



6 Traps to Avoid When Choosing a Digital Press

A Guide to Capturing the
Ideal Press for Your Organization

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It's easy to fall in love with the wrong press.



WE'VE ALL BEEN THERE BEFORE:

You see a stunning press running at a trade show or in a video online, and it's love at first sight. After you take a look at the IQ samples, it's even more settled—you know you've found the one.

Fast-forward a few months, and the honeymoon's over. Serious issues start to creep up, and you're already struggling to make this huge decision—and investment—work.

Digital press technology has exploded over the past few years: costs have dropped; high-end features have become accessible to print shops of all sizes; both efficiency and opportunities have gone up exponentially.

Despite a changing marketplace with shorter run lengths and higher customer expectations, we're entering a new golden age of printing.

AND THAT'S MAKING THE CLUNKERS EVEN HARDER TO SPOT.

Which means, if you're not careful, investing in just any advanced press could actually spell disaster for your print shop.

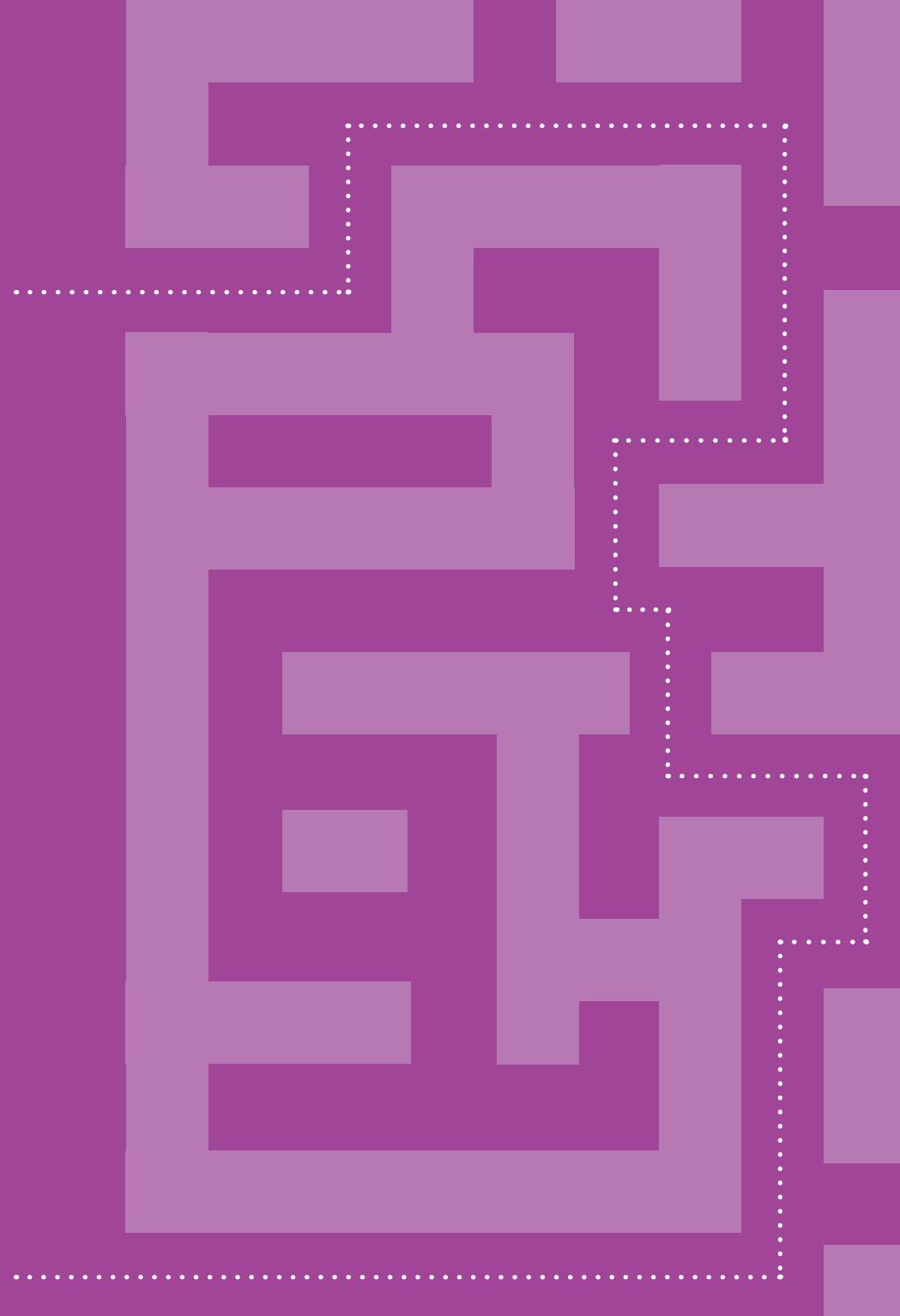
Here's how you find the right press for your print shop.

