

White paper



Shipping & Mailing

Printing

White paper isn't plain any more.

Break your reliance on pre-print to realize lower costs and new revenue.



Few organizations are prepared to revamp their print and mail organization overnight, yet none want to stand still as the industry discovers innovative ways to cut costs and connect with customers.

One of the more dramatic shifts in recent months involves the growing interest in plain white paper. In this new print-to-mail environment, companies can eliminate pre-printed forms and start each job with blank paper and white envelopes. The reasons are simple enough: Inkjet technology now delivers the speed, print quality and per piece affordability that mailers demand.

By combining high-performance printing with data-driven, high-integrity software, you can print in black and white or full color and add variable content on-the-fly as part of your normal print and mail production run.

The two sides of the paper: cost reduction and revenue growth

Your organization likely has a process in place that involves pre-printed forms, inserts, buckslips and envelopes. This represents a smart place to start identifying opportunities to reduce cost and generate new revenue.

On the cost side of the equation, expense-reduction generally falls into three areas:

Inventory management: The time and effort spent coordinating advance print runs can be extensive. This is especially true for organizations that mail using several types of forms and branded envelopes. In some cases, the exact quantity of forms and envelopes required is not known until the final mail file is produced. So, most managers will print more than needed to ensure they don't run short, paying for "overs" that are simply not required. Others order large supplies in advance, and then store these materials over the course of the year. Unfortunately, document revisions are sometimes required as companies revise their terms and conditions, update logos or change offers. Old forms must be discarded and new forms printed, starting the cycle over again. The cost of inventory management, overprints, storage and waste could easily add 10 percent or more to the cost of production, totaling tens if not hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.

Job set up: Labor remains one of the largest day-to-day expenses for any print and mail operation. Adopting new ways to increase productivity is critical to long-term success. By starting every job with a clean, crisp white paper, companies can avoid the time and effort spent retrieving, loading, refilling and restocking different forms and envelopes for every single job. The limited number of feeders required also provides for a smaller footprint. You also eliminate the potential for errors resulting from loading the wrong form, insert or envelope.

Job consolidation: Once you have the basics locked up, you can tackle even bigger cost-saving opportunities. Job consolidation ranks high on that list. This involves consolidating print streams from multiple jobs into a single print run. As all of the content is data-generated and printed onto the same plain white paper, there is no limit to how many jobs you can combine. It doesn't matter whether there are different logos, different messages, different return addresses or different page counts. Everything is driven by the data within your existing print streams.

Companies with sophisticated communication management capabilities can even opt to route one-off correspondence to a centralized print and mail operation. By doing that, they gain significant economies of scale. In addition to productivity and general print efficiencies, job consolidation also opens the door for greater postal savings by comingling and presorting all of your mail to maximize discounts.

While it is likely that cost reductions alone would more than fund any investment in white paper technologies, the long-term profit picture on the revenue side of the equation is even more promising, especially when you look at the impact it can have on enhancing customer relationships.

Openability: Your transition to white paper production can start with inline envelope printing. Studies show that consumers are 70 percent more likely to open a mail piece with color text and graphics on the front than opening pieces with no headline or graphic¹. These results improve even more when the messages are personalized.

It's now simple to imprint address, postal barcode, logo, return address, targeted message and targeted image in black and white or full color in a single pass at production-level speeds.

Upsell and cross-sell: Pre-printed forms and inserts offer opportunities for mass marketing. That said, consumers are bombarded with 3,000 messages or more every day. That means that most one-for-all offers rarely hit their mark. When 100 percent of your content can be personalized based on customer profiles, transaction history and demographics, you can break through the noise and speak to customers as individuals on their terms, using the most relevant offer. You can use any or all of the existing real estate on your documents to support your case. You can transform your transactional statements into highly personalized, data-rich customer communications that drive real revenue opportunities for your organization.

