



BY HEIDI TOLLIVER-WALKER

10 REASONS NOT TO BE A WEB-TO-PRINT HOLD-OUT

SMART CHANGE STARTS HERE.



Are you among those print service providers (PSPs) who have not yet invested in a web-to-print (W2P) system? You know, those systems that let your customers store, manage, order, and proof their jobs online? It's not just simple print jobs. It's variable data. Signs and banners. Promotional items. It's items you print and fulfill in-house and those you outsource to partners.

The benefits of web-to-print, even from simple solutions, are proven. For both PSPs and their customers, they help reduce costs, all but eliminate order and branding errors, and help improve document management. The benefits are so proven, and these systems have become so mainstream, that commercial printers without them have become the exception rather than the rule.

Yet, there are print service providers who still see W2P as an unnecessary expense for their business. Are you among them? If so, here are 10 benefits you don't want to overlook:

1. IT'S THE WAY CUSTOMERS DO BUSINESS.

Commercial printing isn't immune to the overall consumer trends. People shop price and convenience, and today, 11% of all consumer sales are online.¹ The trend line for e-commerce is steep — 45 degrees since 2010 — and e-commerce sales are up 17% year over year.

Can you afford to lose 11% of potential sales because you don't offer an e-commerce solution?

This is a particularly important question for PSPs working with larger clients, where cost reduction is a driving factor in vendor selection. Indeed, one criterion used by companies in awarding print procurement contracts is whether the provider offers (or is willing to develop) a streamlined supply chain.

2. IT'S THE WAY PRINT SERVICE PROVIDERS DO BUSINESS.

It's increasingly challenging to find commercial printers that do not offer some kind of e-commerce solution. For many of the largest, most profitable printing companies, it's become the primary way they do business, especially with their largest customers. It helps reduce errors and remakes, enables higher volumes with less effort, and saves administration time and cost.

Even at lower volumes, however, the benefits of W2P are significant. Regardless of a shop's volume, the goal is to maximize throughput on its presses. This requires automating and taking as much inefficiency out of the process as possible. W2P does this by automating among the most time-consuming and costly aspects of the print business. For printers who have worked in an offset environment, it also addresses the pressure placed on their back-office administration resulting from the print-on-demand environment.

¹ https://www.census.gov/retail/mrts/www/data/pdf/ec_current.pdf

Offering an e-commerce option is also part of being customer responsive. It allows customers to do business with you the way they want to do business with you. Some PSPs find that their customers use their W2P system only for business cards. Others use it for everything from personalized direct mail to complex document management to kitting and fulfillment.

However you use W2P, the point is to let customers drive the process. Let them choose how they want to interact with you. If you don't, there is a risk of losing their business. Don't give them a reason to go somewhere else.

3. IT HELPS STREAMLINE AND REDUCE COST FOR JOBS THAT DON'T REQUIRE MANUAL INTERVENTION.

What does it cost you to process an order? Every time a job is touched, it costs you money. Web-to-print automates one of the most labor-intensive parts of the printing process: the taking and processing of orders.

Exactly how much gets saved in an automated environment? A Keypoint Intelligence / InfoTrends study found that, on average, print service providers using online estimating save 3.31 hours per order. This translates into \$110,800 per year in labor savings.² That's just for online estimating and does not include all of the other cost savings enabled by W2P.

Web-to-print even helps to streamline and simplify complex jobs like variable data. By setting up templates, drawing assets from a centralized and continually updated database, and using drop-down menus for business rules, W2P enables users to create multi-variable data jobs from their desktops. Users report this as one of the fastest growing uses of web-to-print systems.

4. HELPS YOU GAIN MORE "SHARE OF WALLET" FROM EXISTING ACCOUNTS.

Maybe customers are sending you their commercial work, but they are sending their simpler jobs, such as business cards or business stationery, to a low-cost online provider. Why not bring that business in-house? Once customers become accustomed to ordering those jobs online, you can gradually add new types of projects and migrate existing jobs to the system, too.

W2P storefronts also increasingly support and drive higher margin services like mailing, variable data, wide-format, and branded promotional items. Even if your customers don't order these items today, they become much more likely to order them if you make them accessible through their W2P interface. Even if you don't offer these services in-house, you can set up the system to automatically send them to a third-party partner.

5. INCREASE CUSTOMER RETENTION.

Once a customer spends the time and money to work with you to set up a web-to-print portal for their print projects, you are much more likely to retain their business. Especially when accessing the system can be as easy as accessing an app on their phones or a widget on their desktops.

This matters—a lot—because we all know the value of retaining a customer. The common rule of thumb is that it costs five times more to gain a new customer than to retain an existing one, but new data from Brand Keys actually puts this number at 11 times more.³ Not only this, but Brand Keys found that a 7% increase in customer retention can boost lifetime profits by 85% per customer and increasing loyalty by a mere 3% can correlate to a cost reduction of 10%.

² Source: "North American Software Investment Outlook," KPI-InfoTrends 2019. Calculated at 4,800 jobs per year with an average of 3.31 hours saved per online order at a cost of \$41 per hour for an estimator.

³ <https://brandkeys.com/portfolio/customer-loyalty-engagement-index/>

6. WITHOUT W2P, YOU ARE COMPETING AGAINST PSPS WITH LOWER COST STRUCTURES.

You may not be lowering your costs with web-to-print, but more than half of your competitors are.⁴ When trying to compete against PSPs with more lean, efficient ordering and production processes than yours, you are at a significant disadvantage.

7. EASE OF SHIPPING AND MAILING.

Many W2P solutions offer integrated shipping rates and delivery times. This makes the process faster and easier for your customers. Plus, it saves money for you. How long does it take one of your customer service representatives (CSRs) to provide quotes and process a shipping and mailing order? How much do those CSRs make per hour? Again, this translates into real bottom-line savings.

8. BRAND CONTROL.

Wasted inventory, reprints, and other costs resulting from errors in branding cost your customers real money. The benefits resulting from centralized asset management and template-based W2P workflows are a major win for customers. This translates into greater customer satisfaction and higher customer retention for you.

9. DETAILED INSIGHT INTO SALES, INVENTORIES, AND USAGE.

This is one of the fastest growing uses of web-to-print systems. Give your users visibility into their inventories and usage. How many pieces are going out the door? Who is ordering them? What are the fastest selling items? This adds tremendous value that helps your clients to manage their costs, make better sales projections, and so on.

10. LOWER BARRIER TO ENTRY, SO WHY NOT?

Today's W2P software ranges from simple to complex, with a wide range of pricing to match the level of need. Even systems with great functionality come with low barriers to entry, so there is little reason not to invest at least in a basic system.

Web-to-print isn't just for large printers anymore. It's a basic functionality that benefits print service providers of all sizes, with a wide range of customers, and helps provide time and cost savings, productivity enhancements, and customer benefits that are hard to ignore. With the barriers to entry dropping, there is little reason not to invest in at least a basic system.

According to Keypoint Intelligence/InfoTrends, more than half (55%) of commercial printers now own some type of W2P system,⁵ and for those who have these systems, usage is growing. Between 2017-2019, the percentage of work submitted through a web-to-print portal was expected to grow 70% for commercial printers and 29% for in-plant printers. Between 2019-2021, the percentage of work that printers produce in a 100% automated workflow environment is forecast to grow 55%.⁶

⁴ U.S. Production Software Outlook 2019 (Keypoint Intelligence / InfoTrends)

⁵ U.S. Production Software Outlook 2017 (Keypoint Intelligence / InfoTrends)

⁶ U.S. Production Software Outlook 2019 (Keypoint Intelligence / InfoTrends)

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