



# **Transforming Today's Print Business for Tomorrow's Marketplace— The View From 2020**

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# Transforming Today's Print Business for Tomorrow's Marketplace—The View From 2020

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## Abstract

The market for print and for specific printed products has been changing dramatically. By 2020, the marketplace will have changed even more. As an industry, we cannot remain focused on “the way things have always been done.” Printers need to rethink their businesses, and the products and services they produce. A lot of that involves rethinking the approach to buying equipment, as well as rethinking the entire company culture. This white paper looks at the changing role of print, the changing demand for print products, and how new technologies are both challenging and enabling the print businesses of tomorrow.

## Introduction: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

Markets are dynamic. What products or services that are in demand today will likely not be in demand tomorrow. Broad *classes* of things will—food, clothes, cars—but the specific products that make up those classes are ever-changing. The foods, clothes, and cars that were popular in the 1950s are very different from what were popular in the 1970s, the 1990s, and which are different from what are popular today.

Changing tastes, cultural norms, and other external factors cause many changes in demand for products, but of all the factors that affect the market for products or classes of products, nothing has more impact than technology. The transistor radio, introduced in 1954, was one of the most successful products in history. It killed the market for vacuum tube-based radios, which had been another highly successful product, and in fact the primary means of home entertainment in the 1930s and '40s. The transistor radio had a good run, but look around today and you'll probably not find anybody carrying one anymore. People are more likely to have any of a variety of digital media players or smartphones. And what people will be carrying in 20 years time will probably be completely different.

We should not be surprised that the market for print—and the technologies used to produce print—are no less dynamic. The print products that are in demand today are very different from what was in demand 20 years ago, before anyone had ever heard of digital printing, production inkjet, or variable data.

Likewise, printing technology has changed over the 500+ years of printing history. Offset lithography was only invented in 1904 and didn't become commercially acceptable until the 1960s and '70s, displacing letterpress, which had, in one form or another, been the dominant printing technology for centuries. The advent of digital printing in the 1990s, disparaged at first as a low-quality way of printing (just like offset had been, actually), eventually became acceptable and digital has been accounting for a greater and greater percentage of the overall market for print ever since. Talk to any digital printing equipment manufacturer and the common refrain you'll hear is the ability of their presses to “take pages from offset.”

Then, of course, we can't ignore—nor *should* we ignore—the biggest trend of them all: the declining demand for print thanks to electronic media, the Internet and, now, mobile technologies.

