Unlocking the Value of the Print Room

Transforming the print room to deliver greater business value

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Print rooms must continually demonstrate the on-going value that they provide their business through offering fast, affordable and efficient services. By offering extended services that include web-based job submission and services beyond printing, the print room can create more business value and improve performance, lower costs and enhance customer service.

To unlock the strategic value of the print room, many organisations are turning to a third party provider to manage their print rooms. This enables businesses to access the expertise, resources and technology needed to transform the print room, whilst containing costs, reducing risk and driving efficiency.

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Executive Summary

Print rooms are challenged with the demands for faster turnarounds and the need to offer new services beyond printing to deliver more value to their organisation. With the use of web-based job submission and automated workflow solutions, print rooms can maximise productivity, reduce costs and enhance an organisation’s ability to deliver business-critical information across multiple channels. Many organisations are already taking a proactive role to transform their print rooms, using the expertise of a third party provider to unlock the strategic value of the print room.

Print rooms struggle to optimise performance

Print rooms today are challenged with handling complex, short-run projects whilst dealing with downtime and peak loads. Sometimes they may run at full capacity, but only for part of the day, week or month. Such poor device utilisation impacts the performance and responsiveness of the print room.

Print rooms are often undervalued

Print rooms may be perceived as an expensive and unnecessary overhead that is not core to the business, facing competition not only from commercial printers but also in-house departmental printing. Consequently the print room may be bypassed completely, meaning it must work hard to change perceptions and justify its value to the business.

Re-defining the value proposition

An effective print room must add value to an organisation’s communication processes, producing more complex work in-house, using workflow tools and web-to-print solutions to improve efficiencies. The print room must be accessible, responsive and deliver services that internal customers require.

Raising the profile of the print room with web-to-print (W2P)

W2P is key to improving the productivity and efficiency of the print room, by providing an easy way to submit jobs. This provides an online presence for the print room, raising the visibility of print room services across an organisation. This can drive print volume away from office departmental printers and external print procurement, improving device utilisation, reducing overall print costs for the enterprise, and ensuring brand consistency across all printed material.

Beyond print – the multi-channel opportunity

Today, print is just one element of the marketing mix. By offering new services, such as variable data printing (VDP) and multi-channel communications, the print room can more broadly participate in an organisation’s multi-channel marketing communications strategy. Through the use of document composition and automation tools, the print room can also support the delivery of personalised communications – whether printed or digital.

The value of outsourcing the print room

By using the expertise, technology and resources of a third party provider, organisations can unlock the value of the print room. An outsourced provider can help drive innovation beyond cost savings by implementing new services which speed delivery and maximise productivity, ensuring that the print room delivers strategic business value.

Driving efficiency with a Managed Print Service (MPS)

MPS is a proven approach to reduce costs and drive efficiencies in the print environment. By extending MPS to the print room, organisations will gain a wider view of enterprise-wide printing, encompassing office print, the print room and external print procurement. By integrating management of these environments, the print room can raise its profile to users across an organisation, leading to improved utilisation and performance.
Moving with the times

Amidst cost-cutting pressures, the traditional print room or central reprographics department (CRD) must demonstrate its strategic value to the enterprise. Competition is intensifying, not only from commercial printers but also desktop users who may bypass the print room completely in favour of departmental printers.

Consequently, the print room is challenged with keeping devices running and producing high quality output whilst meeting demands for fast turnaround times. The reality is that, in many cases, print rooms are underutilised with devices either being idle for large parts of the day or over-used at others. As a result, print rooms may be perceived as a rising overhead, with many organisations failing to unlock the business value that print rooms can deliver.

Print rooms can play a significant role in supporting communications processes based on print and beyond. The high quality colour printed document remains a valuable and effective communications tool, and many organisations continue to rely on printing to support their communications activities. A recent Quocirca study reveals that, overall, 30% of organisations expect a rise in colour production print volumes with 40% expecting volumes to remain steady. Whilst this presents an opportunity that the in-house print room must capture, the future of the print room lies in embracing workflow technology and multi-channel communications.

By integrating digital printing and automated workflows – including web-to-print – the print room can provide more flexible, cost-effective services to its users, based on short run-lengths, faster turnarounds and personalised printing. Through the use of sophisticated integrated document composition and workflow tools, customised and personal communications can be produced and delivered across multiple channels, such as print, email, web and mobile.

By enhancing and extending its services and raising its profile within the organisation, the print room can change business perception and capture a greater share of enterprise print that would otherwise be sent to (often more costly and slow) office devices or external printers.

Using an outsourced provider to leverage expertise and resources can help transform the print room from a reactive print service provider to a proactive provider of multichannel communications. Further cost-savings and productivity improvements can be gained if the print room is operated as part of an enterprise-wide managed print service (MPS) engagement that covers both office and production printing. This can increase efficiencies in both environments and ensure that device utilisation is optimised.

This paper discusses the challenges of operating a print room today, the need for change and how the print room can thrive by moving beyond print, keeping pace with the digital world. This paper draws on Quocirca’s 2013 study, on behalf of Xerox, covering large enterprises, conducted in the UK, France, Germany and US.

