

WhatTheyTh!nk

Presented By :

Pat McGrew + Ryan McAbee

TECH OUTLOOK: SOFTWARE & WORKFLOW

August 25, 2026



Get the most out of this webinar...



**Send us your questions
during the webinar**

*Please use the Q&A box instead
of Chat box to ask questions*



**Video and audio archive will be
available later today along with
PDF of slides**

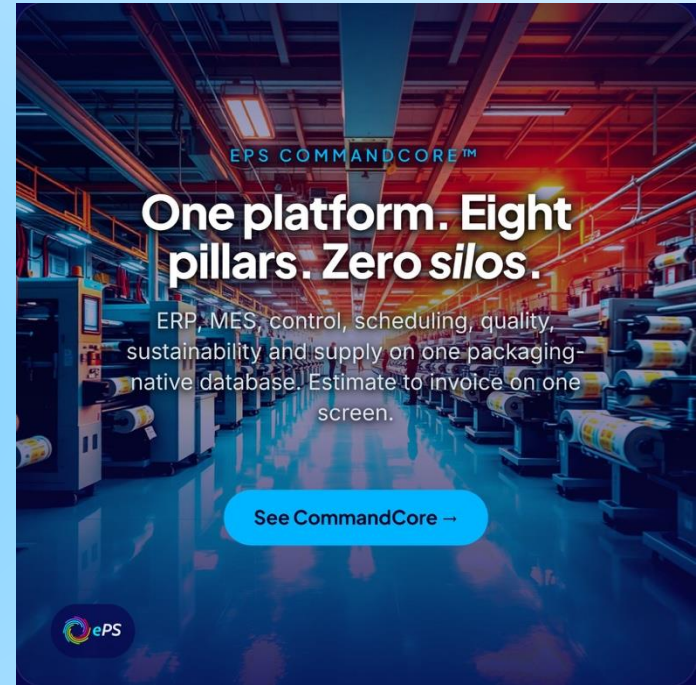
CommandCore: The Unified Platform for Packaging Manufacturing

Packaging manufacturers don't need more software. They need their operations to work as one.

CommandCore is the unified platform built specifically for packaging manufacturers, connecting ERP, MES, scheduling, production, quality, maintenance, and sustainability through a single operational foundation.

Instead of disconnected systems and fragmented data, CommandCore creates a connected manufacturing environment where every department works from the same trusted information. Teams gain greater visibility, faster decision making, improved production performance, and the confidence to respond quickly to changing customer and market demands.

From reducing waste and improving efficiency to supporting regulatory reporting and continuous improvement, CommandCore helps manufacturers turn operational data into measurable business value, enabling smarter decisions across every plant and every stage of production.



Your Hosts



PAT MCGREW

Managing Director

McGrewGroup, Inc.

PCM@McGrewGroup.com

+1.720.220.5097



RYAN MCABEE

Chief Analyst

Pixel Dot Consulting

Ryan.McAbee@pixeldotconsulting.com

+1.973.747.6826

The front office is the new automation frontier.

Every job starts as customer intent.
The opportunity is to make that intent structured, validated, and production-ready.



Inquiry

Quote

Ticket

Prepress

Press-ready

The pressroom got faster. The front office did not.

Behind the pressroom door

- Faster presses
- Consistent prepress workflows
- Color managed as repeatable science

Three or four human touchpoints can sit between the request and prepress.

At the front door

- Email threads
- Manual rekeying
- Tribal knowledge

Each handoff can create delay, error, or margin leakage.

The question is no longer whether the plant can produce the work. It is whether the front office can intake, price, validate, and hand it off at the same pace.

WHY NOW

Speed and self-service are now the benchmark.

Customers are comparing print buying to every other commercial transaction they complete online: fast, transparent, and low-friction.

- 1 Instant or same-hour response wins attention.
- 2 CSR-heavy intake is expensive to sustain.
- 3 Automation is accessible to shops of nearly any size.