Real-time relevance: Consumers today are used to instant messages and chat. In a pre-print environment, however, many content decisions must be made weeks, if not months, in advance. So, mail recipients often receive notifications promoting programs they've already accepted or declined. These are wasted efforts that can drive the perception that you don't know or care about your customers. In many cases, marketing executives within your company have come to a similar conclusion. They are likely unable to incorporate recent learnings or service alerts into their communications because the current process is too inflexible. With the ability to produce 100 percent variable data, you can implement relevant messaging with speed and accuracy for more precise communications.

Even if your organization is not prepared to conduct 1:1 messaging today, you can migrate toward white paper solutions now to gain cost efficiencies, then move to more advanced applications when you're ready without having to spend more money.

The front of the envelope strongly influences when and whether people open it.

A Leflein Associates of Ringwood, New Jersey study¹ showed that participants were 69 percent more likely to open a mail piece with color text and graphics on the front than a piece with no headline or graphic.

- Given a choice of color graphics or black and white text, participants indicated they were 247 percent more likely to open envelopes with color graphics first.
- 57 percent of participants indicated they hardly ever noticed what was printed on the back of the envelope when sorting through or opening their mail.
- However, the study indicated that the presence of color text and graphics on the back was significantly more likely to influence their decision than black and white only.

¹ Leflein Associates Research, "Physical mail preferred by many," April 2010.

Start your white paper strategy with ease.

Creating your own white paper strategy is not an all or nothing proposition. You can start building these capabilities from any point in the chain and leverage existing equipment to round out the process.

Consider where you have the most waste and lost opportunities today, and think about which applications would benefit most from the flexibility of inline inkjet printing. You could start anywhere: envelopes, inserts, statements or data. While the migration to variable print processes may be inevitable, the speed and timing are up to you. Ultimately, you'll want to have an end-game in mind. Whether your roadmap spans 18 months or 18 years, the steps you take today should support your long-term needs. In conversations with mailers who are making the transition now, ten best practices rise to the top that can serve as a checklist when evaluating options.

- 01. Quality:** Good quality is the cost of entry. Look for a minimum of 1200 x 600dpi for variable data statement printing or 600 x 300 dpi for inline envelope printing.
- 02. Speed:** Don't let sluggish personalization slow you down. If your mail finishing system runs at 26K per hour, you won't want to wait for materials to come off the printer. Choose printing solutions that are optimized for print and mail.
- 03. End-to-end integration:** Find a partner with expertise across inserters, high-speed printing, envelope personalization, data management, mail finishing and postal sortation. This partner will be able to help you choose what's right for your business.
- 04. Color:** The use of color can add great value to your communications. However, you can realize tremendous efficiency gains even when printing in black and white, and then migrate to full color when you are ready.
- 05. Data flexibility:** The move to white paper production should leverage your investment in legacy systems. Your output management processes would ideally accept and work with any print stream format, printer and mail finishing system.
- 06. 1:1 Messaging:** Even if you only begin with basic segmentation strategies, start with an intelligent production engine that makes it easy to customize content based on profile data. That adds great flexibility over the long haul.

07. Integrity: When utilizing data-driven content, your data integrity, continuity and control are essential. The right systems can help you marry the right message to the right customer on each and every component. These systems can also help you manage and track factors associated with operations management, right down to print cost optimization.

08. Project management: Working with vendors who know how to integrate new capabilities into existing workflows will help ensure a more seamless, cost-effective implementation, from planning and design to installation and training.

09. Digital migration: While variable print involves paper and ink, the ultimate goal is to deliver the same level of personalized, targeted experiences in whatever channel your customers prefer. Leading technology providers offer systems and software that can help you bridge that critical gap. Such hybrid models allow you to deliver the same content in either physical or digital format through a single, high-volume gateway. That gives you much needed control.

10. Trust and vision: Work with companies you trust that have a proven track record and commitment to ongoing improvement. The concept of building an integrated print-to-mail process driven by 100-percent variable data is an idea that some organizations have been working on for years. The reality is that technology has finally caught up with the vision so that mailers of all sizes can actually realize these benefits.



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