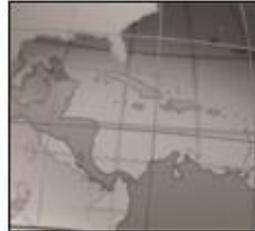


# White Paper



Production Printing & Media



August 2014

## Workflow Automation: Why It's Key to your Success

*In-plant/Corporate Printers*

### Service Areas

On Demand Printing & Publishing

Production Workflow & Customized  
Communication Solutions

Document Outsourcing

[Comments or Questions?](#)

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## Introduction

In-house and corporate print environments are strapped with many of the same issues as traditional print service providers (PSPs) often with fewer resources and dedicated support. Departments are looking for more products and services from their in-plant shop but often with a decreased budget. Successful in-house printers have found that by adopting workflow automation into their production process they are able to decrease their bottom line as well as increase throughput and free up employees to work on more imperative tasks.

## Key Findings

- For every dollar spent on business communications, another \$6 is being spent on the complete document production and distribution process according to InfoTrends' 2012 *The True Cost of Business Communications* report.
- There is ample opportunity to reduce this overhead through more efficient processes and automation with one area being the production workflow.
- Eliminating human intervention where possible not only reduces cost, but reduces the amount of errors and mistakes.
- Addition of wide-format capabilities to existing products and services is a smart move for in-plant printers. According to InfoTrends' 2013 *Wide Format: A Critical Part of the Communications Mix* The retail value of digitally printed wide format signage and graphics is expected to grow at a 6.7% from 2012-2017

## Recommendations

- To meet changing budgetary and staffing constraints, corporate printers need to make automating print production a top priority.
- Improve customer experience through the addition of self-service job submission as well as an interface where they can check on job status.
- Addition of new products and services increases the value of a corporate print shop and allows them to keep more business in-house.

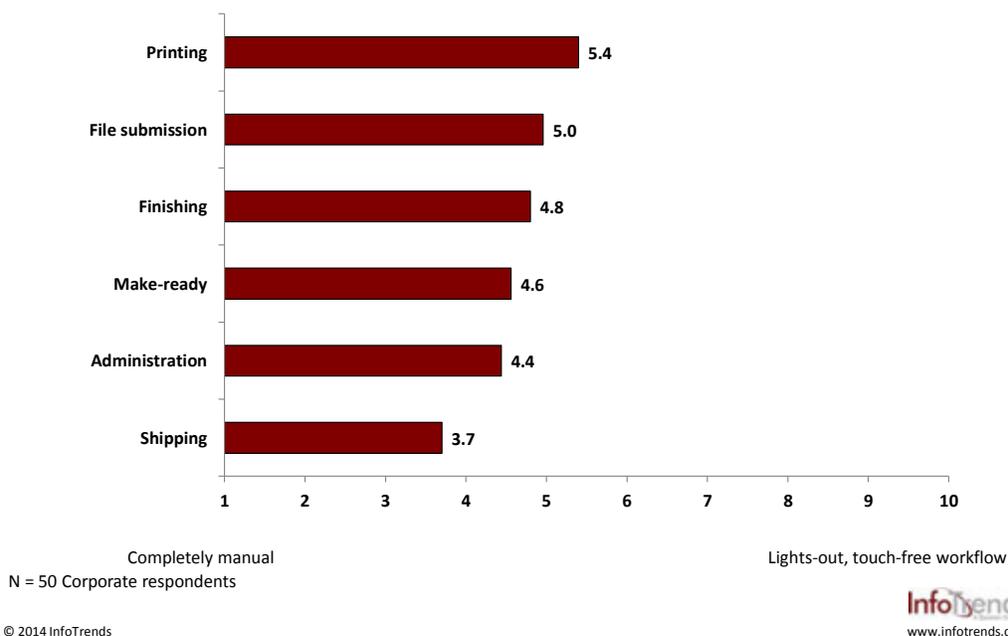
## Investing in Today's Automated Production Workflows

In-plant print service providers today are burdened with a number of obstacles when it comes to evolving their business. Although in-plants primarily serve customers within their parent organization, many still face the same issues as commercial printers albeit with fewer resources and tighter budgets. From faster turnaround times and shorter run lengths to increased job complexity, it is no surprise that determining where to invest can be a challenge. In-plants are feeling the pressure to generate new revenues from higher-margin, value-added services and implement streamlined workflows focused on efficiency and cost reduction.