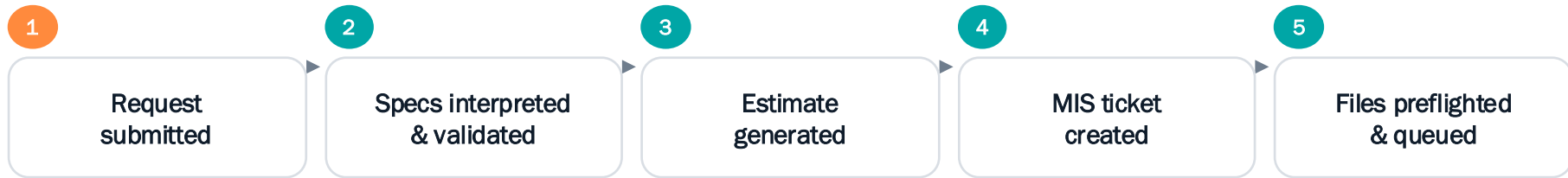
Automation has moved from “someday” to competitive table stakes.

DEFINITION

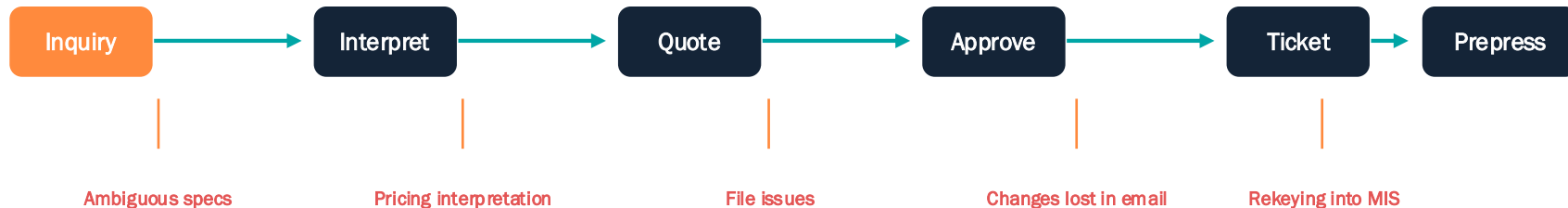
Front office automation converts intent into a job.

Customer intent  Structured, actionable production job

The goal is not to replace customer relationships. It is to remove mechanical work so human judgment stays where it matters.



Every handoff is a friction point.



Prioritize by frequency × error rate — not by technology novelty.

Map the path from inquiry to prepress. The best first automation project is usually the handoff that happens most often and causes the most rework.

THE FOUR TARGETS

Focus automation where the front office leaks time.

01

Structured intake

Turn emails and free-text requests into validated job data.

02

Speed-to-quote

Compress quote turnaround for repeatable work.

03

File receipt + preflight

Automate receipt, checks, fixes, exceptions, and notifications.

04

MIS handoff

Create job tickets and scheduling data without rekeying.

These are not separate conversations. Together they define how quickly a customer request becomes press-ready work.

TARGET 1

Turn unstructured requests into structured data.

Customer email

“2,500 brochures
8.5 × 11
tri-fold
full color
100 lb gloss text
due Thursday”



Structured job data

Product	Brochure
Quantity	2,500
Size	8.5 × 11
Fold	Tri-fold
Stock	100 lb gloss text
Due	Thursday

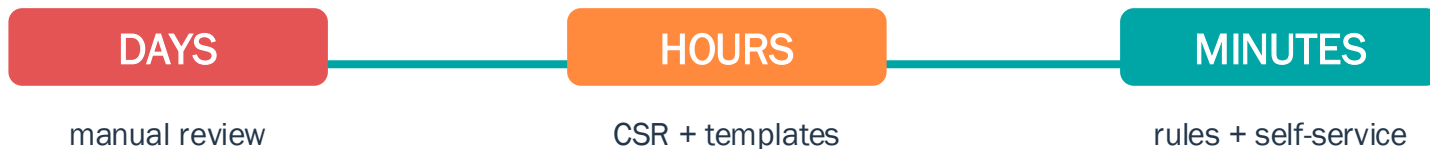
AI extraction → validation layer →
MIS/API handoff

Examples: Good2Go AI Order Pilot, Fiery Scribe, and PlanProphet.

