

Tips, Insights & Tactics

Pros and Cons of In-House Printing

Technology has improved the business case for printing in-house. Today the benefits far outweigh the drawbacks. We'll examine every side of the idea and guide you through the pros and cons to identify potential opportunities for your business.



Print or perish?

A good place to start is to challenge whether print is still relevant in an increasingly digital world. It is. Just like customers' purchase preferences, sales increase with the number of options available. Different customers prefer different information formats. Thus, print remains a vital part of your communications mix.

In-House Pros

Quality

The English idiom "don't judge a book by its cover" is solid advice. Yet on a visceral level we can't seem to help being influenced by appearance. Image becomes perception, predisposition and predilection. So whether it's your storefront, the way you present yourself personally, or your website, make no mistake, image matters.

What's new is that today's desktop and floor-standing printers are capable of quality and fidelity that rivals traditional offset printing presses. Add the ability to print on a wide variety of paper types and sizes and you have a viable in-house solution.

Control

When you take printing in-house you gain control of the print queue and priorities. Even when deadlines compete you can respond to late-breaking changes faster and shorten overall turnaround times. Logistics are simpler too. No time spent trying to catch up with account reps or communicating changes to production.



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Cost per Print

Printing digitally eliminates setup costs. And the type of printer also matters, but printing small quantities is more cost effective than outsourcing. However, if you need specialties like metallic inks, or high quantities, a commercial printer can be unbeatable.

Security

Some documents are more confidential than others, but taking production in-house eliminates many security gaps and concerns from the start. And digital printers may offer unique security safeguards such as disk image overwrite, or enable a PIN, entered at the front panel, to release a job for printing.

Capabilities

Digital printing opens the door to personalized printing, a boon to marketers. And inline finishing options like folding and stapling are available, as is automated collating, including insertion of tabs and covers for projects like business presentations or training manuals.

In-House Cons

Capital Expense

One of the biggest drawbacks to bringing a high-quality color printer in-house, is the upfront investment. However, you're in business for the long term, so the cost should eventually be recouped.

Management

Once you starting printing in-house, expect some management overhead. Someone will have to schedule the print jobs and monitor supply levels to ensure you have the printing supplies you need on hand when you need them.

Maintenance

Unlike PCs, printers are half mechanical, half electronics. Moving parts are more likely to wear out, so expect your printer to require service from time to time, especially after the first year. Consider an extended service agreement for coverage beyond the standard warranty period.

Cost Justification

In-house printing is most cost effective with frequent, low volume print jobs, including those with variable data. As print quantity rises to 1,000 or more the cost advantage begins to shift to offset printing. There's value in both alternatives, so plan your printing strategy accordingly.

Other Factors

Portable Document Format

The ubiquitous digital document is ideal for both distribution and printing. One file fits all. And with the right multifunction printer you can even take hard copy and scan it into a fully editable, searchable PDF file, just as if you'd created it from a wide variety of software applications.

Distribution

Today's digital communications have reversed the traditional model of print (centrally) and distribute. Now it's more efficient to distribute over the network and print locally. This new distribution model, along with advances in quality and the reduced cost of today's office printing equipment, adds another factor in favor of in-house color printing.

What to Print In-House

- Brochures
- Business cards
- Case studies
- Competitive comparisons
- Flyers
- Handouts
- Invoices and transpromotions
- Posters
- Presentations
- Price Lists
- Spec sheets
- Stationery
- Training materials
- White papers

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