



**Converting New Customer
Dynamics & Preferences
into Print Sales**

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Converting New Customer Dynamics & Preferences into Print Sales

As communication channels have evolved, so have the decision makers and influencers who select media options. Organizations have many media choices with regard to how they communicate with customers and prospects, promote and sell products, and build brand awareness. Decision makers selecting and purchasing media represent various generations, invest in multiple channels, and rely on their communication providers to deliver results.

Print remains a vital communication tool, but print service providers need to offer go-to-market and selling strategies to align with changing customer demographics, requirements, and communication preferences.

This special report combines NAPCO Research survey data with market trends to provide print service providers with key insights and recommendations to guide efforts in converting new customer dynamics and preferences into sales. The report identifies and addresses trends and opportunities in the following areas:

- The relevance and power of print as a communication tool that organizations value and use
- Buyer expectations and confidence in print service providers' ability to offer more than print
- Sales strategies for engaging and influencing a new generation of buyers
- Picking the best social media platforms for attracting prospects
- The metaverse and why it matters to a print business
- Virtual selling recommendations for driving results

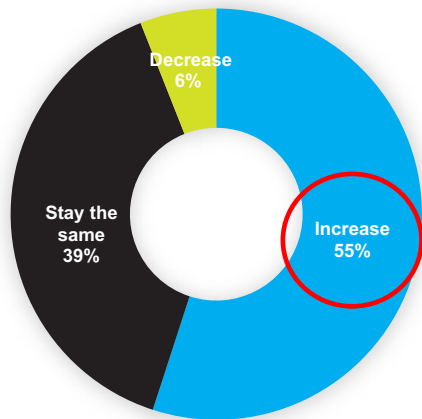
Survey Points to Print's Value and Use

The more than 300 communication buyers and influencers who participated in NAPCO Research's annual Commercial Print Trends and Strategy Service survey make clear that print remains a highly valued communication channel. In fact, respondents indicated that printed communications and transactional documents will represent 39% of their communication spending in the next 12 months, with 55% of respondents stating they expect their communication budget to increase (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Communication Buyer Budget Expectations

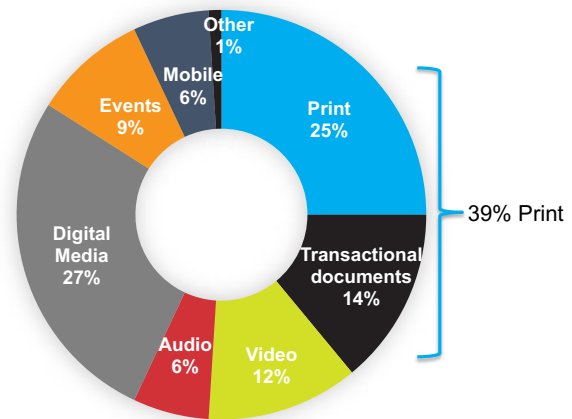
Q. How do you expect your communications budget to change in the next 12 months?

Communication Budget Will ...



Q. How do you expect your company's/ organization's total communications spending will be distributed in the next 12 months by the various communication types that you use today?