TARGET 2

Quote turn time is a competitive variable.

When buyers get an instant or same-hour quote, they rarely wait a day for another one.

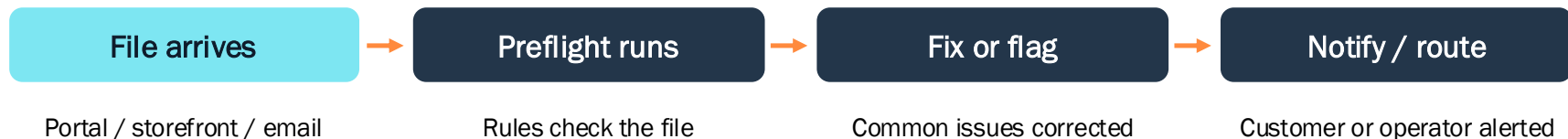


For repeat product types, quote delays are usually a process bottleneck — not unavoidable complexity.

Technology options: web-to-print pricing engines, template-based estimating, rules-driven pricing, buyer-facing configurators, and MIS tools that compare production paths.

TARGET 3

File receipt and preflight should not be separate manual events.



Minimum viable workflow: receive files, run preflight, auto-fix the common issues, and route only true exceptions to people.

Examples: Enfocis Switch + PitStop for workflow/preflight; Esko Automation Engine + Comply for packaging and content validation.

TARGET 4

The MIS handoff should be clean, connected, and no-rekey.

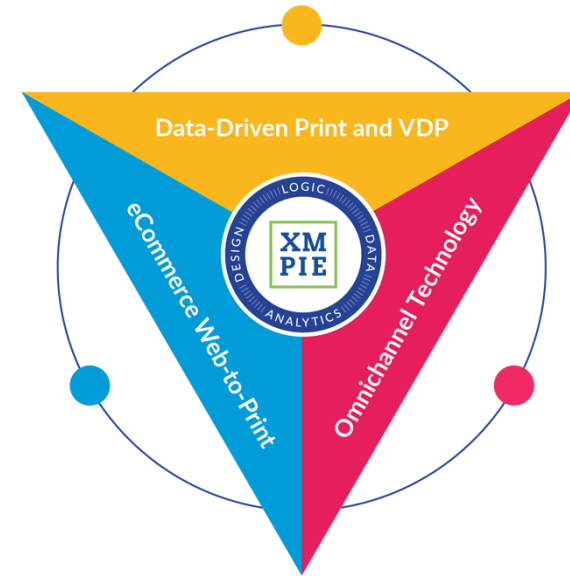


NO REKEYING

Estimate details, customer-approved changes, and file status should flow into the job ticket without someone typing them again.

The gap is often not MIS capability. It is the connection between the intake tool and the MIS backend.

		
Data-Driven Print and VDP Automate to streamline the creation of hyper-personalized content. Scale up to high-speed, high-volume projects.	eCommerce Web-to-Print Extend your market reach by selling Print via an eCommerce workflow that maximizes efficiencies at every stage.	Omnichannel Technology Futureproof your business by expanding into lucrative services that unify Print and Digital media.



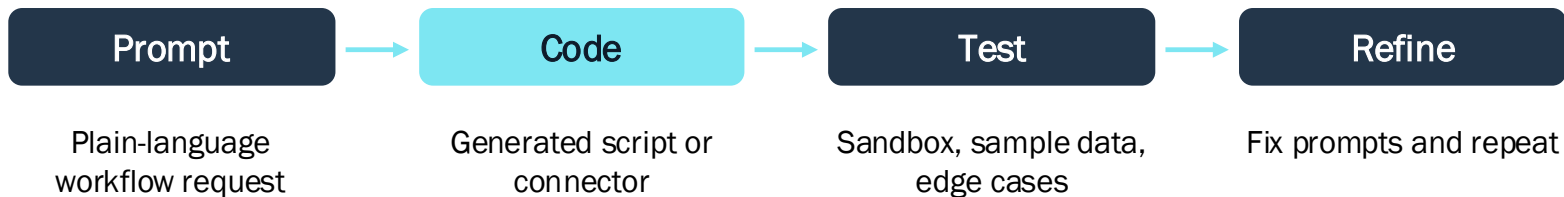
From personalized direct mail to digital engagement, XMPie connects every touchpoint into a seamless customer journey. Trusted by In-Plants and Print Service Providers worldwide, the platform automates the creation and delivery of relevant, data-driven communications at scale.



one to one in one™

Plain-language prompting can now create useful code.

