Workflow
System
Business Builder

Profitable digital print comes down to a very simple principle:

Maximise Clicks &

Minimise Costs.

Would a system that has been designed by printers, to do both of theses things, be worth a look?

Read on…..

Contents

Foreword

The purchase of any web to print solution will be based on many factors, however the final deciding issue will probably be "Will it benefit my business?" We would be the first to admit that our system will not suit every digital print company. In this document we aim to demonstrate how it could work for you.

In order to keep this document as concise and relevant as possible we have made some assumptions. The first of these is that you either do not have a complete automated web to print system or if you do, it does not operate as effectively as you would like. The second assumption is that you would like to either increase your sales, reduce your costs or both. The third is that you are either unsure of the benefits that such a system can bring to your business or undecided as to whether the benefits justify the costs involved.

There are many web to print solutions on the market. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. You may want to perform your own evaluation of these systems however our intention here is not to compare our system with any of these. Rather, we hope to give you information about our system that will help you make an informed decision. Some systems offer more features than ours and, whilst we can adapt our products to give a bespoke solution where required, one of the most important questions we think you need to ask is whether these additional features would get sufficient use within your business to justify their higher cost.

You may find some of the issues discussed in this document to be obvious however there inclusion is purely to make the document as complete as possible.

Our business model is to offer our system on a month to month rental. We believe that this reduces your risk to a point where you would give us serious consideration. If you do adopt our system the only way we make a profit is by your continuing satisfaction with our product!

The underlying principle behind our system is to maximise the number of individual print jobs that can be processed with the absolute minimum of human involvement. How this has been achieved is discussed in the next section – "System capabilities".

System Capabilities

Our system can be broken down into 3 segments:

Front end (online shop),

Online processing and

Back end (also referred to as Inhouse)

The front end encompasses a series of modules, either from our existing range or bespoke, that is, tailored to your specific requirements. There is no practical limit to the number of front end modules that can used with the system and the advantages of having more than one front end is discussed in the next section – "Business Models"

The front end module feeds all jobs into the system. In the module your customer can generate an instant quote for their job, upload their pdf and add that job to their "basket". The customer can then either add more jobs or continue to the dispatch section. There they can select the delivery address (either their own address or the address of their customer) or specify "for collection", if they intend to collect from you. By default all customers must pay online for their order however you have the option to allow them to bypass paying at time of order (called "pay on invoice" in which case they can pay online later or pay by another method. Having placed their order they receive an email confirming their order, with a copy of the invoice attached. The order is then released into the system.

The operation of the quote system is different to most other systems. Rather than you having to set pricing for individual product types or quantities the system works of a price per sheet. You set the cost of each paper stock and the cost per printed side (click) & then specify a margin to give a selling price per sheet.

You also set various finishing charges for laminating (if offered), cutting, creasing and stapling. Other finishing options can be added if required. Discount can also be included and the standard system includes 2 options that can be used either separately or together. The first is a customer level discount that can be set for individual customers. he second is a volume discount which applies a % discount to that part of an order that exceeds "X" number of sheets.

To get a quote the customer needs to tell the system about their job. This can be done by either selecting a standard product (e.g. business cards, A4 posters, A6 postcards etc…) and then editing values that are suggested by the system (eg standard business cards are set at 57mm x 87 mm including 1mm bleed), or by "starting from scratch" for non-standard jobs. Starting from scratch involves specifying the number of pages in their pdf & its dimensions. They can also specify any "lay-up" requirements – more on this later. They would then specify the quantity required, single or double sided printing, the paper stock and whether the job is to be laminated. Finally they select any finishing options required, eg simple or complex trimming, creasing / folding or stapling. This now gives the system sufficient information to "generate a quote".

The system works on a standard SRA3 paper size although this can be altered to suit your requirements. It calculates how many of the job can fit on a sheet (allowing for unprinted margins, gutters & a slugline), calculates the number of sheets required and the calculates the price of the job. Where the quantity required does not fit exactly the number of sheets required the customer's print quantity is automatically adjusted. (so for example, standard sized business