There are some obvious traps to watch out for when buying a new press—such as buying a massive production workhorse with all the bells and whistles when you don't have the workload to keep it running.

But lately, the traps are being obscured by flashy high-end features. It can be challenging to figure out whether or not a press is more than just a pretty piece of machinery.

THIS GUIDE IS A TOOL TO HELP YOU LOOK DEEPER, to identify where your true needs lie and discern whether or not a press can fulfill them—today and tomorrow. It's a roadmap to greater productivity, offerings and growth.

The right press can completely transform your organization. Here's how you can avoid the traps and missteps on the road to finding it.



Trap #1

Buying A Press That Hasn't Been Engineered For Ease Of Use

IF A PRESS ISN'T RELIABLE, IT'S NOT WORTH LOOKING AT.

The good news is that advanced technology has made presses more reliable across the board. The bad news is that every press is still going to have problems down the line—it just may take longer to notice them.

Sooner or later, something will go wrong—whether or not a press has advanced technology:

- Paper will swell, leading to registration inconsistencies
- Drums will get scratched and leave you with noticeable imperfections
- Parts will crack or break, potentially stopping time-sensitive jobs in their tracks



HERE'S THE TRUE TEST OF DEPENDABILITY:

Rather than focus on how long you can go before something goes wrong, consider how long it takes to get back to 100% productivity when something does go wrong. Four hours waiting for the service tech is four hours you'll need to make up after hours—and that's assuming they have the part you need and the skills to install it.

MAKE SURE IT'S ENGINEERED FOR EASE OF USE.

While reliability is still key, always ask these questions about your press:

- Does it have a straight paper path to not only prevent jams but also make them easier to clear?
- Does it have automatic sheet clearance, so jams can be purged with the push of a button?
- Is it easy to diagnose when something goes wrong?
- Can you replace parts yourself so you don't have to wait for a service technician?
- How simple is it to dial in perfect color, registration and finishing?
- Does it hold color and registration throughout a print run?

The answers could mean a huge difference in your ability to get jobs out the door on time.

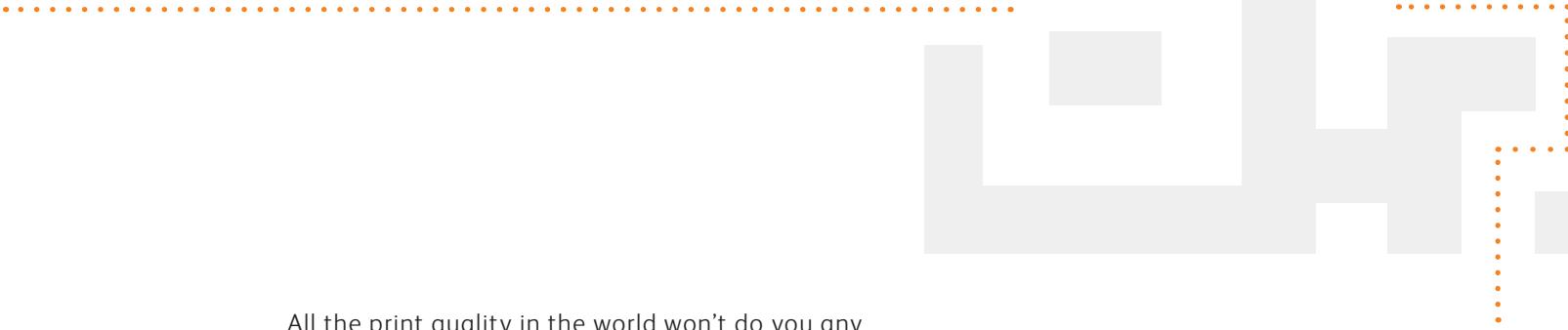
HOW TO AVOID THE TRAP:

Be careful when it comes to reliability hype. Look for a press that has automation and ease of use engineered into its bones.

