

ANALYSIS

HOW WEB-TO-PRINT IS DRIVING INKJET SUCCESS

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Introduction

Inkjet print volumes are on the rise and are expected to see continued growth as businesses seek ways to obtain high-quality printed materials in a fast, cost-effective, and efficient manner. This presents a great opportunity for print service providers (PSPs) that own an inkjet press, but it's important to note that simply having an inkjet press is not enough for substantial business growth. It takes a combination of factors working together to achieve success. Print volumes depend on your sales and marketing efforts, the finishing solutions you offer, a smooth workflow, and how your customers place their orders.

The on-demand digital economy has revolutionized the way people shop and obtain all types of goods. With just a few clicks, consumers can have their favorite takeout delivered to their doorstep or access the latest fashion trends without having to step outside. This convenience revolution is not limited to life's luxuries; it has also made its mark in the printing industry.

Web-to-print solutions have become increasingly important to our industry as they enable businesses to streamline their ordering processes and increase efficiency. This article explores the impact of web-to-print solutions and considers how the automation they embody is driving inkjet success.

Technology Stacking

The volume of print being produced on an inkjet device is often associated with technological advancements. To put this another way, improvements in image quality and substrate flexibility can make it easier to produce the shorter run lengths that today's businesses require. Other drivers behind the popularity of inkjet include the ability to produce personalized, customized print at prices that justify a strong return on investment. This, coupled with the speed that inkjet delivers, means that applications once reserved for a traditional offset press can now be printed digitally.

Clearly, it's not easy to point to a single reason for the growth in inkjet pages—ever-changing customer expectations and ongoing technological innovations will continue to create new opportunities. This might seem like an overly simplified reason for why inkjet is finding success in today's market, but that's because it is. It's important to remember the value that inkjet delivers, but its ultimate success can be attributed to a bigger picture. The impact of technology stacking, or the cascading effect a single piece of technology that leads to subsequent conveniences and advancements, cannot be underestimated. Each part of a new solution will build upon the previous one, creating a "cascade" of improvements that drive growth, efficiency, and competitive advantage.

The relationship between web-to-print platforms and inkjet production presses is a good example of how a single piece of equipment or technology is rarely the reason behind



business growth. Instead, success can be attributed to multiple components and elements that work together in harmony and cause a ripple effect. For another analogy, a powerful computer alone does not make a complete solution. That computer must be connected to other devices (e.g., monitor, keyboard, mouse) and have the necessary software installed to be useful. Therefore, while the inkjet press is a tower of strength, capturing the opportunities it can create will depend on the systems surrounding it.

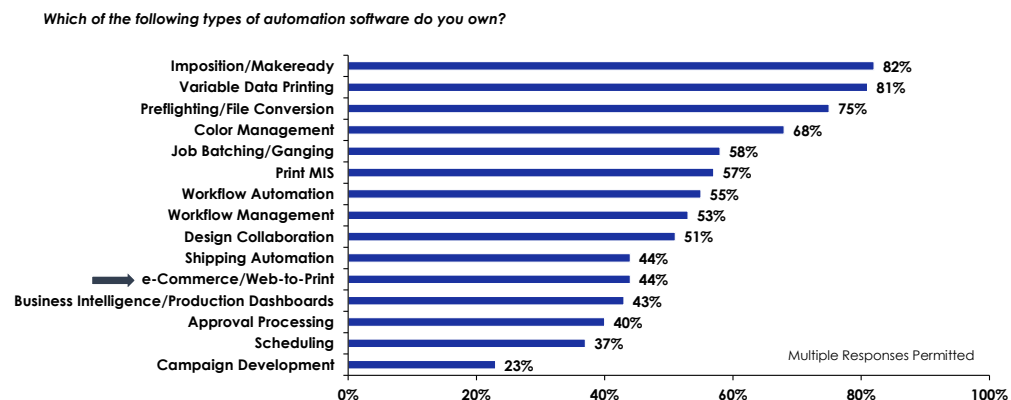
Web-to-Print Doomsday: How Will Sales Teams Survive?

It's not uncommon for a sales rep to want to be the point of contact when their customer places an order. Although the sales rep can still be involved, a [McKinsey report](#) states that nearly 86% of B2B decision-makers prefer using self-service options for reordering rather than meeting with or speaking to a salesperson.

Although many were initially concerned that web-to-print solutions would negatively impact the direct sales process, the reality is that W2P has not replaced the role of sales reps. Instead, it can be a way to facilitate the transformation of B2B sales by enabling reps to take a more consultative approach and build personalized relationships with customers. By taking this approach, sales reps can move toward a more strategic and advisory role, rather than being bogged down by manual tasks like filling out quotes or taking orders via traditional methods.

According to Keypoint Intelligence's 2022 North American Software Investment Outlook report, there is room for improvement on the web-to-print front. In fact, less than half of surveyed PSPs (44%) own an e-commerce or W2P solution.

Figure 1: Automation Software Ownership



N = 91 Respondents who own automation software
 Source: North American Software Investment Outlook; Keypoint Intelligence 2022



Additional data suggests that PSPs still rely heavily on their direct sales teams to manually collect orders. With the trend toward smaller run lengths, the number of jobs required to make up the difference in revenue is a reality that every PSP must face. Using your revenue engine—your sales team—as a resource to collect jobs is an expensive solution.

Mirroring the Requirements of Today's Print Buyers

According to [Deloitte](#), the digital revolution is drastically altering the way that B2B buyers make purchasing decisions. At this time, nearly 70% of the purchasing process is occurring online. In a similar study, Keypoint Intelligence asked print buyers where they purchased print. A heavy majority of respondents (93%) reported buying at least some print online and over half shared preferred using an online purchasing tool or platform that was customized to their company.

PSPs have an opportunity to create a strong competitive advantage simply by mirroring the wants and needs of today's print buyers. There are an endless number of investments that can be considered to remain competitive and current, but there's no question that PSPs must adapt their customer engagement strategies to reflect the shift toward digitization.

The relationship between W2P and inkjet success extends beyond clearing the path for a frictionless ordering process. Embracing an e-commerce solution addresses some of the biggest clogs in the productivity wheel, specifically errors and waste. With the rising cost of labor and materials, future success will depend on automation. PSPs who offer customized W2P solutions deliver far more than print communication. They literally hand their customers:

- ◆ **Convenience** by enabling print buyers to place orders quickly and easily without having to wait for a sales rep to be available. This saves time and improves the ordering process.
- ◆ **Control:** With self-service tools, print buyers have control to make changes or adjustments to their orders as needed. They can also easily track their order status, which improves transparency, trust, and peace of mind.
- ◆ **Accessibility:** W2P tools are available 24/7, so buyers can place orders at any time, from anywhere.
- ◆ **Speed:** Self-service tools enable faster order processing because there's no need for back-and-forth communication with a customer service/sales representative. This can reduce lead times while also improving the overall efficiency of the ordering process.

Overall, the benefits of online ordering systems and the value inkjet delivers is a sum that is greater than its parts.



The Bottom Line

If you want to determine how your inkjet business will benefit from a new and improved ordering process, the following three steps can help to establish the framework you need to make an informed decision:

1. Start by creating a map of the steps required to successfully onboard print jobs.
2. Talk with customers that buy inkjet from you so you can determine what would make their life easier.
3. Turn to your inkjet solutions partner. They can help you identify potential solutions!



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As part of the Business Development Strategies Consulting Service at Keypoint Intelligence, Karen Kimerer has experienced the many challenges of expanding current market opportunities and securing new business. She has developed a systematic approach to these opportunities, addressing the unique requirements of becoming a leader in our changing industry.

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