QUOTE → ORDER → PRINT → FINISH → DISPATCH
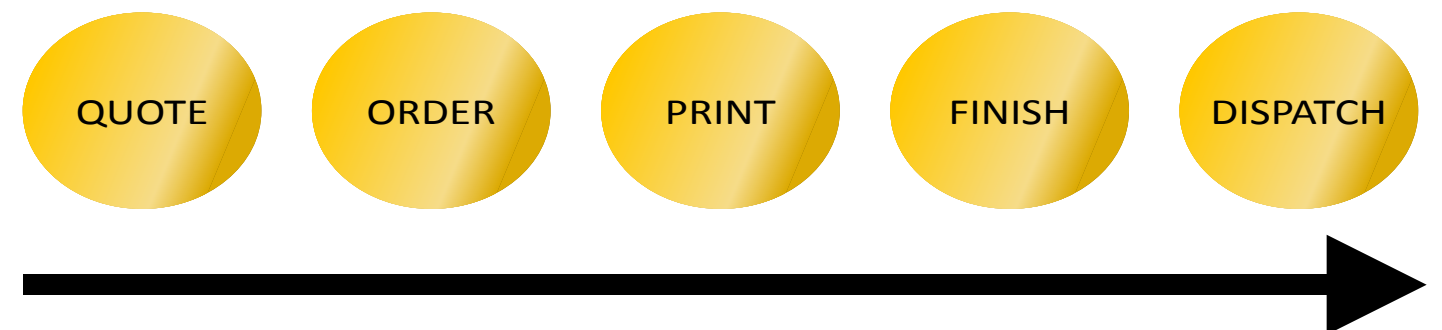
cards fit 21 to a sheet so a quantity required of 250 would change to 252.)

Having received a quote they would then upload their pdf. By default the system requires pdfs at 1.3, to avoid issues on some RIPs with live / unflattened transparencies (although this option can be turned off either globally or for individual customers). The system is set to accept pdfs up to 500Mb although again this can be adjusted. Once uploaded the file is checked by the system to ensure that it is a 1.3 (if enabled) and then the dimensions match those specified by the customer in the quote. If the dimensions are different the quote is adjusted accordingly. This is to prevent errors but also to stop any customer getting a quote for say an A5 job but uploading an A4 job!

The option to select "layup" was mentioned earlier. At the heart of the system is the RTP (ready to print) file. This is generated by the system from the customer's file and is a pdf that can be sent directly to your printer. It is a laid up page (or pages) with gutters and crop marks (added by the system). Some jobs will be straightforward and to use our business card example again, the RTP file would contain 21 cards. Other jobs will be more complex. Two examples will explain this better:

Take an A5 greetings card. When flat this would be a double sided A4 page. If the customer supplies artwork as like that then layup is simple. However if the customer has a 4pg A5 pdf then they need to tell the system either "layup for left-fold" or "layup for tent-fold", depending on the position of the crease. The system then uses this information to correctly generate the RTP file.

For a second example lets assume a 20pp A6 portrait pdf to be saddle stitched. Selecting "layup for left fold" will allow the system to generate a 10 page RTP pdf which again can be sent straight to print. The quantity associated would, in that case, always be a multiple of 8.

The options available at the quote / order stage allow most if not all types of job to be put through the automated system. However, where a customer has a job that cannot be put through the system, you have the option to manually add a charge for a job to a customer's basket before that place an order. To use

another example; lets say that you also do wide-format printing and a customer has several jobs in their basket that have been uploaded to the system. If they email you a file for an A1 poster you can add the charge for that to their basket as a manual print job so that all of the invoicing is handled in the same system. Once added the customer can proceed with their order as normal.

The "online online processing" element of the system handles all of the complex processing involved in each of the front end modules. It also stores all of the data generated by the system and feeds files and data to the "back end"

The "back end" is your Inhouse element of the system. We recommend running this on a Windows 7 PC with a good broadband connection, network access to your printer(s) and minimum 500Gb hard-drive. We can advise on specific requirements as necessary.

The operation of the Inhouse system is covered in more detail in a separate document called "Workflow System – Operation".

What happens from this point onwards depends on which version (or "package") you are using. Our Pro package includes full print automation whereas the Basic package requires you to manually drop proofs and jobs onto your machine.

Each job within the system has a status attached to it. Initially all jobs are "pre-proof". You can send jobs to proof individually or in a batch of "all jobs". If using the Pro package this process is automated and the status of jobs sent for proof is updated to "awaiting proof check" when they have been sent. With the Basic package selecting jobs that you are proofing manually updates their status.

Once you have your printed proofs you can check that they appear correct. If the customer has added any "special instructions" at the order stage, these are printed along with the slugline.

If printing manually you can select "has been printed" which updates the job status to "print complete". This fact is then displayed on the dispatch screen.

If you are using automated print you can either mark the job as "ready to print" which adds it to a print ready queue in the system or you can "send to print" immediately.

With the Pro package you then have 2 further screens. The first allows you to select which paper is loaded in your printer. The second displays the print control screen. This screen lists all paper types for which there are jobs waiting to print and, if you have selected a relevant paper type on the previous screen you can click on that paper type and the system will automatically send all jobs for that paper type to print. By default this "send to print" function will send a maximum of 10 jobs per click so as not to overload your RIP.

This is probably the most impressive part of the system. Assuming you have 3 paper trays (for example) you can send all jobs, on 3 different paper stocks with just a few mouse clicks. An operation that may previously have taken hours is accomplished in seconds. A demonstration video of this is available to view on our website.