“When looking at a digital press, I always ask ‘can my operator keep it running on their own in between necessary service calls?’ As a digital operator, technician and shop manager, I understand this is key because it means minimum downtime and more time meeting customer needs.”

—Joe Spedale
Director of Print Operations
Minuteman Press (Boca Raton, Florida)

Trap #2



Evaluating Print Speed In A Vacuum

EVER OWNED A LAPTOP?

Then you know the battery never lasts as long as the manufacturer says it will. Why? Because those estimates are based on optimal running conditions.

Under real-world conditions, there's no way it can perform as well.

PRINT SPEED IS TO THE PRINT WORLD WHAT BATTERY LIFE IS TO THE REST OF THE WORLD.

On paper, a press's print speed might be perfect for your needs. But give it a challenge, such as heavy stock or mixed media, and the results might make you cringe. And unlike bad battery life, correcting slow print speed isn't as simple as finding the nearest wall outlet.

All the print quality in the world won't do you any good if you can't get work out the door. So rather than looking at print speed on its own, make sure you consider all the other factors in play:

- How do heavy weights, mixed media and heavy coverage impact print speeds?
- Are there any weight limitations on auto-duplex printing?
- Does it incorporate advanced on-press automation to save you time and steps?
- Can it produce stable, accurate, repeatable color without human intervention?

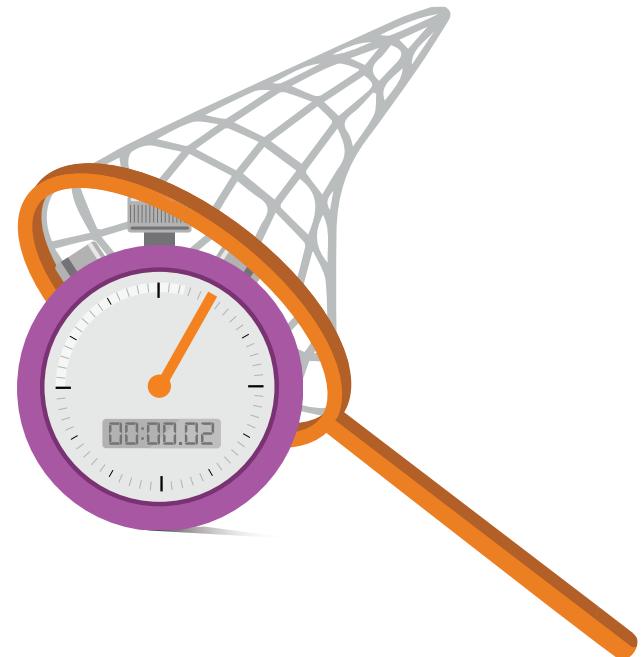
A press that can't deliver on these could cost you dearly—either in overtime pay or lost business.

HOW TO AVOID THE TRAP:

Make sure a press can efficiently and effectively handle the jobs you produce daily.

“We value a press that maintains a high print speed, regardless of media or stock. That’s critical. Our old press would slow to a crawl with mixed media and we’d lose business because of it.”

—Oleg Nekrasov, Director, Craft Printing House



Trap #3

Mistaking Today's Needs For Tomorrow's

Nobody invests in a new press without a reason. It's always to fill a need—whether that's to meet growing customer demand or to replace a legacy press that's reached the end of its life.

But while your current needs may prompt you to simply purchase the latest iteration of the press you already have, that may cut you off from valuable future applications.

CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS AND NEEDS ARE EVOLVING.

More than ever, customers are looking for you to provide complex, high-value services. And if you're "upgrading" without taking that into account, your press may not have the flexibility to meet customer needs and expectations.