### *The Way the Printing Industry Was: 1998 Was the Year of Judgment*

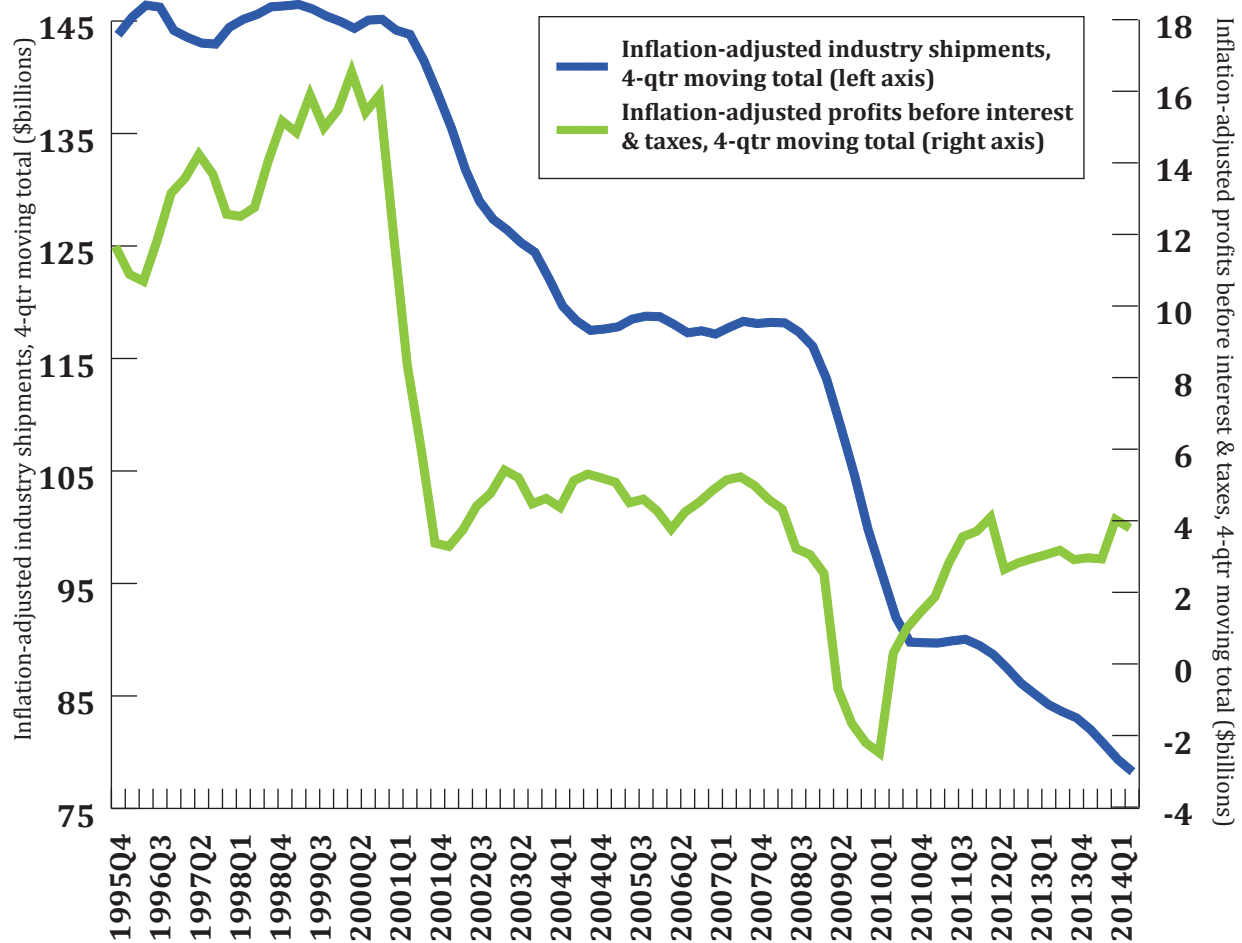
1998 was the prelude to a printing industry recession, although it certainly didn't feel like it at the time, as the rest of the economy was on the upswing. The Internet “dot-com” boom

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was accelerating, and commercial printers were rising with that tide. Companies had money to burn, and they needed *some* way of driving traffic to all those brand-new websites, driving the demand for print.

Then something happened. That something was “search.” Search engines were nothing new—Lycos, WebCrawler, Alta Vista, and Yahoo! had been around for a few years—but then Google came along in 1999 and very quickly “google” became synonymous with “search.” No one needed physical (aka print) media to drive traffic to websites. No one really “surfed” the web anymore; they could head for specific destinations. The Internet could serve as its own enclosed ecosystem. So by the time the dot-com bust and mini-recession hit in 2001, the printing industry's decline had already started.

Figure 1: Printing Industry Shipments and Profits, 1995–2014



Source: *Strategies for Management analysis of U.S. Commerce Department data*

## The Way the Printing Industry Has Become: The Digital Age (in Several Senses)

Here's an interesting thought experiment: would digital printing have become so successful as a technology if the Internet and electronic media had never existed? The arrival of digital

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printing in the mid 1990s coincided with the advent and proliferation of the Internet, and the applications for which digital printing proved ideal were exactly in line with communications trends driven by the Internet: timeliness (instantaneous in the case of the Internet, “fast turnaround,” however one chooses to define that, in the case of digital printing) and relevance (data-driven email and other marketing initiatives, VDP and personalization).