Expected Communication Spending: Print Highest Share



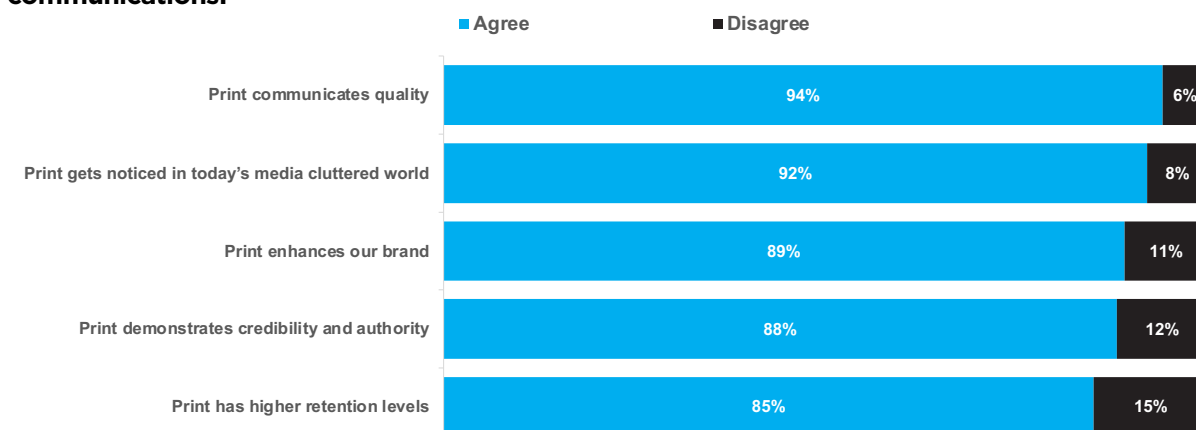
n= 315 Communication Buyers and Influencers
Source: NAPCO Research Annual Commercial Print Trends and Strategy Service, 2023



Communication buyers and influencers see a variety of benefits in print. According to NAPCO Research's study *Propelling Your Business Forward in an Everchanging Competitive Environment*, sponsored by Canon U.S.A., communication decision makers believe (Figure 2) print communicates quality, captures attention in a media-cluttered world, enhances brand image, demonstrates credibility and authority, and yields higher retention levels. This survey finding underscores why organizations use print in their sales conversations and marketing messaging.

Figure 2: Buyers Say Print Communicates Quality and Credibility

Q. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements relative to printed communications.



n=75 Communication Buyers and Influencers

Source: *Propelling Your Business Forward in an Everchanging Competitive Environment*, NAPCO Research 2022



In addition, communication buyers, in a different question in the same survey, ranked print extremely/very effective on the following attributes:

- Return on investment (79%)
- Ease of use (73%)
- Brand building (70%)
- Delivering results (67%)
- Personalized messaging to recipient (64%)
- Capturing attention (63%)
- Measurability (59%)
- Credibility with audience (57%)

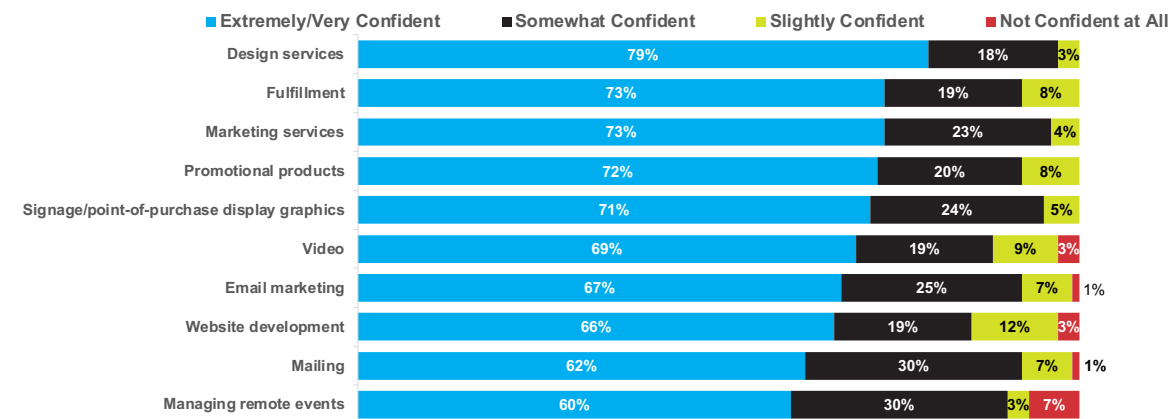
The omnipresence of digital media has led many to question if print is heading toward obsolescence. However, with communication buyers devoting sizable budgetary allocations to print, while firmly believing in its effectiveness, print providers have a strong story to share with customers. Figures 1 and 2, along with communication buyers' ranking of print attributes, tell a strong story on the relevance and value print delivers to users that print providers should share with customers.

