

Enhancing your printing solution to work smarter, easier and more profitably

The printing industry has changed, with many established printer providers, as well as new companies, adopting digital printing solutions to meet the demands of the print market.



By [Leon Minnie](#) 13 Jun 2014

The purchase of a digital device is not always done willingly, sometimes it is done through necessity and sometimes the technology is embraced as companies look to the future.

Speedy hardware

For those printer providers working in a traditional manner - quoting on jobs, collecting or receiving jobs on CD or USB, phoning to let the client know the job has been received, printed or rejected - new digital hardware can feel burdensome and labour intensive. However, the implementation of certain software solutions that work in-line with the hardware will speed up the process, enhance client service and interaction, give more control over what is being printed, contain costs, automate provision of quotations and enable additional products or services to be offered to clients.

For those struggling with the transition, there are even advanced print reproduction solutions, which include various features to make a digital machine perform like an off-set press and match various litho characteristics.

Many print providers are hesitant to invest in these software solutions, with cost, complexity and support being the most frequently cited reasons. However, the cost of the solution should be offset against the increase in productivity over a defined period; the complexity will obviously be dependent on the type of solution and user comprehension as well as uptake and today most software solutions come with a comprehensive maintenance agreement that takes care of the support, as well as updates and new features.

There are many different software solutions in the market and it is important to consider whether to go the manufacturer dependant or independent route, allowing the freedom to change brands, or not, as the solution must suit the requirements both now and down the line.

Many device manufacturers, including Konica Minolta, will offer independent production solutions to meet client requirements and assist them in working smarter, more profitably and easier. The offerings available are able to meet the needs of centralised reprographic departments (CRDs), through to copy shops and commercial printers and range from an effective but easy to use imposition plug in on a print controller to a management information system (MIS) workflow for a CRD with multiple machines.

Colour reproduction

Colour consistency is a hot topic for all print providers, making colour management systems for different printing processes essential. The resultant colour of printed material can be completely different when printing across various locations, or on different printing presses or systems.

Even when printing on two identical digital presses, the same job can show differences. An effective colour management system should bring accurate and consistent colour reproduction for all print jobs, from print run to print run, independent of system, in conventional and digital production printing environments.

It should also be able to manage and match to various printing standards, such as GRACoL, ISO coated V2, FOGRA39 and so on. This iterative colour matching will give accurate and reproducible results with colour stabilisation and minimised digital press drift over time.

Some colour management systems will also offer integrated soft proofing for cost effective client communications, as well intelligent workflow tools and complete process automation resulting in less operator involvement.

Data printing

The use of a variable data printing (VDP) solution can assist in reaching audiences in a more cost effective, direct, specific and relevant manner - all without sacrificing quality. VDP enables organisations to set themselves apart from their competitors through personalised promotional communications such as advertisements, direct mailers, brochures and flyers, business cards, newsletters, discount coupons, tickets and letters.

Elements such as text, graphics and images can be amended from one printed piece to the next using information from a database or external file, without stopping or slowing down the printing process. The same applies to transactional and business documents such as invoices and statements, reports, labels, certificates, policies and multi-part business forms.

The combination of a VDP application with a Web2Print solution allows users to make a more strategic investment in print media and improve the way they currently go about their day to day activities. Web2Print is a broad term that refers to the practice of doing print business using web sites.

The growing popularity of the internet has opened up opportunities for commercial printers to allow their customers to submit print jobs, do online prepress reviews and design items (such as calendars, postcards and photo books) directly on a website using feature rich user interfaces.

New software solution

Scalable centralised production and optimisation solutions are able to combine several machines in a multitude of different workflows to increase productivity, print faster and reduce costs. They allow the user to setup printer groups to intelligently balance production output - automatically splitting colour and black & white pages, routing jobs to the most productive and cost-effective devices and even re-routing errored or paper jammed jobs to a similar printer to continue production with e-mail notifications.

Additional options can provide for advanced PDF-based job-preparation functions, including intuitive document assembly with fully visual tab insertion and design, media assignment, page numbering, finishing and scanning, plus powerful late-stage editing features. Advanced prepress capabilities can also be browser-based, for an even more cost-effective solution. Automated job workflows including PDF conversion, pre-flight, correct and edit PDF files, image enhancement, document imposition, approval and job ticketing can all be configured, thus saving time, reducing rework and waste and increasing customer communication.

When considering investing in a new software solution, it is important that the solution meets the business' requirements both now and in the future, gives a competitive edge, improves delivery times and helps to reduce costs and increase client base. Konica Minolta South Africa is a leader in advanced document management technologies, focusing on the provision of complete business solutions and print systems and able to assist any organisation to work smarter, easier and more profitably.

ABOUT LEON MINNIE

Leon Minnie is the product manager: production systems at Bidvest company, Konica Minolta South Africa. In 2002, Leon joined Konica Minolta South Africa as a software technician in the digital cut sheet printing industry. Here, he was hired to assist production clients on colour management and associated printing issues from hardware to software. A further promotion in 2009 saw him take on his current role as product manager for production systems.
View my profile and articles...