WEB TO PRINT
ENABLING THE TRANSFORMATION

EXECUTIVE **SUMMARY**

The World Wide Web has fundamentally changed the way we do business. Now, almost every transaction can take place on a web portal. In spite of this transformation many digital print organizations still lack the knowledge to successfully implement an e-commerce web to print solution.

This whitepaper will discuss the impact of this transformation on the digital printing industry and illustrate how organizations can find the right e-commerce web to print solution to meet their needs. In this paper you will learn:

- **The advantages of having a web to print portal**
- **Key considerations in making the right choice of web to print solution**
- **What your customers want in a web to print solution**
- **Understanding that user experience is the key to success.**

E-COMMERCE **OVERVIEW**

The author Alan Cooper posed the question "What do you get when you cross a computer with a" camera, a clock, a car, a bank, or anything else? The answer is simply another computer. [1] Evolving devices coupled with the World Wide Web have changed the way we do business, and it's understandable why e-commerce web to print solutions have enjoyed tremendous growth. InfoTrends forecasts the investment in Web to print solutions in North American to grow from $143 million in 2011 to $259 million in 2016, representing a 12.7% compound annual growth rate. [2]

Web to print solutions exist in all areas where print is used, from photography, to commercial outlets, to packaging. Organizations such as the UPS Store and office suppliers provide B2C web to print services. [3] Vendors that provide B2B solutions assist businesses in setting up web portals and specialize in integrating with existing operations. For smaller businesses, such as designers or photographers, B2B2C solution providers serve as a reseller of works through a customizable web storefront.

The typical B2C web to print portal displays a storefront that allows users to select from a variety of template designs. These templates contain areas

where users can add content, and provide users the option to select images or upload their own image files. An essential component of the portal is the ability to view proofs before making any purchasing decisions. As proofs are viewed and changes are made the cost of the job is continuously updated. Once the design is finalized the user adds the job to the shopping cart for checkout. In the shopping cart customers are provided with payment and shipping options, and after the job is ordered they have ability to track its progress. A B2B solution provides the supplier the opportunity to customize the storefront to the businesses needs and often allows them the ability to personalize templates. The B2B2C or reseller solution also allows businesses to ship non-branded jobs directly to their customers.

E-COMMERCE **AND SALES**

E-commerce is driven by the purchasing habits of consumers. Their expectation is to purchase online and instantly receive information about the product, its price, and shipping options. This experience has been further enabled by the introduction of mobile devices making transactions even easier. [4]

For the print service provider web to print offers an expanded market reach, and it provides opportunities for value added services, such as design, variable data printing, direct marketing, and online and mobile mar-

keting services. Managing these services encourages customer loyalty that can lead to additional opportunities such as complete campaign management. [5] In spite of the advantages of web to print it's critical to make the right choice of an e-commerce web to print solution.

HOW TO **GET STARTED**

The selection of an e-commerce solution begins with the customer. Therefore, the initial step is to understand the needs of your current and potential customers. What are they looking for?

- Faster turnaround
- Ease of transaction
- Templates for employees to use
- Remote proofing and collaborative markup
- A variety of payment options

Once you understand the needs of your customers the next step is to determine if the web to print solution can integrate with your organization's digital printing equipment. [5] Demonstrated integration with equipment similar to what exists in your organization is essential. An e-commerce solution can take the form of licensed software or it can be provided by a web based service (SaaS). Regardless of the option support is a critical component in the selection process. Depending on the needs of the organization an e-com-

merce web to print solution can come as a standard package or it can be custom built. In selecting standard solution there are several factors to consider.

- Will the e-commerce solution be print only or multichannel
- Is it scalable to future needs
- Can it integrate with the organization's digital equipment
- What type of customer payment methods does the portal provide
- How is the security of transactions ensured
- Can portal design be modified
- Are specialized options like VDP available
- What type of support does the vendor provide [6]

The other option is to use a custom portal. While this is more expensive because of development costs, it does provide the ability to create a web to print interface for businesses that may not fit into standard models. One example of a company using a customized e-commerce web to print solution is Thoro Packaging in Corona, California. Thoro found that its customers wanted the ability to produce small run package designs without the expense and lead time normally associated with package production. Their answer was to design a custom web to print interface that provided customers with a portal where they could choose from a number of package designs, upload their graphics and instantly see the cost for short runs. [7]

Regardless of the choice of solution the use of web analytics is essential. Tools such as Google analytics will show where your customers are coming from and the type of devices they are using. And any web portal should include a plan for search engine optimization.