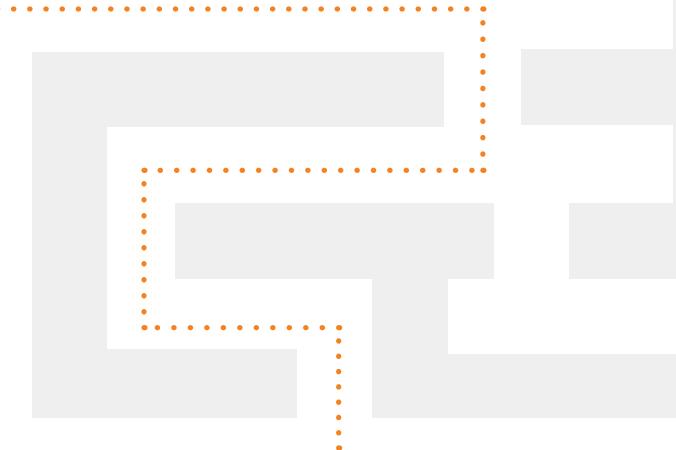
THINK ABOUT HOW THE SERVICES YOU'RE PROVIDING COULD CHANGE OVER TIME.

Are there any obvious ways your customers' needs could evolve? If you do a lot of direct mail printing, for instance, you could up the ante by offering short-run envelope printing.

Or if you're into photo merchandised print—such as calendars and photo books—think of how much your customers would love a wider selection of specialty media substrates.

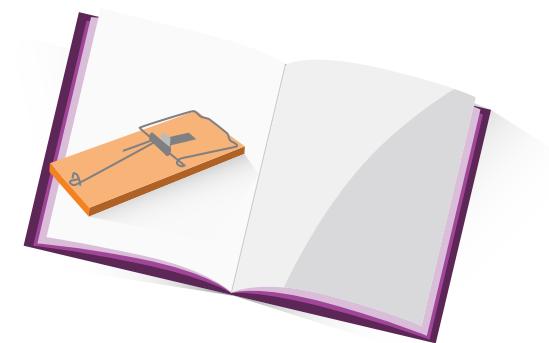
To do these things and more, you want a press that can:

- Open new business opportunities with high-value applications and specialty substrates
- Print on envelopes without the frustration of wrinkles, jams, hand-feeding and fuser changes
- Flawlessly handle textured papers and synthetic substrates
- Run at top speed regardless of media
- Maintain a library of your most frequently used stocks so press operators can get jobs set up faster and without spending time profiling substrates



HOW TO AVOID THE TRAP:

A new press should liberate your potential with extensive media flexibility—not hold you back from pursuing new opportunities.



"The equipment must fit your current needs. But you also need to consider growth and what new offerings you want to provide in the future. Having services that none of your competitors have will give you a great leg up when it comes to new business."

—Bob Meyer, Vice President, Galaxy Press

Trap #4

Settling For Less Automation Than You Deserve

AUTOMATION ISN'T A NICETY ANYMORE.

In a world of shorter print runs and greater job diversity, automation has become a necessity. You need to be able to efficiently process more and more short run jobs each day just to stay in the game.

WITH AUTOMATION, EVERYTHING CLICKS.

Automation makes everything push-button simple. Not only can you process more short run jobs in less time, you can also ensure:

- Consistent quality and color density
- Perfect registration (color-to-color, image-to-sheet and front-to-back)
- Elimination of skew, magnification and perpendicularity
- Simple press calibration
- Less labor and human error

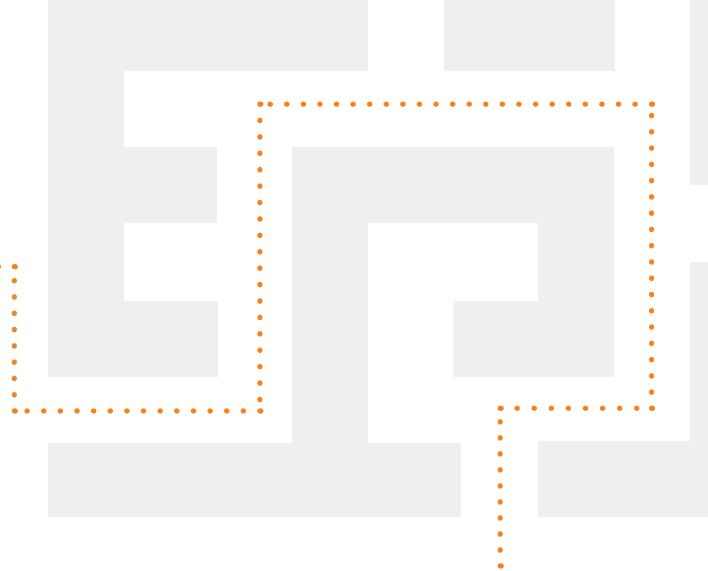
Without automation, trying to process more jobs only means more chances for mistakes, rework, waste and expense. Nobody enjoys manually measuring and making x/y coordinate adjustments—especially on jobs where expensive substrates are on the line and wasting output is not an option.