All types of production environments face similar issues when it comes to automating their workflows. The majority of corporate printers rank the level of workflow automation in key production areas relatively low. The act of putting ink or toner on paper is largely seen as the area with the most automation, which is no surprise considering the impact of digital technology on all of the printing methods. Other key areas, such as prepress, file submission, and administration are areas in which automation could be implemented, but largely remains a manual process with many touch points. (See Figure 1)

**Figure 1: Level of Workflow Automation**

Q14: Rate the current workflow automation in each production area.



One of the key benefits that comes from automation is the ability to do more with less. The majority of revenues are projected to either stay the same as last year or only increase slightly. This coupled with tightening corporate budgets places even more importance on workflow automation to ensure in-plant print operations stay viable and are not outsourced to external vendors. Additionally, automating repetitive tasks reduces the risk for errors and enables corporate printers to focus employee resources on new services and capabilities that add more value to their product offerings..

**Controlling Costs is Critical**

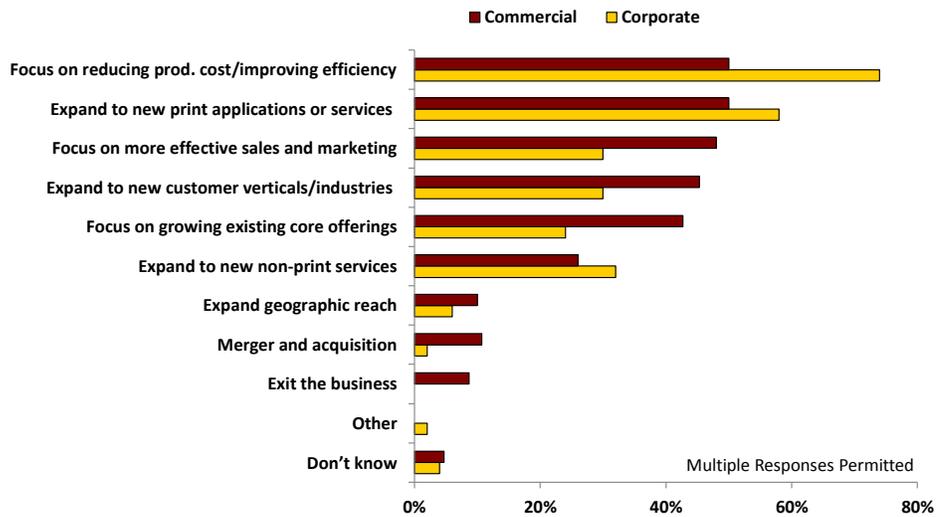
In-plants indicate that reducing cost is one of the most important strategic initiatives for the next five years. In-plants need proper costs controls to remain viable to the parent organization while also freeing up capital for future infrastructure and technology investments. InfoTrends’ *The True Cost of Business Communications 2012* research indicates that for every dollar spent on business communications, another \$6 is being

spent on the complete document production and distribution process. There is ample opportunity to reduce this overhead through more efficient processes and automation with one area being the production workflow.

Any time there are manual touch points cost is added to the job. When and if manual intervention is the result of the customer's doing, there is an opportunity to track this and charge it back to them or their department. For internal errors, delays, or inefficiencies due to manual processes, however, the in-plant's bottom line is adversely affected. The addition of automated workflow solutions can aid in-plant managers in benchmarking and reporting activities. This increased level of detail will allow managers to gain more control over the costs and productivity of their operation.

**Figure 2: Strategic Business Direction**

Q25: Which of the following initiatives best describes your strategic business direction in the next five years?