There has been a persistent myth in the industry that “run lengths are declining” and that’s why there’s been the shift from offset or gravure to digital. When looked at in a very broad sense, that’s true. However, when we look more closely at print products and printing technologies, we find not that run lengths *per se* are declining due to a shift to digital, but rather that the *applications* for which digital is well-suited are increasing, while those for which analog technologies like offset are well-suited are *decreasing*. These new applications comprise highly targeted, personalized, and/or customized jobs that, generally speaking, would never have been offset work to begin with.

As digital printing technology has evolved and improved, it has enabled more and more unique “high-value” applications. So in the past decade we have seen a shift away from long-run “commodity printing” toward shorter-run “specialty printing.” Think of things like limited-edition photobooks, on-demand books, one-off items, garment printing, and so on.

## *The Way the Printing Industry is Becoming: To 2020 and Beyond*

We can use the term “short run” in at least two different senses. The first is the traditional sense, of pressruns of a small number of copies.<sup>1</sup> The second sense is that certain “short

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***It’s vitally important that printers have much greater interaction with their customers than they traditionally have had, and keep a close eye on what products are falling in and out of favor.***

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run” applications may not exist in 10 years. For example, photobooks are a hot item today, but there is no guarantee that they will be in demand in 2020. As more and more people use Instagram and Facebook to share photos, what impact will that have on the demand for photobooks—even those that are designed to commemorate specific events, like weddings?<sup>2</sup> So the industry needs to acclimate itself to a market for print products that changes far more rapidly than it is used to.

As a result, it’s vitally important that printers have much greater interaction with their customers than they traditionally have had, and keep a close eye on what products are falling in and out of favor.

This trend is one of the most important facing the industry today, and will be discussed further below in the conversations about staff and, especially, equipment.

<sup>1</sup> What is considered “short run” can vary hugely depending upon whom you ask. While it is often thought that “short run” is anything under 5,000 copies (or maybe 1,000 copies...perhaps even less), a label printer may consider 100,000 or 200,000 to be short run, and a big magazine or catalog printer—using heatset web or gravure equipment—may consider a “short run” anything under a million copies. So it’s all relative.

<sup>2</sup> I recently witnessed a conversation among twentysomethings, one of whom (and it wasn’t the groom) had no qualms about sending email-only wedding invitations. The way of the future or just plain tacky? A fine line.

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It is also becoming more and more imperative that printing companies step outside their comfort zones and consider offering, in some way, complementary and supplementary non-print products and services, like email marketing,<sup>3</sup> social media marketing, mobile app development, database management, and so on. There has been a great push in the last 10 years for printers to brand themselves as “marketing services providers” without really knowing too much what that specifically means or entails. We will also discuss that below in the section in marketing automation.

## The Forces Impacting the Industry

There are myriad forces affecting the demand for print and therefore the health of the printing industry. It's tempting to think that these are only bad forces, but they can be good forces as well. As we will see later in this white paper, a lot of these same forces can also be used to *help* the industry.

### *New Technology*

At one point, we would have put “the Internet” here, but the Internet in general is not a new technology, and it's only but one aspect of a larger network of technologies. It's not necessarily “the Internet” that is impacting print, but the applications enabled by the Internet: email, websites, downloadable files like PDFs, social media, online video, and more. These are all specific applications that have helped erode the demand for print. There are also more subtle “stealth” technologies that, it could be said, are weaning us off print—electronic boarding passes, emailed ATM receipts, online statements, PDF-based forms, and more. Even restaurant menus are in danger of going electronic, from the dynamic digital signage used in new fast food franchises, to an emerging trend of using iPads even in sit-down restaurants.<sup>4</sup> Smartphone-based transactions via Apple Pay may also further erode our reliance on print.

At the moment, mobile devices are the technology *du jour*, and the image on the next page gives some indication of why devices like the iPhone have taken over.