Customers Confident in PSPs' Ability to Offer More Than Print

Beyond print, customers are confident and looking for their print service providers to take on additional services. As shown in Figure 3, communication buyers and influencers were asked to rate their confidence in using print service providers for work beyond print. Over half of survey respondents expressed high confidence in using print service providers for design, fulfillment, marketing, video, email marketing, website, mailing, and remote event management services. In addition, respondents gave high marks to print providers in handling promotional products and sign and display graphics.

Figure 3: Buyers' Confidence in Printers

Q. Rate your level of confidence in using a print provider for the following services.



n=75 Communication Buyers and Influencers

Source: *Propelling Your Business Forward in an Everchanging Competitive Environment*, NAPCO Research 2022



This confidence points to the opportunity available for print service providers in expanding ancillary services to create “sticky” business, where deep relationships are formed and customer sales increase. A common obstacle for print providers in expanding services is a belief they lack credibility in offering the service. This survey finding indicates communication buyers and influencers are confident in print providers’ capabilities to offer services beyond print.

Today's Print Customers: Different Mindsets and Requirements

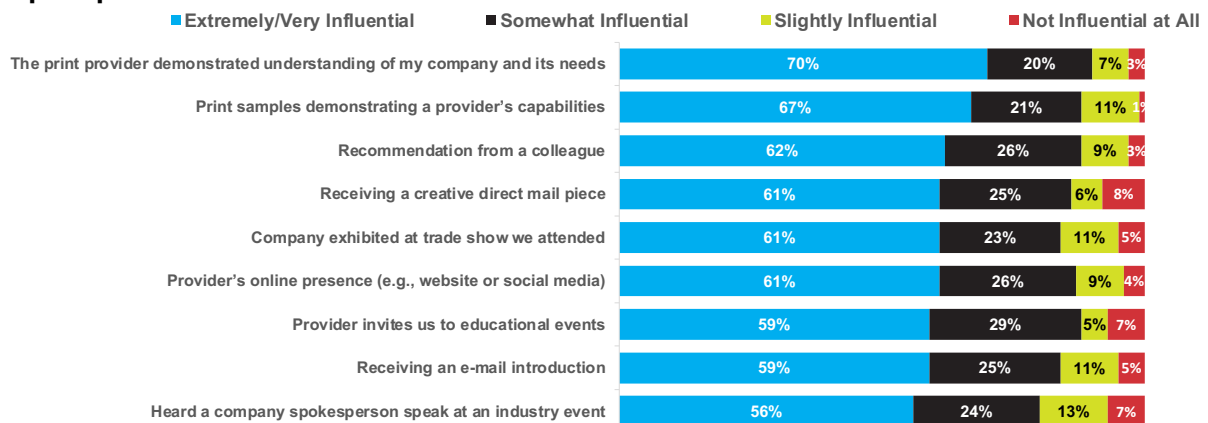
Digital printing changed the customer landscape by expanding the potential base of print users. The ability to offer affordable short-run print work has enabled more organizations to use print. At the same time, digital media has expanded communication choices. As a result, print customers today represent a broad mix of organizations (by size and industry) and differing requirements.

In addition, customers represent various age demographics. According to generational data, most marketers today are likely digital natives, meaning they don't know a world without digital media. An analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data by the Pew Research Center indicates more than one-in-three U.S. labor force participants (35%) are Millennials, making them the largest generation in the U.S. labor force. Generation Z — the first generation of true digital natives — will soon surpass Millennials as the world's most populous generation.

With a new generation of buyers that communicate via multiple channels, print service providers need to consider their strategies in arranging sales conversations. A NAPCO Research survey of communication buyers and influencers provides insight into the most influential factors buyers consider when accepting a sales meeting.