N = 150 Commercial and 50 Corporate respondents

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Furthermore, automation can reduce commonly reported bottlenecks, such as proofing and approval, job estimation, preflighting, and job submission, while improving customer service and saving money. Many of these tasks can be provided through an interface that enables company employees to better service themselves, while providing the opportunity to drive more print orders that leverage customized catalog ordering and integrated variable data support.

## Reduction of Errors

A key part of customer service is making sure that jobs are received, produced, and delivered with little to no errors or delays. As deadlines become shorter, ensuring that print jobs are produced and delivered without error becomes more of a challenge—particularly when manual touch points are involved.

In print production workflows, connecting the organization's processes with print shop workflows can be challenging. The time it takes from job receipt to production often results in delays from relying on manual transfer of files, updating job information, or communication that a job has been approved and is ready to be processed. Eliminating human intervention where possible not only reduces cost, but reduces the amount of errors and mistakes.

## Improving the Customer Experience

Web submission is a great example of a production area that is ripe for automation. Web portals allow for streamlined interaction between the in-plant staff and employees within the organization. These online tools provide a way for users to submit jobs whether down the hallway from the print shop, from home, or from halfway around the world.

The time consuming effort of routine customer communication related to routine job details and status can then be self-serviced. Tracking and tracing can be used to notify customers if changes are needed, if the job is completed for their pickup, or if the print shop has taken care of shipping it to an external location for them.

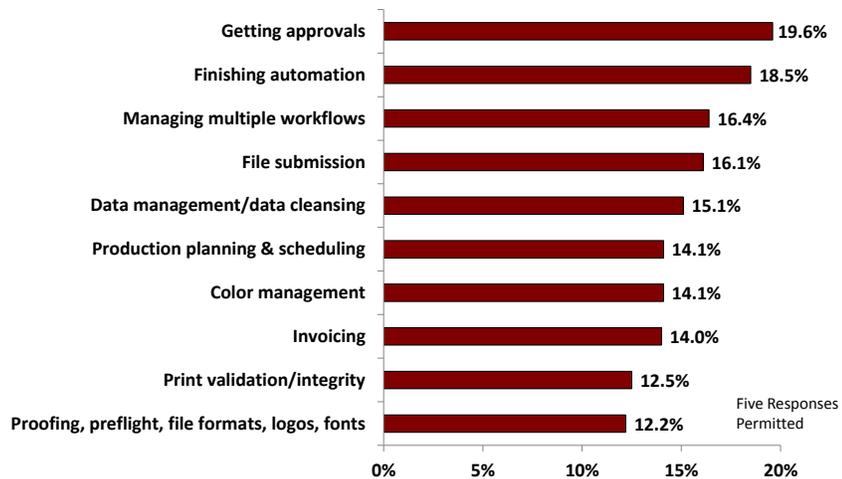
The ability to track and trace projects does not only benefit the customer, but the print shop workers as well. The reduction in time spent working with customers allows workers to focus on more imperative tasks, such as editing/designing new jobs and managing higher value projects. Instead of interacting with customers on mundane job information more time can be spent communicating with them about adding incremental value to printed campaigns, and office communication, as well as delivering new products and services. Automated tracking of jobs also lends itself to more efficient scheduling, reducing the amount of downtime that commonly results from confusion or unknown delays.

### Minimizing Bottlenecks

There are several bottlenecks in the production workflow that commonly effect PSPs. Certain steps such as proofing, preflighting, and invoicing are automated with relative ease. Other aspects are slightly more difficult to automate due to difficulty integrating into existing environments, or having a significant amount of manual touches needed.

**Figure 3: Bottlenecks in Workflow**

Q: What are the biggest technical bottlenecks, problems, or inefficiencies in your current workflow?  
(Top Ten Most Popular Responses)



N = 623 All Respondents

Source: Cloud Workflows & Infrastructures, InfoTrends, 2013

Finishing workflows, for example, are some of the most manual processes left within print production facilities. Most instances of automated finishing today are achieved through in-line finishing on digital print devices or near-line via job tickets. Adoption of finishing automation among U.S. PSPs is low (22% in 2013), but there is a desire to remove any efficiencies in the finishing process (23% of PSPs wants to improve automated finishing).