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<sup>3</sup> I may be going out on a limb here, but I have serious doubts that email marketing will be a go-to channel much beyond 2020. Email in general is becoming less effective as a communication medium, and young people don't use it all, preferring to communicate via Facebook Messenger, other social media like Twitter, or basic texting.

<sup>4</sup> There is a restaurant in New York's JFK airport, launched in 2010, that uses iPads at tables as menus and users order directly through the iPad. You can even enter your flight time into the iPad and it will remind you when departure is imminent. See <http://www.delish.com/food/recalls-reviews/at-jfk-airport-eateries-ipad-will-be-your-server>.

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*20 Years Later, All These Things Fit In Your Pocket*



It is not an exaggeration, either. And, in fact, there are even things missing, such as a large bookshelf, a newsstand, and a magazine rack.

Perhaps the biggest impact that new technologies have had on print—and not *just* on print—is the proliferation of communication channels. If you need to reach someone, you have the following choices:

- Printed mail
- Telephone
- Email (often more than one account)
- Mobile phone
- Skype (call, video call, and/or instant messaging)
- FaceTime
- Instant messaging
- SMS messaging (texting)
- Facebook Messenger
- Twitter
- LinkedIn Mail

And there are more appearing all the time. As the number of ways to communicate increases, it's easy to become overwhelmed and ignore or miss messages. Even important messages can be lost in a sea of communication. Different individuals also have different preferences as to how they prefer to communicate, and with whom. Some people prefer email, some never check their email. Some prefer texting, some hate it. Some prefer LinkedIn Mail, some have no idea it even exists. Some use Twitter for one-to-one communication, some only follow George Takei on Twitter and that's it. Some people rely entirely on Facebook for messaging, others despise Facebook. And still others prefer a good old-fashioned phone call to anything else. It's a miracle we can get in touch with anyone these days, isn't it?

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It could be argued that, given how empty a lot of our physical mailboxes are these days compared to our email inboxes, the best way for communication to stand out may very well be print. The effectiveness of email alone has always a bit overstated; in terms of return on investment, it was always quite good (since the investment was practically nothing, *any* response could yield a decent return, which is why spam is such a problem), but in terms of response rates, email's was never as high as print's. However, when used in *combination* with print and/or other channels, overall response was always greater than the sum of the parts.

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***When email is used in combination with print and/or other channels, overall response was always greater than the sum of the parts.***

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If there is one trend that is constant in the evolution of communication technology, it's that it is becoming faster. One wonders how much faster you can get than the "instant message," but it's a safe bet something new will come along. The point is that in an age of instantaneous communication, there is little room for print in that equation.

However, while the evolution of communication has challenged print substantially, as we'll see in the next section, this is where a lot of the opportunities for the print business of 2020 lie.

## *Digital Printing*

Earlier, I posed the question, if the Internet had not come along, would digital printing have become so successful? There's a related hypothetical question: if digital printing *hadn't* come along around the same time as the Internet, would print have survived?

Another of those great cocktail party questions, to be sure, but there's no denying the fact that digital printing is saving the industry, largely because offset and other analog technologies have proven unsuitable for the types of print products that are in demand today. Not that digital is without its challenges; everyone points out how short-run jobs are becoming the norm, but the challenge for printers has been to aggregate enough of those jobs to offset (as it were) the loss of much longer and more lucrative lithographic runs. However, the future of the industry as we head toward 2020, many analysts believe, lies in digital directions, for reasons we will look at later in this white paper.

## *Changing Markets*

The table on the next page presents some of the "classic" end use categories—these are the print products that market research reports tend to focus on when they project markets forward. In this case, I point out the extent to which a given product can be accommodated by digital printing—that is, is it suitable for some kind of digital approach—and what the impact on electronic media has been which, for many categories, is quite substantial (read: devastating). There is also a rough "outlook to 2020"—what will the market for these products look like in six years?