Figure 4: Sales Meeting Influencers

Q. Rate the level of influence of the following factors in deciding to take a sales meeting with a print provider.



n=75 Communication Buyers and Influencers

Source: *Propelling Your Business Forward in an Everchanging Competitive Environment*, NAPCO Research 2022

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Here are recommendations for using these survey findings to land sales meetings.

- **Demonstrate an understanding of the prospect's organization and its needs.** The internet and social media are great tools for learning about prospects, but they are not foolproof. If you can't find all information in advance of a sales conversation, ask the prospect directly. Guide customers to define their pain points and challenges. Here are starter questions to identify a prospect's challenges:
 - What are the key factors stopping your business from growing?
 - What are your organization's biggest profitability challenges?
 - Is your organization losing customers? If so, why?

- How do you communicate with customers? What is the composition of your communication spending? What is the average ROI on your marketing communication investments?
 - What tasks in the print ordering and design process take the most time and how does this affect your business?
- **Send print samples and direct mail to demonstrate capabilities.** Print samples are a great way to demonstrate what your company can do while also providing customers with inspirational ideas. Over two-thirds of survey respondents reported print samples are very influential in accepting a sales call, while 61% noted the influence of receiving a creative direct mail.
 - **Ask clients for referrals and recommendations.** 62% of survey respondents indicated the importance of references. According to the Harvard Business Review, 84% of B2B sales begin with a referral, and peer recommendations are influencing more than 90% of all B2B buying decisions¹.
 - **Attend the same events as customers.** Survey respondents (61%) cited seeing a company exhibiting at a trade show they attended as highly influential in accepting a sales call. Exhibiting at events customers attend offers a venue to meet prospects in-person, demonstrates commitment to their industry, and showcases the credibility of an organization. Speaking at these events is also influential in getting a sales call, as reported by 56% of survey respondents.
 - **Host education events.** 59% of respondents indicate a print provider inviting them to an educational event is highly influential in accepting a sales call. Print providers that host open house events, hold educational webinars, and post online educational tools are demonstrating credibility in meeting customer requirements.
 - **Evaluate and adjust online presence.** Because 61% of respondents report a print provider's online presence influences decisions to take a sales call, the quality of websites and social media pages matter. Clearly defined services, examples of work, thought leadership content, site design, and every other element of online presence influences buyer perceptions. A key question to ask yourself: Based on your company's online presence, would you take a sales call? Communication buyers and influencers are looking for print service providers that demonstrate expertise and innovation. A robust content marketing program — including video, blogs, social media posts, infographics, and whitepapers — can be a competitive differentiator as it can position a print service provider as a trusted expert and industry leader.

¹ How B2B Sales Can Benefit from Social Selling, *Harvard Business Review*, November 2016

Social media is a popular tool used by marketers, brand owners, and communication decision makers to support their organization’s goals. In addition, social media is a means for organizations to learn about printing and print providers.

Print service providers are using social media to distribute content, share ideas, demonstrate expertise, and market services. Because each social media platform offers different user demographics and features, it is important to understand the differences between platforms, how they’re used, and who uses them. Table 1 details user demographics and features of key social media platforms to consider.