Vendor support is a critical part of the equation. Questions to ask the vendor should include the initial training to be provided and the kind of support offered in the event of a problem. It's critical to look for a complete solution to your organization's needs because customers expect buying print online to be seamless like other products and services.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Once it's determined that the web to print solution will work within your organization the next step is to link your customers' needs to specific features. Customers expect a superior user experience. This experience consists of two components. The first is the ability to perform desired functions, and the second is to access these functions through a superb user interface.

Depending on your customer base they will want to

have the option to upload files or select from a variety of design templates, as well as the ability to quickly see proofs. Also, businesses are becoming aware of the power of personalization. In the past simply adding someone's name to a document was enough, but increasingly businesses are realizing that the data they are collecting about their own customers can be leveraged by using more sophisticated personalization techniques. Regardless of the type of customer you serve it is essential to provide them with a complete package that goes from design to delivery.

In addition to the functionality of the web portal consider the design of the user interface. When looking at a computer screen, a tablet, or mobile device u sers have a different expectation of the experience each platform will provide. For a desktop design the web portal will need to be multicolumn in order to display modules that provide functionality for the user and display business offers. An end user in this setting is expected to engage in more complex work such as designing and ordering a VDP document.

The user of a mobile device is often on the go, so they will be performing different tasks and have different expectations of the user interface. Often, mobile users will be engaged in tasks such as checking order status or proofs. When using a mobile version of the web to print interface there are two basic choices, a responsive website or an App. A responsive website detects the size of the viewport it is displayed on and dynamically modifies the layout of the portal. Typically, this is accomplished by moving from multiple columns to one column inline as the viewport gets smaller. If the features that the user might interact with fit into a responsive design then this is the way to go. However, if user expectations are entirely different in the mobile space then the solution might be a native App. The advantage of an App is that it can use features of the mobile device, such as a camera. For instance, if a user wants to print captured images then a native App would be the best choice. It's also important to remember that the user of a mobile device is transitioning from the desktop world of click into the mobile world of touch, so size and spacing of critical features is essential.

Support has a place in assisting customers in learning and finding new uses for their portal, but it shouldn't be used to make up for a poor user interface. Consider the restaurant that serves inconsistent meals, but readily offers to replace any meal you don't like. They provide great support, but a poor user experience.

SUMMARY

Web to print is a fundamental transformation in the way print service providers interact with their customers. It allows the PSP to expand market reach and to provide value added services. The keys to success are:

- Understand current and future needs of customers

- Provide customers with a superb user experience across all platforms

- Ensure integration with your equipment

- Seek a complete solution that includes training and support

In addition to the functionality of the web portal consider the design of the user interface. When looking at a computer screen, a tablet, or mobile device u sers have a different expectation of the experience each platform will provide. For a desktop design the web portal will need to be multicolumn in order to display modules that provide functionality for the user and display business offers. An end user in this setting is expected to engage in more complex work such as designing and ordering a VDP document.

The user of a mobile device is often on the go, so they will be performing different tasks and have different expectations of the user interface. Often, mobile users will be engaged in tasks such as checking order status or proofs. When using a mobile version of the web to print interface there are two basic choices, a responsive website or an App. A responsive website detects the size of the viewport it is displayed on and dynamically modifies the layout of the portal. Typically, this is accomplished by moving from multiple columns to one column inline as the viewport gets smaller. If the features that the user might interact with fit into a responsive design then this is the way to go. However, if user expectations are entirely different in the mobile space then the solution might be a native App. The advantage of an App is that it can use features of the mobile device, such as a camera. For instance, if a user wants to print captured images then a native App would be the best choice. It's also important to remember that the user of a mobile device is transitioning from the desktop world of click into the mobile world of touch, so size and spacing of critical features is essential.

Support has a place in assisting customers in learning and finding new uses for their portal, but it shouldn't be used to make up for a poor user interface. Consider the restaurant that serves inconsistent meals, but readily offers to replace any meal you don't like. They provide great support, but a poor user experience.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[1] Cooper, A. The Inmates Are Running the Asylum: Why High Tech Products Drive Us Crazy and How to Restore the Sanity. 2004. (Accessed: March 29, 2016).

[2] Fenton. H. InfoTrends. How Web to Print Helps In-Plants Increase Value. 2015. (Accessed: March 29, 2016).

[3] InfoTrends. Web to Print Drives Print Volume and Ensures Economic Viability. 2014. (Accessed: March 3, 2016).

[4] International Business Times. Mobile Devices Are Changing eCommerce: Here's How. 2013. (Accessed: March 3, 2016).

[5] Shaffer, J. Printing Impressions. Web-to-Print: Finding the Right Solution. 2010. (Accessed: February 29, 2016).

[6] InfoTrends. Ultimate Guide: Web to Print. n.d. (Accessed: March 3, 2016).

[7] FoldedColor Packaging. (Accessed: April 6, 2016).

Canon

CANON SOLUTIONS AMERICA