Describe what you want. The AI writes code. You test it, refine it, and iterate.

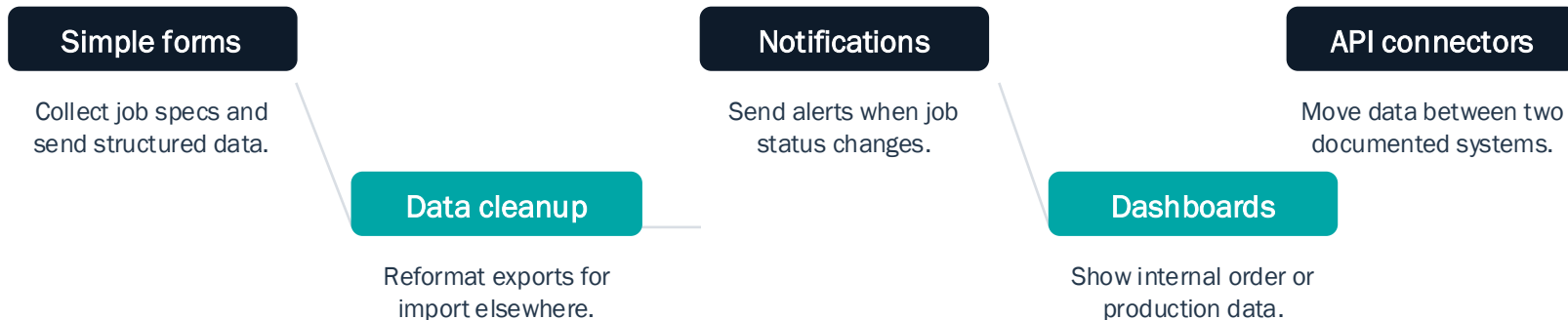


The genuine shift: people who understand the workflow deeply can prototype automations without formal programming experience.

REALISTIC SCOPE

Use vibe coding for low-risk internal automation.

Best when the downside of failure is a temporary inconvenience — not data loss, compliance exposure, or customer impact.



Vibe coding works best where a small script can reclaim repetitive time without becoming a mission-critical platform.

RISK LENS

The risk is not “AI code.” It is an unmanaged dependency.

Maintenance dependency

Nobody fully understands the code when it breaks.

Security + data exposure

Customer data and pricing logic need controls.

API fragility

Vendor updates can break unsupported connectors.

Scope creep

A quick script can become an unofficial system.

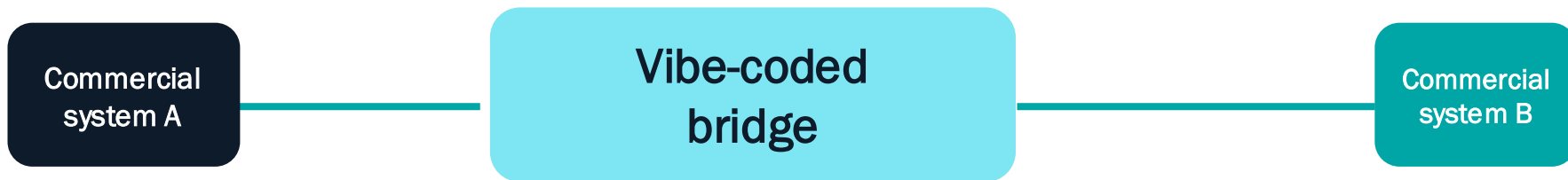
Compliance risk

Regulated data needs professional standards.