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## *Print End Use Categories and Impact of Digital Printing, Electronic Media*

	<b>Traditional Technology</b>	<b>Extent of Digital Printing Accommodation</b>	<b>Impact of Electronic Media</b>	<b>Outlook to 2020</b>
Books	offset	toner, inkjet; short-run/on-demand/customized books	ebooks popular although growth has stalled	Still strong market for print books; ebooks as complement not replacement; rise of self-publishing
Magazines	offset, gravure	some short-run digitally printed titles	websites cannibalizing print readership, some tablet apps but not overwhelmingly successful	some strong titles, but most struggling; ad page decline continuing; challenge remains monetizing online content
Newspapers	offset	some digital inkjet-printed newspapers, mostly in Europe and Asia, for short-runs of language editions, some personalization	websites cannibalizing print readership, some tablet apps but not overwhelmingly successful	some strong-ish titles, but most struggling; ad page decline continuing; challenge remains monetizing online content
Catalogs	offset, gravure	very little; some imprinting of offset/gravure-printed catalogs	websites, apps	some strong titles but most online; AR has potential to revitalize printed catalogs (IKEA, e.g.); strong opportunities for production inkjet
Directories	offset	n/a	website, location apps, social media	no one even wants the phone book anymore
Forms	offset	desktop printers, copiers, and digital presses lend themselves to forms printing	PDFs and online forms have all but destroyed the forms printing market	even the IRS encourages e-filing
Packaging	offset, gravure, flexo	some digital applications, esp. corrugated; shorter runs, more SKUs, customization	some integration of electronics with print packaging but no real replacement	very strong; no real electronic replacement, strong role for digital
Labels	offset, flexo	Digital label market—esp. inkjet—growing strongly; emphasis on shorter runs, customization, personalization	n/a	very strong; no real electronic replacement, strong role for digital
Direct mail	offset	strong digital presence, toner and inkjet; driven by short run lengths, targeting via VDP, customization, personalization; QR/AR/PURLs keys to revitalizing print direct mail	websites, direct email, search, social media, location apps all strong competition	better targeting, esp. with QR/AR/PURLs and integration with electronic medial
Office stationery	offset	stationery, business cards, envelopes can be done on desktop/office printers; much decreased need for these types of collateral materials	email and electronic communication decreased demand for these types of items	this category is commodity printing incarnate; some healthy areas, such as business cards, but little else
Brochures	offset	some digital applications	websites, downloadable PDFs reduced demand for printed brochures	even further diminished role of printed brochures
Transactional	offset/digital	mix of digital imprinting on offset shells; “white paper in” approach enabled by production inkjet	online statements/bills threatening this application	the rise of online banking/bill pay and encouragement by creditors and others to “go paperless” hasn’t killed transactional printing—yet; it will still hold on to some extent beyond 2020



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## Technologies Enabling the Industry

The last section was titled “Technologies Affecting the Industry” and it’s important to understand how those technologies are negatively impacting the market for print and for specific print products. Everyone tends to shut out negative news and forecasts, but it’s just as important to know where threats are coming from as it is to know where to look for opportunities. In fact, it could be argued that you look for both in the same places.

So while the Internet and electronic media have done their damage, they also provide new opportunities for printers. This is not just in being able to offer communications services that use these non-print channels, but also in adding efficiencies to one’s own workflow. We probably take, say, online file submission for granted today, but it’s astounding how long it took many in the industry to implement it. Web-to-print streamlines the file intake process, but also enables printers to take advantage of the fact that, for many individuals and businesses, ecommerce is the norm. No one wants to take the time to drive down to a print shop and hand over physical files anymore.

There are other technologies that are more print-specific that are also enabling the industry.

### *Production Inkjet*

For most of the history of digital printing, the conversation has centered predominantly around toner-based equipment. The last several years, however, have seen a great deal of momentum shift from toner to production inkjet, as the latter has improved in such areas as image quality, performance on a wide variety of substrates, color reproduction and consistency, and so forth. Inkjet installations are proceeding apace, and users are seeing improvements in productivity, total cost of ownership, and customer satisfaction and retention. Production inkjet facilitates many of those “high-value applications” we have spoken about, and when coupled with “big data,” can offer even more value to customers.