NOT ALL AUTOMATION IS CREATED EQUAL.

Some presses will simplify your business by removing steps—automatically making image adjustments to compensate for temperature, humidity and shrinkage, continuously measuring to eliminate skew, perpendicularity and magnification. Others will claim to remove manual steps, and then make you take 15 to clear a paper jam.

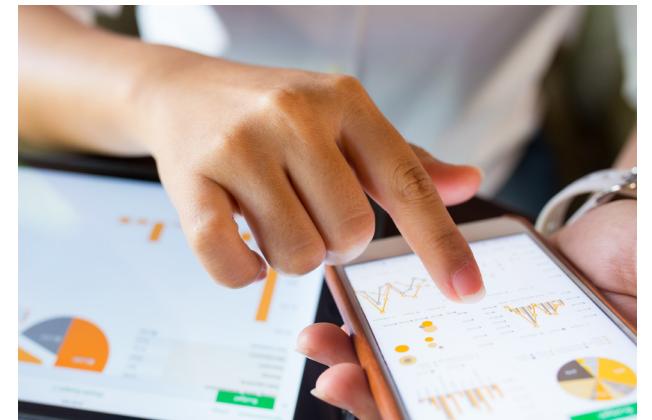
So when you're looking at a press, be sure to evaluate:

- How many steps does it actually remove under real-world conditions
- If the workflow is simple and repeatable
- Whether or not it will help you simplify your organization



HOW TO AVOID THE TRAP:

True automation is capable of transforming your business. Never settle for less.



“Automated registration is very important in terms of getting a job off the press as soon as possible. Great registration combined with speed gives you a very efficient operating unit. Automation brings more profits and a happier work force.”

—Dennis Beck, Owner, Minuteman Press (North Palm Beach, Florida)

Trap #5

Buying In To Outdated Beliefs About Inline Finishing



YOU'VE BEEN AROUND THE BLOCK A TIME OR TWO.

After a certain number of years in the print industry, you start to pick up on a few essential truths:

- Customers rarely have reasonable expectations about turnaround times
- It's next to impossible to make money producing short-run jobs on offset
- Inline finishing slows you down without providing any real value as a trade-off

ESSENTIAL TRUTHS DON'T CHANGE OFTEN.

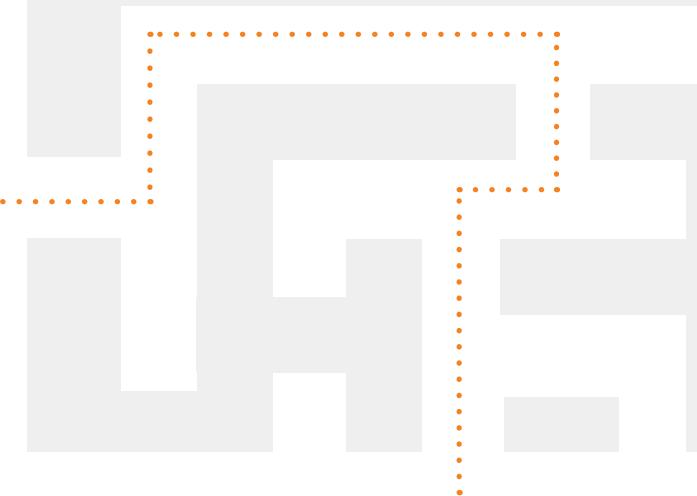
Yet sometimes technology leaps forward, transforming truth into myth. Take the belief about inline finishing. In the past, offline and nearline finishing were better alternatives that afforded more flexibility without slowing you down.

TODAY, INLINE FINISHING CAN BE A GAME CHANGER FOR YOUR PRINT SHOP.

When it's designed right—incorporating technological advances such as buffering—and matches your application mix, inline finishing allows you to run at rated speed while removing both steps and manual touches. And the efficiencies gained can really make a difference with today's high volume of short-run jobs.

Some inline capabilities include:

- Inline square folding, for the polished look of perfect binding with the added security of saddle stitching
- Full-bleed three-sided trim booklets, produced hands-free
- Coil bound applications without any operator intervention



So rather than shy away from inline finishing, embrace it. It can take your work from everyday to extraordinary—and your print shop's throughput to new heights.