Use commercial software when reliability, vendor support, and long-term maintainability are requirements.

THE RIGHT ROLE

Use vibe coding as a bridge — not a parallel system.



Examples that fit:

- Website job form → draft estimate in MIS
- MIS status update → shop-floor display or shared channel

Examples to avoid:

- Custom order management that replaces the MIS
- Tools that handle payments or regulated data without controls

Before live data: scope, test, log, document.

1

Start with documented APIs

Published, versioned API docs are the foundation.

2

Scope tightly

Define fields, direction, triggers, and failure behavior.

3

Ask for logging

Make failures visible and troubleshooting possible.

4

Test in a sandbox

Use sample data before connecting live customer jobs.

5

Document what you built

Create plain-language restart and support notes.

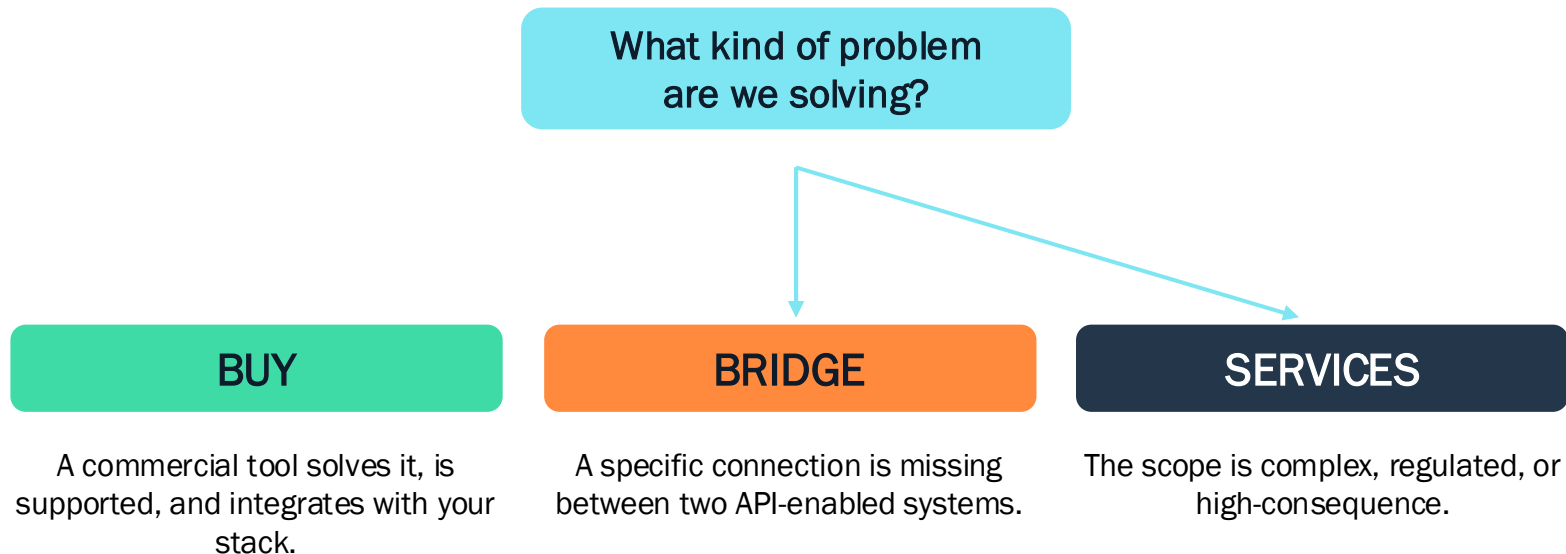
6

Know when to hire

High-consequence work needs professional services.

The same AI tool that helps write the connector can also write a plain-English explanation of what it does.

Make the decision explicit before the project starts.



Before adding software or code, ask: are we closing a real process gap, or automating a process that needs to be simplified first?

WHERE TO START

A practical 30 / 60 / 90-day front-office reset.

30

Audit handoffs

Map every information transfer from inquiry to prepress. Baseline quote time and intake-to-ticket time.