The range of end use applications for which production inkjet is suitable is increasing all the time, but two in particular have been the traditional<sup>5</sup> applications for production inkjet:

### *Book Printing*

High-speed production inkjet enables the cost-effective printing of short-run titles, specialty books, on-demand books, one-offs, and cut-sheet inkjet systems are also enabling custom-printed covers. Full-color books are still a premium item, but many printers have demonstrated to their publishing clients that color is not as prohibitive as with offset, and for certain types of books, is ideal. Educational publishing, for example, is a strong market for digital book printing. This is in turn stimulating the creativity of editors, book designers, and authors. The integration of variable data is also making its way into book production. Think of college textbooks personalized for individual students with printed personalized URLs, user names, and passwords where they can go online and obtain additional course materials. This has been done on toner-based presses in the past and is now being done with inkjet. Small, independent, and self-published books are also growing, and tend not to be produced in the mass market quantities of your average Stephen King or James Patterson bestseller, making them ideal for digital printing, and inkjet in particular.

<sup>5</sup> To the extent that anything can be “traditional” with such a new technology.

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## *Transactional/Transpromotional*

Credit card statements, loyalty program statements, invoices, financial statements, and other printed materials that quantify some kind of monetary transaction have been a high growth area for production inkjet. Traditionally produced using digital imprinting of offset-printed “shells,” transactional printing is lending itself to what has been called “white paper in” or “WICO (white in, color out)” approach, where the static content and variable data are all printed in one pass through the press.

Transpromotional is the offspring of transactional, and refers to the integration of the transactional data (amount owed, points/miles accrued, etc.) with promotional content (ads, essentially). The Holy Grail of transpromotional printing has been to dynamically place ads that are targeted to a specific recipient. These ads are the result of mining data from the statement or other data a company may have about an individual: if a credit card statement, for example, has regular charges in New York City, place ads for New York City restaurants or other retail locations. Despite some splashy examples and case studies, transpromotional has never quite lived up to its promise, and has not become as common as many had forecasted. Much of the reason is due to the limitations of the data itself or a lack of ability at mining the data as effectively as is needed for true transpromo to work.

Which brings us to another enabling “technology”:

## *Data*

For centuries, printing has been described as “putting ink on paper.” Today, that description should read, “putting data on paper using ink.” Businesses in all markets—vertical, horizontal, diagonal, whatever—are leveraging data and databases for everything from basic mailing

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lists all the way up to marketing automation. Effectively managing and using data about prospective customers is the way digital printing applications work. It's how the content gets targeted, and targeted effectively. The biggest challenge to data-driven printing has not been finding effective front-end solutions, or marrying VDP-enabled front ends with print engines, but rather working with clean databases.

Think about the personalized mailings you may have received over the years. How often was information incorrect—your title was out of date, you no longer worked for the company indicated, or your name was misspelled<sup>6</sup>. And these are just some basic Database 101 issues. Then there are all the other data points that are necessary for true transpromotional or next-generation targeted printing. So you can see that there is always a need for database hygiene. Acquiring the abilities to work with, manage, and leverage databases may ultimately be one of the most important services a printer can offer their clients. A proficiency with databases then opens the door to all sorts of other services—like marketing automation.

<sup>6</sup> This is even more egregious when your name is spelled out in snowflakes or Alpha-Bits or any of the other image fonts used in variable-data printing.

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## *Marketing Automation*

The buzzphrase in marketing circles today is “marketing automation,” which is perhaps best thought of as “Cross Media 2.0.” Marketing automation refers to technology platforms that allow marketers to effectively deliver content across different media channels—such as email, social media, websites, and even print—with as many tasks automated as possible. Marketing automation is driven by data on the front end to manage contacts, the channels by which one reaches them, and matching up the proper content to the right contact, and on the back end by gleaning data on how effective various portions of multichannel marketing campaign have performed. What was the email open rate? How many click-throughs did the email campaign generate? What was the level of engagement of those who did click through? Did they register for something, fill out a form, or download content (like, say, a white paper)? Did they share or mention a brand on social media?