HOW TO AVOID THE TRAP:

Inline finishing takes steps out of your workflow and gives operators the opportunity to devote more time to other high-value activities.

"Jobs that historically went to the finishing department to be cut down for four-passes on the guillotine cutter then a pass through the folder—running by two different operators—can now be done inline and completed without an operator even standing at the press."

—Tim Sellers, General Manager
Printegra Corporation

Trap #6

Mistaking Lip Service For True Service

BUYING A NEW PRESS ISN'T A ONE-AND-DONE KIND OF EVENT.

The truth is, you're entering into a long-term relationship with the manufacturer—a business partnership. So even if a press is perfectly suited for your print shop, can fulfill your needs today and provides ample opportunity to expand tomorrow, slow down and ask yourself: Is this a company I want to attach myself to for the long haul?

"REBOOT AND TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED" DOESN'T WORK HERE.

When you've got just 24 hours to get a job out the door and your press is acting up, the last place you want to be is on the wrong side of a call with an outsourced call center. You want:

- Confidence that you can get help fast
- Expert advice from knowledgeable service technicians
- Speedy service that can diagnose your problem, fix it and get you back up and running as quickly and smoothly as possible

DO A LITTLE EXTRA RESEARCH INTO CUSTOMER SERVICE.

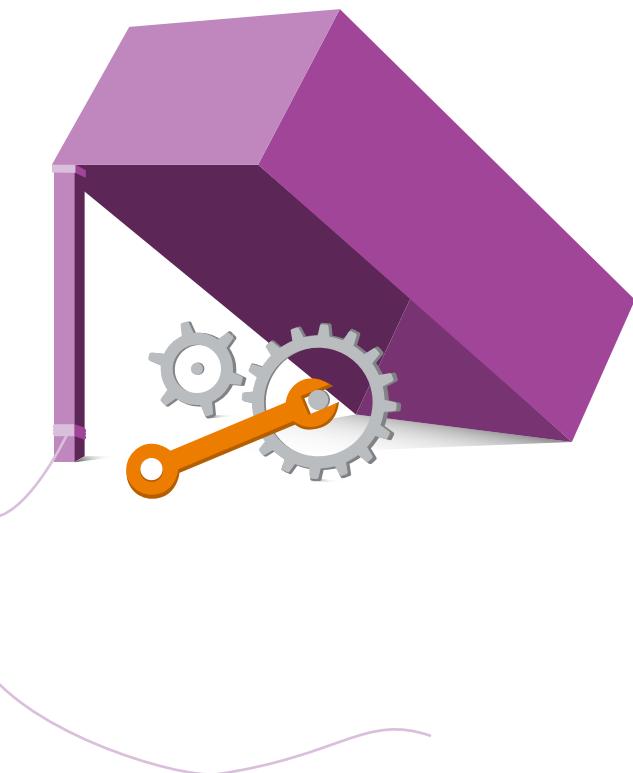
Keep an eye out for service success and horror stories alike. And look for signs that the manufacturer is willing to go the extra mile to ensure your success—such as maintaining an inventory of spare parts right at your organization, hassle-free remote diagnostics or a robust business development program that can help you grow your business.

“Start with identifying your needs. Use those needs to narrow your selection down to a group of machines. After that, your top three considerations should be service, service and service.”

—Earl Howell, Director of Operations
Millennium Marketing Group

HOW TO AVOID THE TRAP:

Look for a press manufacturer that's as invested in your success as you are.



Transform your print shop and enter print's new golden age.

An investment in a new press is an investment in your organization's future. It's an exciting time, but also one that requires a level head to find a press that not only fulfills your needs but allows you to unleash your potential.

In the end, it all comes down to scoping your needs over the long run—where you are now, and where you'd like to end up. Take the time to avoid the traps along the way and you'll be sure to capture the ideal press for your print shop.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- 1 Pick a press that's engineered for ease of use.
- 2 Evaluate print speed in the context of the jobs you want to run.
- 3 Media latitude opens the door to new opportunities.
- 4 Automation can—and should—transform your business.
- 5 Inline finishing gives you more flexibility—not less.
- 6 Your press manufacturer should be invested in your success.

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