Table 1: Social Media Platforms’ Key Demographics and Features

Platform	User Demographics by Age	Features
LinkedIn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25% are 18-29 46% are 30-49 20% are 50-64 8% are age 65+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Popular with marketing professionals. LinkedIn groups enable interaction with people in the same field who share interests and expand business reach. LinkedIn Sales Navigator is a sales management tool that allows sales reps to tap into LinkedIn’s network to contact prospects, generate focused lead lists, send customized sales pitches, build quality pipelines, and monitor and manage prospect accounts.
Twitter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 43% are 18-29 38% are 30-49 14% are 50-64 5% are age 65+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Users can see and subscribe to curated feeds of people they follow. Twitter Polls provide a way to engage audiences and get feedback. Hashtags were started on Twitter, and branded hashtags generate brand awareness.
Facebook	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 23% are 18-29 41% are 30-49 22% are 50-64 14% are age 65+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audience Insights provides aggregate information on Facebook users to create content that resonates with a desired audience. Facebook 360 allows businesses to upload panoramic photos from a smartphone to create immersive and interactive experiences. Facebook Live offers an interactive way to connect with audiences.
Instagram	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 44% are 18-29 37% are 30-49 13% are 50-64 5% are age 65+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shoppable Tags allow users to click on products in images and go to a product page to make purchases. Instagram Live is a great way to engage your audience and interact with them in real time.
YouTube	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 27% are 18-29 40% are 30-49 22% are 50-64 11% are age 65+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most popular social media platform in the U.S. and biggest hub for videos. Is the second-largest search engine after Google and dominates video content sharing.
TikTok	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 52% are 18-29 34% are 30-49 12% are 50-64 2% are age 65+ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows users to create, promote, and react to short video content. Has experienced huge growth across multiple age brackets, though it tends to skew younger. Offers print service providers a way to elevate awareness of print and their company to a wide audience of prospects that includes digital natives.

Source: Pew Research



While a social media presence is increasingly important, companies should strike a balance in the frequency of their posts by not letting their social channels go dormant, but also not overloading customers' feeds. Additionally, social media managers should focus on creating engaging, yet relevant, content for their platforms. Here are some suggestions:

- Photo galleries of a unique or successful print application or samples
- Videos highlighting your operation and staff in action
- New technology and equipment installations
- Interactive Q&As
- Internally produced content/blog posts/webinar replays
- Seasonal promotions
- Photo galleries of internal staff and customer events
- Video interviews with satisfied customers
- Interactive polls
- Highlights from live events

Defining the Metaverse: Why It Matters to Your Print Business

Print service providers are on the hunt for new ideas and platforms to advance their sales, and the metaverse is emerging as an intriguing concept. Investopedia defines the metaverse as a “digital reality that combines aspects of social media, online gaming, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and cryptocurrencies to allow users to interact virtually.”

These various components of the metaverse can be used individually, however, and print service providers can capitalize on them to interact with customers and prospects. For example, a virtual tour of a printing operation uses aspects of the metaverse to show off a facility and its equipment without having to physically bring people in-house.

According to an RR Donnelley (RRD) research study², 94% of marketing decision makers agree the metaverse is a new and exciting way to reach potential customers, and 77% have plans to incorporate marketing inside the metaverse as a new channel within the next year or two. The study surveyed 500 in-house marketing decision makers and 1,000 consumers in the U.S. in August 2022.

Direct mail may also play a role in building the metaverse, as marketers can leverage a common, tangible, and effective channel to connect people to the metaverse, which will be unfamiliar and perhaps intimidating to newcomers.

² The Macro Marketing Report, RRD 2022

In a customer education webinar titled *The Metaverse and Marketing*, Chris Wells, executive vice president of DS Graphics Universal Wilde, discussed what the metaverse is, its implications for marketers, and the role print plays. During the event ([the replay is available on YouTube](#)), Wells described print as the window into the metaverse because people can enter it by scanning a QR code. The video offers DS Graphics Universal Wilde's marketing customers great insights into the metaverse and its role in marketing, while positioning the company as a thought leader.

Even though the metaverse and its role for marketing and print providers is evolving, themes and ideas of what it can be are emerging. Print providers should learn more about the metaverse and focus efforts on finding ways to leverage it in meeting customer requirements.

Virtual Selling Is Here to Stay; Here's How to Yield Results

Although virtual selling has been around for some time, COVID-19 has made it more commonplace. Transitioning in-person sales calls to online video calls can result in organizing sales calls faster and potentially shrinking the sales cycle.

Virtual sales calls take less time compared to face-to-face meetings, which is attractive to customers and prospects. For print service providers, virtual sales calls can save time, costs, and travel expenses. In addition, assembling all essential customer decision makers and stakeholders for a virtual call is usually easier than organizing an in-person event, as people can log in from anywhere.

