn, open up new avenues for growth for print service providers. One of the biggest opportunities lies in

digital print.

With lead times and print runs getting shorter and workflows becoming more collaborative, digital printing continues to grow in popularity. Why? Because a lot of today's technology can help providers check a number of boxes: excellent speed and

productivity, cost efficiencies, color management, consistent quality, and even energy savings. Plus, there are a number of options to meet varying needs, from lower volume digital printers to more robust high-speed and high-volume options.

To understand how to unlock opportunity with digital print, providers must first understand the key trends that are shaping print. Below are four noteworthy industry and cultural trends:

#### **A shift to shorter production windows and smaller runs**

In a world of two-day shipping, customers expect most things yesterday. The trend of quicker

by hand.

In the 2019 NAPCO Research study Digital Printing 5.0 survey, print providers reported producing and managing a large number of small jobs and shortening of production times as the biggest workflow pain points. In addition to the digital presses, it is imperative for organizations to have workflow solutions to help users streamline the job submission and preparation process of print orders.

Digital print is a game changer for a lot of organizations, especially those in the business of printing books, catalogs, and direct mail. The book publishing industry, in particular, has been

target customers. While digital marketing has unlocked a number of new advertising and promotional opportunities, the assumption that traditional print has lost all value is completely misguided. In fact, a [Print For Action survey](#) revealed that consumers of all ages use a mix of print and digital channels in their daily routines to gather news, inform purchasing decisions, and communicate with others – among other activities. Some survey respondents admitted to digital fatigue; seven in 10 (69%) of respondents said they find the barrage of digital communications overwhelming, and more than 80% said they just

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turnaround times has been a challenge for many print service providers and has led to the rise in popularity of toner and digital production printers to complement traditional offset operations.

Why the change? In addition to the increase in fast-turn jobs, print providers have also seen an influx in small volume requests that don't make sense financially for offset production. Digital presses are designed to mimic the quality of offset printing, but offer speed and personalization with a few clicks, making them a resource, and a budget-friendly option, for printers that don't want to turn away lower volume jobs. Plus many models offer in-line finishing options that an operator would otherwise do

transformed by new technology that moves production from offset to digital and consequently can help improve efficiency and costs. With high-speed and durability, some digital presses can produce books on demand without sacrificing quality, as well as conduct economic prints of runs down to single copies of books. Digital on-demand printing means organizations print only what they need when they need it, cutting back on wasted time, money and resources.

#### **A convergence of print and digital marketing**

There was a time not too long ago when marketers were told that digital channels were the only way to reach their

scroll past digital ads when they are online.

Fortunately, marketers have realized the impact of combining print and digital mediums to reach people in creative ways. This modern omnichannel approach opens up new possibilities in which print outputs can be used to drive to digital channels, and vice versa.

One example of print and digital working together is interactive print communications that use augmented reality, QR codes, and personalized URLs to direct people to digital information or content. Another is trigger-based printing, a marketing tactic that involves automatically printing and sending targeted direct mail to people

when certain actions are triggered online. For instance, if a shopper adds something to their cart but exits without checking out, a company could follow up with a personalized, direct mail coupon to be used to complete the purchase. It's a powerful convergence of traditional print and modern digital marketing tactics that can drive sales and leans into consumer-centricity.

Whether working with a

print providers can customize content is through the use of color. For marketing materials like direct mail, color can help capture attention and be used to personalize messages in creative ways – for instance, by matching images or text to images of a customer's past purchases. Brands can also create color schemes that complement the logo or visual brand identity of a prospective customer to help

to help reduce power usage, consumption, and waste.

In the past, print providers may have treated sustainability as a “nice to have.” Today, it's a business imperative for long-term viability and success. Beyond our own interests and corporate responsibilities, many customers demand eco-friendly options and want to do business with brands that consider environmental sustainability an important issue.

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big-name retailer or a small organization, these success stories underscore the power of print to drive action through memorable, personalized experiences.

#### **A desire for personalization**

One of the most interesting aspects of marketing today is how brands can utilize data to personalize a customer experience, and how that personalization drives action. In the Print for Action survey, 30% of Americans found personalization to be a key factor in helping print to stand out. From printed cards to custom signage, people love adding personal sentiments, thus making this a huge trend in the printing industry today.

Still, there are naysayers who don't feel the effort to customize materials is worth the return on the investment. Realistically, new technology within digital presses has made personalization easy, even for high-volume jobs.


One of the easiest ways that

demonstrate synergies. Forty-two percent of Print for Action survey respondents indicated that color was most important in capturing their attention with printed materials.

#### **A focus on sustainable solutions**

For print providers to really grow, they must look at macro business trends and align their strategies to meet the demands of the changing culture. One of those trends shaping conversations is increased focus on environmental sustainability.

It may seem counterintuitive to some for the printing business to focus on sustainability, but our industry is innovating to help reduce our environmental footprint. From implementing sustainable forest sourcing certifications for paper to reducing emissions from equipment and consumables, many print manufacturers are developing solutions and processes that are designed

It's unlikely that the pace of business will slow down any time soon, meaning print service providers must acclimate to new ways of working in order to stay competitive and meet customer demands. Production print, particularly through digital presses, can offer help with flexibility, efficiency and long-term cost savings – making it an attractive option for commercial and in-house print shops alike. Now is an opportune time for print service providers to collaborate with other print service providers to explore the full suite of production solutions that can help them thrive in today's dynamic, on-demand economy. 

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