A detailed look at marketing automation is beyond the scope of this white paper<sup>7</sup> but the primary components of a marketing automation platform include email marketing (managing lists, contacts, content, and messaging, and measuring click-throughs); web tracking and analytics (where visitors are going on a website what are they're doing there); lead scoring and nurturing (assigning points to leads and prospects based on what actions they've taken, such as opening an e-mail, clicking-through, etc.); and ROI reporting (measuring how a campaign performed).

Many of the biggest players in marketing automation today began as data analytics companies, and printers who have successfully implemented marketing automation platforms for clients often did it by acquiring a data analytics company.

Most of the big players—and many chief marketing officers (CMOs) of businesses utilizing marketing automation—often leave print out of the equation. Why? Largely due to the perception that print is not as measurable as electronic media. However, simple things like QR codes, personalized URLs, and what has been called Augmented Reality can make print as measurable as electronic media. If someone scans a QR code or an embedded AR tag and goes to a website, the marketer can determine exactly where that user came from—it's essentially a print-generated click-through. The CMO can use that click-through data to determine how effective a particular print campaign was. Meanwhile, once users are in the sales funnel, they can be tracked exactly as if they came from an email campaign.

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***QR codes,  
personalized URLs,  
and Augmented  
Reality can make  
print as measurable  
as electronic media.***

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Effectively using data, whether it be for true marketing automation or other kinds of targeted or customized print applications, will become the paramount issue for the industry as we head toward 2020. Transactional printing may be the emblematic applications, but data-driven printing—especially via production inkjet—is penetrating into other types of print applications as well. In Europe and Asia, newspaper printers, publishers, and advertisers are

<sup>7</sup> Shameless plug: For more information on marketing automation and its relevance to print businesses, check out *This Point Forward: The New Start the Marketplace Demands*, by Dr. Joseph Webb and Richard Romano, <http://amzn.to/1vlt8jd>.

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using inkjet printing or imprinting to print “interactive” ads that contain unique, variably-printed codes that are used by the advertiser to determine where the ad was seen. The ad can be physically clipped like a coupon and taken to a retail location, or can contain a code (like QR) that sends the responder to an online destination. Either way, it plugs the newspaper reader into the sales funnel. Some other inkjet printers are blurring the line between newspapers or magazines and direct mail. Insurance companies, for example, can create personalized welcome publications for new policyholders that are a mix of variable and static content. The result is heightened brand loyalty, increased customer satisfaction, and more new and renewed insurance policies.

Labels and packaging are also providing new frontiers for digital printing. The big topic of conversation at recent LabelExpo shows and elsewhere has been “how do I get into digital label printing?” The drivers are the twin forces of shorter runs and customization.

In all of these cases, new printing technologies like production inkjet and the front ends that drive them are enabling new types of high-value print applications, and printers are finding that their biggest opportunity is educating their clients about what is possible.<sup>8</sup>

## **New Approaches to Investment, Hiring, and Sales**

The bulk of this white paper has discussed technology, and its impact on end use products. What about the printing company itself? What kinds of corporate and cultural changes need to take place in order to effectively cope with the new print marketplace of 2020 and beyond?

We can identify three main areas:

- investment
- hiring
- markets and marketing

### *Investment: The Advantages of Digital Printing Equipment*

As the print products that are in demand change rapidly, investing in printing equipment that is tied to a limited number or type of products is setting a company up for rapid obsolescence. Offset and other analog equipment can last for decades—long after demand for the products they produce has ebbed. The advantage of digital equipment is that it can be easily upgraded or replaced, and is often versatile enough that often the product mix can be adjusted at the front end.

We think that in order to maximize productivity, printers need to either become highly manufacturing-based or move in the direction of a more flexible customer service model. The affordability and flexibility of digital equipment means that printers are able to acquire a backup device in order to be prepared to handle peak periods and burst capacity requirements.

