



Marketer's Primer Series: Digital Printing

Consider 1:1 print marketing campaigns with follow-up emails or SMS text messaging (depending on your audience) to reinforce the message. Or mailers that drive respondents to personalized URLs, where they can provide more information on themselves, respond to surveys and provide feedback, and their movements can be monitored and tracked. Or campaigns that include QR codes or social media marketing to reach certain demographic groups.

One case study that stands out comes from vROAM Global. vROAM is an Australian communications company that “hires out” cellphone SIM cards for overseas travelers who need temporary mobile phone service while traveling in other countries. The SIM cards are pre-programmed according to each customer’s destination country and the best mobile phone coverage and price packages available in that location. The company switched from bulky, static printed packets to personalized booklets for every new customer. It also began using SMS text messaging to welcome customers, alert them to the arrival of the personalized booklets, and remind them to return their cards at the end of their trip. Since implementing the program, vRoam Global has seen a 90% drop in customer inquiries from 20–30 per month to an average of two per month. The company has also seen a “marked increase” in the return of SIM cards.

We are just starting to scratch the surface of how multi-channel marketing can use complementary media to boost the effectiveness of a message. This fact has not been lost on the top marketers, which are scrambling to increase their multi-channel approach to their marketing.

6. Make a long-term commitment.

Sometimes the benefits of digital-printing-driven applications are felt right away. Other times, they are accrued over time. Too often, marketers evaluate the value of these campaigns on a short-term basis instead of using the flexibility offered by digital production to test, refine, and optimize programs over time.

In other words, the marketers who gain the deepest benefits from digital printing are those who have a philosophical commitment to them. They see themselves as making a **shift in business and marketing model** that goes beyond a single or even a series of campaigns. The deeper your commitment to this approach to document management and marketing, the more you will benefit from it.

This is especially true for 1:1 (personalized) printing and Web-to-print, which have front-end and other development costs.

In terms of **1:1 (personalized) printing**, for example, you will reap the greatest benefits if you test, learn, and tweak campaigns over time. Don’t assume that a single campaign is representative of long-term results. Likewise, **Web-to-print**. Often, marketers invest in these applications but fail to get the full buy-in



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internally. As a result, their systems get under-utilized and fail to provide the marketer with the full benefits.

7. Choose your service provider carefully.

Marketers looking to benefit from marketing shifts enabled by digital production need to carefully consider their selection of a digital output provider. You are really looking for a marketing partner.

Marketers need to make a distinction between merely selecting a digital *output provider* (printer) and selecting a *marketing partner* with digital printing capabilities. Unless marketers have their own internal expertise and simply need someone to output the file, they will need someone who can help develop and execute the kinds of applications that will maximize success. That means a company with a level of marketing and business development expertise that goes beyond the traditional print manufacturing model.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

Many printers who have developed the expertise to develop marketing applications no longer call themselves “printers.” They call themselves “marketing services providers” or “cross media companies.”

Don't restrict yourself to companies with “printing” or “graphic arts” in their names. It is very common for companies who have transitioned into the marketing services provider model to change their names from XYZ Printing to XYZ Marketing Services. Or they might have taken names that reflect an involvement in cross media, data, or design.

Work with the business development manager or marketing executive, if possible.

Although salespeople and CSRs are increasingly becoming trained in digital print applications, companies with the greatest expertise tend to hire business development managers and marketing executives to run this area of the business. There are still many marketing services providers who are at the very beginning of the learning curve. If, however, you are talking to a business development manager or marketing executive, you can be sure that you are talking to someone who understands the development of marketing campaigns beyond the production level.

Hone your interview skills—and be thorough.

Ask the company how much experience it has in developing document management, Web-to-print, 1:1 printing, or personalized URL campaigns. Request samples. Ask how they evaluate the success. What measurement standards do they use (or recommend that you use)? How do they handle data? Do they have their own in-house expertise or do they use a third