If enabled, the Pro system can also receive feedback from your RIP controller to confirm that each job has been printed. If a job fails on your RIP that fact is also fed back to the system.

The dispatch screen displays all customer baskets and indicates whether they are complete (print finished) or not. Each basket can be expanded to display the individual jobs and a thumbnail is provided to aid in job identification.

The delivery address along with any "special instructions" added by the customer at the order stage are also displayed.

Once marked off as dispatched, each basket can have a courier "consignment" number added. Your customer can track the progress of each job from order through print & dispatch and can view the consignment number for each job to allow them to track jobs through to signature by customer (if delivery is direct to customer)

In this section our intention is not to try to tell you how to run your business. Rather, we hope to show you how, based on real customer experience, our system may be the right choice for you. Our system has been designed from the outset around the requirements of real-life printers rather than what software developers perceive as their requirements.

Making a profit from competitively priced, short-run, full colour digital print is difficult because of the administration and production costs attached to those types of job. Making them profitable by the adoption of a fully automated workflow system like ours is however only part of the process. You still have to generate the work in the first place. This is where understanding and reaching your potential customer base becomes critical.

Customers.

Customers can be split into 2 basic types. Walk-in or one-off orders and repeat customers. This is where you may want to consider have separate front-ends to address each set in a different way. We have 2 standard online shops to address this.

The first is a simple to use site which offers customers an easy way of selecting the product they want. It allows them to quickly find the product that they need and walks them through the ordering process to ensure that what they eventually order is exactly what they require. This site can be marketed as your "general public" option, with both online (targeted) and local advertising.

The second is a more detailed site, which is aimed at graphic designers. Whilst this type of (hopefully) repeat customer can still choose from a selection of standard products, the site is designed with their experience in mind. It also allows them to quickly and easily process a number of simple or more complex jobs. Because of the options available to them they should be able to process most jobs without any intervention or assistance from you. Having a dedicated site of this type would then allow you to market it directly to graphic designers through product sample mailshots.

In both instances above, "Live Support" by your customer support team will ensure that the customer

experience is hassle free. The aim being always to provide clean orders into the system at the front end.

You may also receive orders from regular customers by email. In these cases you can set up accounts on the system for each of these customers and then login to their account as a proxy user to place an order on their behalf. Depending on how you operate you can then ask them to login and pay for their basket or place the order on their behalf using the "invoice me" option. They would then receive their invoice by email. If using the invoice me option they can pay you in their normal way, and you as administrator can mark their invoice as paid or they could be asked to login to their account and pay online. Your aim may be to eventually move them away from ordering by email and use the site instead.

Products and Sites

With our system there is no limit to the number of paper stocks you can offer. Within the quote section paper selection can be split between "standard" and "special". This may allow you to easily increase the potential number of products you can offer. It may also then allow you to develop Niche markets.

You could have a series of sites, each specialising in different products (e.g. wedding stationery) or market sectors (e.g real estate brochures). We have already developed some niche market sites and would be happy to discuss any ideas or requirements with you!

Before making a decision to purchase any web to print system we would encourage you to consider the following factors.

Can the cost of the system be justified in terms of the additional revenue you can generate and the costs you can save?

What is the risk attached to purchasing an expensive system? If it is not correctly of fully implemented or if it does not actually meet your requirements will it be shelved resulting a waste of both time and money?

Has the system provider demonstrated an understanding of your requirements?

Can the system be tailored initially and upgraded later to meet your initial and future requirements and is the company providing the system heavily invested in the success of your business?

Will you be forced to compromise how you want to run your business in order to be able to run the system?

We charge for our system on a month by month basis. We believe that the levels of these charges are unmatched by any similar product offering and also that this reduces your risk If you are unhappy with the system you can cancel at any time. If you are happy with the system you can switch to an annual contract at a reduced rate. If you see our system as a long term part of your business you can purchase an operator license for a one-off fee and a small monthly support contract.

For each potential customer we gather as much information as we can in order to provide a detailed proposal to match your requirements.

Before you purchase our system we would ensure that what we are offering meets your requirements. Where this requires only minor setup adjustments our standard setup fee would apply. If significant tailoring is required we would issue a quote detailing our understanding of your requirements and the costs involved. We do not aim to make a profit from these setup charges but rather recover part of our costs with the aim of recovering the rest from your future long-term custom.

In all cases our aim is to work with you to enhance your current business. If we do not think our system is suitable for you we will tell you and explain why not.

Conclusion

The aim of this document has been to provide you with more information about our system and how we believe it may benefit your business. It may well have raised some issues that you had not previously considered or questions that are not answered within the document. We are always happy to discuss any issues you may have and will always endeavour to answer any questions you may have.