60

Fix intake first

Standardize job specs, add forms or AI-assisted parsing, and reduce clarification loops.

90

Connect and measure

Use existing APIs, automate a narrow handoff, and track exception rates and CSR hours per job.

Measure the work you automate.

Quote turn time • Intake-to-ticket time • Preflight exceptions • CSR hours per job

Is your front door as capable as your pressroom?

The most competitive print operations will close the gap from customer request to press-ready job ticket with fewer manual steps, reentries, and interpretations.

Which front-office handoff costs you the most today?



McGrew
Group



pcm@mcgrewgroup.com



+1 720 220 5097



/patmcgrew



www.McGrewGroup.com



PIXEL DOT

Elevating Print with Tech



ryan@pixeldotconsulting.com



/mbossed



+1 973 747 6826



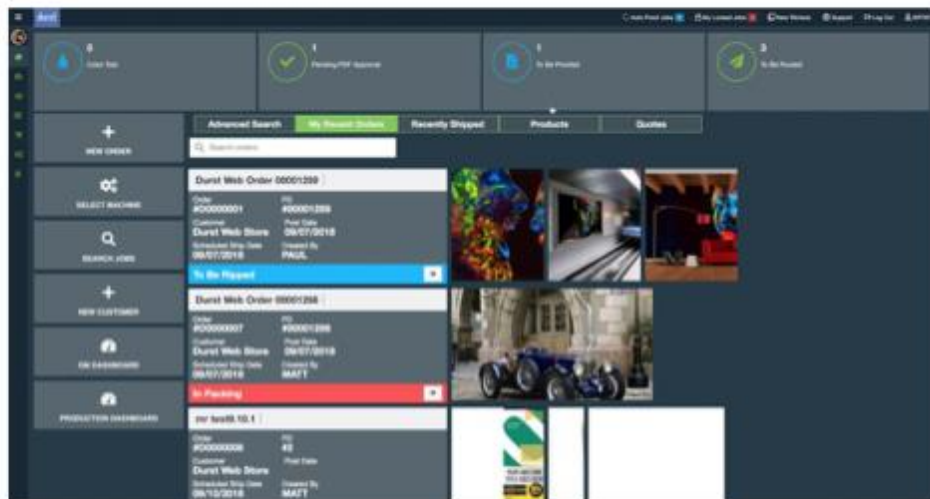
www.PixelDotConsulting.com

Streamline Your Print Process With Lift ERP, An ERP System Developed For Today's Print Service Provider

Durst Lift ERP is a cloud-based, print-specific ERP system built to optimize every aspect of your print shop's operations from quotation, order entry, preflight, production, purchasing, inventory, shipping, accounting, and everything in between. It replaces paper-intensive processes with a fully digital, customizable, and scalable platform that “speaks your language,” ensuring your workflows are mirrored in the software rather than altered for it.

With features such as rule-based estimating, real-time visibility, push notifications, customer portals, and seamless integrations, Lift ERP empowers you to reduce manual data entry, eliminate errors, streamline production, and enhance customer engagement all while boosting productivity and profitability.

Whether accessing dashboards from anywhere or managing customer orders online, your team and clients stay connected. Lift ERP transforms your print business into a lean, automated, paperless, and highly responsive operation, delivering more with less effort.



Q&A

Send us your
questions!

Upcoming Webinars

Technology Outlook Week Continues!

Wednesday, August 26—Labels & Packaging w/David Zwang, sponsored by Michelman, Durst, and EFI

Thursday, August 27—Display Graphics & Signage and Textiles & Apparel w/Richard Romano and Cary Sherburne, sponsored by EFI and Canon LFS

Friday, August 28—Appearance Management w/Don Carli, sponsored by Tecnav

The Evolution of Inkjet in Direct Mail—Market Forces and Technology Shifts

Wednesday, September 9—Presented by Ramya Krishnan, Business Segment Manager, Specialty Printing & Technology Solutions, for HP Inc., and Kevin Loos, VP Sales & International Business for MCS. Sponsored by HP/MCS

For more information and to register, visit
whattheythink.com/webinars

Thanks for attending!