Virtual Sales Meeting Checklist

Given the increased use and acceptance of virtual sales calls, it is important to establish best practices for selling in this environment. Here is a checklist of best practices to consider:

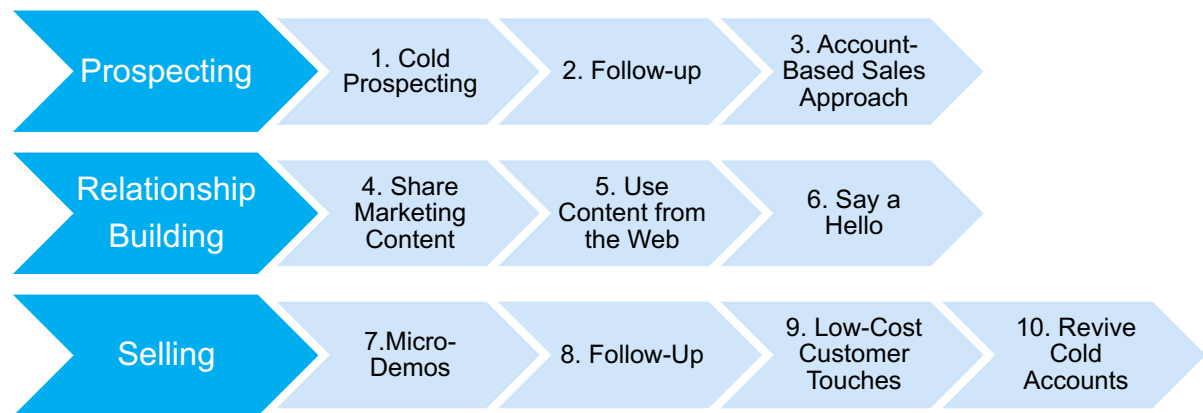
1. Create a defined agenda of what will be covered in the call, including the call login details, and send it in advance of the call.
2. Make sure everyone who needs to be on the call is invited.
3. Focus the presentation on prospects and what you can do for them.
4. Before the call, eliminate background noise and declutter your visible space.
5. Record the meeting.
6. Pay attention to the attentiveness of meeting participants.
7. Take notes — even of nonverbal reactions to anything you say or do.
8. Prompt for a next step at the end of the call.
9. Send a meeting recap email.
10. Share any relevant content with your prospects after the call to continue engagement and advance the sales discussions.
11. Send the invitation to your next meeting.

Sales Prospecting with Personal Video

In addition to live meetings, virtual selling includes communicating with prospects through emailing personalized video messages throughout the sales cycle. For example, video sales tools like Vidyard, Loom, BombBomb, Bonjoro, or Wistia can be used to create personalized videos for current customers and prospects. These videos can discuss new services or offer tips on ways to overcome business challenges. Figure 5 highlights 10 ways to use video in sales. These videos provide deeper context than an email message and allow prospects to “virtually” meet potential vendors and begin building a relationship not likely through a text-based email. Using personal video in prospecting efforts is more easily attainable as a result of video prospecting tools.

Figure 5: Ways to Use Video in Sales

Q. Rate the level of influence of the following factors in deciding to take a sales meeting with a print provider.



Source: Vidyard

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Conclusion

Shifting customer demographics and expanding communication options require print service providers to tailor sales and marketing strategies to address today’s new customer dynamics. Use the research data and information presented in this report to support efforts to pursue trends, strengthen selling, train staff, better communicate with prospects, adopt new tools, and ultimately to help grow sales.

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 NAPCO RESEARCH

NAPCO Research crafts custom data-centric solutions that leverage our highly engaged audiences across the markets in which we operate, our industry subject matter experts and in-house research expertise. We partner with our clients to identify their unique business problem and create solutions that enable deeply informed decision-making.

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- Opportunity discovery
- Market segmentation
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- User needs and wants
- Product features and functionality
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- Sales strategy and tactics
- Market conditions
- Benchmarking
- Industry trends
- Brand awareness

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