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<sup>8</sup> To keep this white paper at a reasonable length, I have omitted a detailed discussion of wide-format and specialty printing, which is one of the hottest topics—and provides some of the biggest opportunities—in the industry today. Although this paper has focused on small-format, print businesses seeking to broaden their horizons may want to pursue some of the hot and growing wide-format applications.

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## *Hiring: Looking for Love In All the Wrong Places*

To transition or build a print business geared toward 2020—rather than 1990—you will need to acquire not just flexible equipment, but flexible staff, or employees who have the skills that new products and services will require. Employees who are skilled in database management and analytics, programmers, IT experts, social media mavens—depending upon what you want to get involved in, you will need new skills. And it isn't just at the shop-floor level; you may even need new C-level executives who can guide the company into the future, rather than repeat the processes of the past.

Nowhere is this more important than in the sales staff. Rule number one as we head toward 2020: avoid hiring salespeople with “traditional” print sales experience. That's a backward-looking hire. You want sales staff that will go after the *right* prospects, who are tapped into today's marketing executives and CMOs at client companies, not traditional print buyers.

## *Markets and Marketing: Think Creatively*

The days of waiting for business to walk in the door—or come in via email—are largely over. The successful printer of 2020 needs to proactively seek new markets and new opportunities, as well as take advantage of all these new technologies to market their own products and services. There is no one size fits all solution, but some ideas:

- What additional communications products or services—print and non-print—do current customers require? What are they buying elsewhere that you could add? Signage? Social media management? Marketing campaign design, deployment, and management? Marketing automation? Understanding the needs of your customers, and customers' businesses, are essential ways of understanding what products and services are in demand by the market.
- Use today's technologies. How current is a print business' website? Does it say “copyright 2008”? Are notable projects, awards, or achievements up to date? Does it offer compelling and interesting content, like blog posts that offer advice on a range of subjects from proper formatting of files, marketing tips, and so forth? Do you use social media best practices to connect with present and prospective customers? Staying abreast of new technologies and demonstrably using them for one's own business is the way to build credibility. If a company can effectively use these channels and technologies for their own businesses, it instills a certain level of confidence in prospective customers.
- Think creatively about new types of products and services, and ways of marketing them. Some printers have found success in helping manage events, like trade shows or seminars. This can involve anything from printing collateral materials and/or signage, to managing attendee databases, even to staffing the event itself. What about content marketing, such as coordinating the writing and production of white papers (like the one you are reading)?

Ultimately, the let is to remain curious about new technologies, new markets, new opportunities.

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## **Conclusion: You'll See Perpetual Change**

We as an industry are not used to how quickly the demand for print, and the demand for certain printed products has been changing—and will continue to change.

Here are some basic steps you can take to help grow your business:

- Ask your current customers about their printing needs beyond what you provide for them. If there is a common denominator (posters? labels? signage?), think about expanding in that area.
- Ask your current customers about the non-print-based marketing needs they have. Again, if there is a common denominator (email marketing? marketing automation? social media? mobile?), think about expanding in that area.
- Use new printing—and non-printing—technologies for your own business.
- Think about creative ways of marketing your own business.
- Go to big trade expos beyond simply Graph Expo, such as the SGIA Expo, ISA's Sign Expo, FESPA, PackExpo, or others that may be relevant to a business or product niche you may want to expand into. The Ad Specialties Institute (ASI, <http://www.asicentral.com>), for example, has Power Summits and roadshows for promotional products.
- Attend vendor-sponsored customer events; they can offer valuable ideas—and networking opportunities—for growth areas and markets.
- Never stop seeking information, following trends, and asking questions.

To be able to successfully play in the new marketplace of 2020 will require a rethinking of a current print business, and, in many ways, a rejection of everything that has gone before. As of this writing, there are about 1,500 days until 2020 is here—will you be ready?