Automating workflow steps like finishing can drastically reduce production costs by cutting labor needed in the process. By improving automation corporate printers not only save money and time, but free up resources to add new products and services.

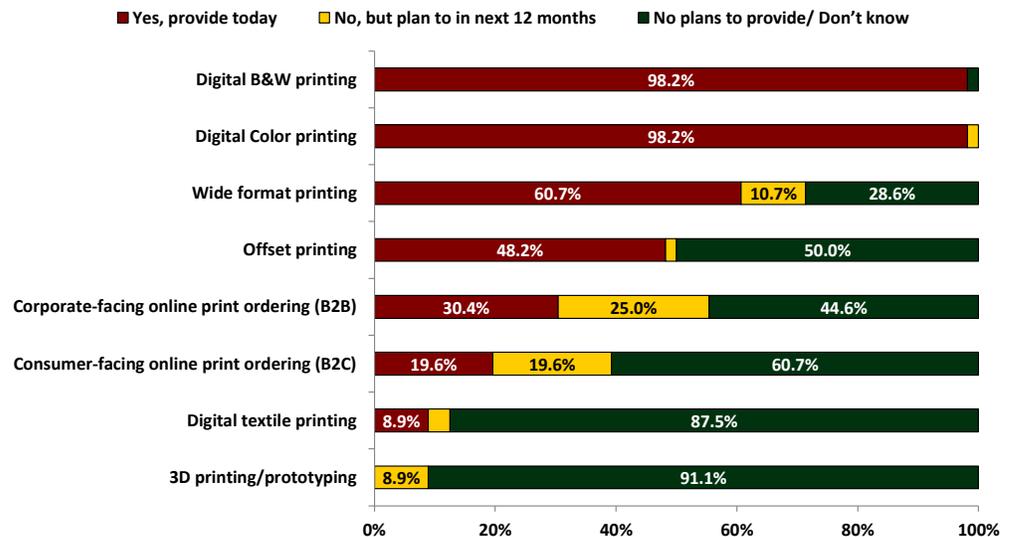
### Addition of New Services

For many corporate printers, providing more than just standard copy/print services is vital to their existence. Whether it is working with the engineering department to create and archive blue prints or the marketing department to develop a campaign to reach new customers, print is no longer the only service being offered. In fact, print eCommerce and wide format printing are the areas of focus for in-plants to add new applications and revenue streams over the next twelve months. While we already covered many benefits of print eCommerce, one often overlooked is the ability of the in-plant to enter into value added applications such as personalized printing. According to *Variable Data Digital*

*Printing: Realizing the Potential* from NAPL, 68.5% of service providers indicated that variable data printing increased their profitability. Similarly, wide format printing extends the types of applications that can be produced while positively impacting revenue. InfoTrends' *Wide Format: A Critical Part of the Communications Mix* report projects the retail value of digitally printed wide format signage and graphics to grow at a 6.7% compound annual growth rate from 2012-2017.

**Figure 4: Print-Related Service Offerings**

Q: Do you offer the following print-related services to your customers?



N = 56 respondents who work for an In-plant  
 Source: *Trends in Workflow Automation Emerging Trends Research*, InfoTrends, 2014  
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### InfoTrends' Opinion

To meet changing budgetary and staffing constraints, corporate printers need to make automating print production workflow a top priority. Workflow automation enables in-plant's to improve turnaround time, enhance productivity, improve customer throughput, as well as explore new service offerings. As competition from commercial vendors and outsourcing continues to occur, in-plant printers need to do all that they can to ensure that they are able to provide the best service and products as efficiently as possible for their organization.

This material is prepared specifically for clients of InfoTrends, Inc. The opinions expressed represent our interpretation and analysis of information generally available to the public or released by responsible individuals in the subject companies. We believe that the sources of information on which our material is based are reliable and we have applied our best professional judgment to the data obtained.

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[Comments or Questions?](#)

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*This analysis was commissioned by Canon Solutions America to help in-plant managers and their parent organizations better understand how today's technologies can optimize their business communications and how they can benefit by adopting these proven best practices.*

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