

From print provider to marketing service provider

By [Jenny Attewell](#), issued by [Communikay](#) 19 May 2016

Printing has been around for what seems like forever - and even though the popularity of printed material hasn't diminished in the face of widespread digitisation, the maturity of the market means competition is fierce and margins slim. Smart printers are looking to enhance their value proposition with modern digital printers serving as a crucial foundation on which to build a business which goes from print provider to marketing services provider.



Making this journey is an opportunity not only to grow a more profitable business but also to fundamentally change your relationship with customers. Instead of providing a point solution – marks on paper – the delivery of a complete set of services deepens the engagement and provides the potential to deliver strategic insight to help shape marketing campaigns rather than just executing a small component of them.

Probably the most obvious additional service (which most printers today already offer) is creative. On-site graphic design is increasingly essential to support a smooth workflow, particularly with the time-sensitivity which characterises a lot of current jobs.

Additional services can include one-to-one marketing and variable data printing, email marketing, printing of personalised URLs and the design of campaigns which feature social media integration.

Cross-media campaigns with multi-channel marketing have emerged as the optimal way to engage with people across industries; a printed flyer might grab the attention of the recipient, with a scan of a QR code taking him or her to a website for interaction which can be shared with social media connections.

Whether producing multi-channel campaigns or personalised mailers, Xerox technology and software solutions can handle the most complex personalisation and data-driven jobs, helping you deliver a true 1:1 engagement to exceed your customer targets.

But how does the printer get there? The first step isn't the latest, greatest digital printer (although that does play a significant part in the process). Instead, start by understanding what your clients need and how they spend their marketing budgets. (You do the printing... what happens to that output after it leaves your shop?)

Go further by engaging with clients to get a feel for the returns they expect from print and digital marketing activities. The idea is to learn, challenge and, eventually, guide your clients towards options and services you can provide, which deliver results they seek.

That brings us to the necessary hardware to produce amazing output which enables multi-channel and interactive engagement with your clients' target audiences. But the machines that produce the finished printed output also need the right software to enable the delivery of the various components of an integrated marketing campaign.

Job management and automation software means the ability to execute jobs – like one-to-one campaigns – which would otherwise require many thousands of man hours to complete.

To survive in today's highly competitive print market, providers have two options: reduce costs or add services. Workflow automation enables both, and with these enhancements, we're improving the way our customers work by making the industry's easiest path to automation work better.

Xerox now offers two of its leading automation solutions, the award-winning FreeFlow Core and Xerox FreeFlow Digital Publisher.

The new version 14 of Xerox FreeFlow VI Suite, one of the industry's most flexible and powerful personalisation solutions, now enables designers to create moderately demanding transactional applications in familiar Adobe InDesign software. The suite's VI Design Express plug-in for InDesign now supports importing transactional data; creating dynamic, data-driven print line and bar charts; dynamic invoice tables; and PDF and PDF/VT output.

Once the shop is set up as a Marketing Services Provider, it's a great time to run the first campaign to promote yourself to your customers. Since you're now offering the ability to create and execute amazing campaigns, invest in making the first one your own and target it at those clients who are likely to need such services themselves. There's no better way to advertise what you're capable of than actually doing it.

Remember, change is difficult for almost everyone – if you are known as a printer only, it could take some time to convince long-standing clients that they can look to your organisation for a lot more. The best way to do that is through a little old-fashioned show and tell, through your own campaign, or anytime you produce an impressive result for other clients. Share the achievement (assuming your client is happy for you to do so) this will get others thinking about what you can do in the environment.

It pays to move up the food chain – and with powerful digital printers and the right software as a foundation, the addition of more services which customers need and which can command higher margins could just boost your print shop into a whole new league.

About Bytes Document Solutions

Bytes Document Solutions, a division of the Bytes Technology Group, is Africa's leading document management technology and solutions company, offering a comprehensive range of products and services through two independent business units: Xerox and NOR Paper. A wholly-owned division of JSE-listed Altron, Bytes Document Solutions is the authorised Xerox distributor in 26 sub-Saharan countries, and has an annual turnover of more than R2 billion. In 2014, the company celebrated two important milestones: Xerox's 50th year in South Africa, as well as the invention of xerography, the basis of the most widely used document-copying machines, which was developed by Xerox 75 years ago. www.xerox.co.za

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