Definitions

Print Room/Central Reprographic Department: A corporate reprographic department (CRD) or print room is an internal service (also referred to as in-plant) that performs copying or printing for a given organisation. Printing may include transactional and personalised documents (e.g. customer financial statements, invoices) as well as short-run documents such as the printing of manuals, sales and marketing collateral, booklets and other documents where multiple copies are required. In this report, an in-house print room is one operated by an organisation’s own staff and an outsourced print room is run by an outsourced provider.

Managed Print Service: Quocirca defines a managed print service as the use of an external provider to assess, optimise and continuously manage an organisation’s document output environment. MPS allows organisations to reduce costs and improve efficiency by rationalising the print environment. It also leverages existing investments in multi-function peripherals (MFPs) while continually monitoring usage so that the optimised infrastructure continues to meet business needs.

MPS covers a number of service areas across four broad categories:

- **Assessment** – a review of the current print environment to provide recommendations for a rationalised print environment and provide an estimate of potential future savings. Assessments range from basic on-line to full workflow assessments. Environmental impact analysis and document security assessments may also be included.
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- **Optimisation** – device rationalisation and consolidation to improve user-to-device ratios and development of print policies to formulate a governance framework for a full enterprise MPS, including change management and deployment and transition.
- **Proactive Management** – continuous process improvement, business reviews, SLA monitoring, remote management and workflow improvement.
- **Business process automation** – includes document workflow software and services to support the transition from paper to digital workflows.

**Web to print**
Web-to-print solutions (also known as Web2Print or W2P) are web-based applications that enable collaboration and/or customer service interactions between those having document production requests and the print room. W2P encompasses the entire delivery system including job file submission, on-line catalogue, job tracking, soft proofing, on-line payment, on-line shipping, inventory management and also basic cross-media. An effective W2P system can increase automation, improve operational efficiency, control brand management and enhance customer retention, as well as removing costs and time from the print procurement process.

**Multi-channel communications**
In addition to print, the delivery of content to electronic channels such as email, mobile, social media and the web can generate new revenue opportunities. This is typically achieved through document automation tools that allow the creation of communications for electronic delivery. For instance, a financial services company may choose to deliver account information online, by email as well as in paper format. For the future print room, multi-channel communications should be part of a broader service portfolio to support integrated marketing communications campaigns.

**Research methodology**
In April/May 2013 Quocirca conducted 250 telephone interviews across organisations with over 1,000 employees. Interviews were across 4 countries, 50 in each of the UK, France and Germany and 100 in the US. Target respondents were those responsible for decisions relating to the print room – not print room managers but those in FM, IT or operations roles. There was an even split between those who were managing the print room in-house versus those who were using an outsourced provider. This enabled us to compare perceptions and market drivers across the two groups. (See Appendix A for demographics)
The print room today

Print room challenges

Print rooms are struggling to justify their relevance for a number of reasons. Print rooms may not be seen as a core part of the business, often as a result of lack of investment and management focus on extended services to respond to the explosion of data and proliferation of channels. In many cases, employees may not know how to send requests to the print room or find it too cumbersome, leaving the print room to be bypassed completely in favour of commercial printers or in-house departmental printing.

Consequently, an organisation may incur additional costs through print jobs being sent to, often unauthorised, external suppliers. Meanwhile, the use of departmental office printers can be both inefficient and costly. These print jobs are often too large for the departmental printers, tying them up for long periods of time, inconveniencing other users, delaying work and costing more to produce. This leads not only to poor print room utilisation but also spiralling costs if the burden of large print jobs produced on office printers is left unmanaged.

Quocirca’s study revealed that cost control is rated as the overriding challenge for operating a print room – regardless of whether they are in-plants or using outsourced providers. Overall, 81% rate cost control as a 4 or 5 (where 5 is the highest rating for being challenging). The next top two challenges are governance and document security. Industry variations show the financial sector respondents rating document security, governance and productivity above cost.

![Figure 1. What are the main challenges of operating a print room? (1= not a challenge to 5 = always a challenge)](image)

Whilst cost control is the top challenge for both the in-house and outsourced groups, those organisations that are outsourcing the print room to an outsourced provider rate the areas of document security, governance and job complexity higher than those managing the print room in-house.

Certainly, these issues highlight the need for an effective and well-designed on-site print room; one that optimises use of production print hardware and workflow tools. This can help the print room deliver a faster, more effective level of service at lower cost than a commercial print service and can provide better control over print quality and document security.
The value of outsourcing

To improve the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of their print rooms, some organisations turn to third party providers to design and manage their on-site print rooms.

The drivers for outsourcing

An outsourced provider can often protect existing investments by making improvements without necessarily introducing new hardware. The introduction of workflow tools that simplify the submission of documents across an organisation and the centralised management and accounting of multiple print rooms can significantly impact cost and productivity across an organisation.

Organisations are looking to leverage the expertise and resources of outsourced providers to improve the performance and reduce the costs associated with running a print-room with in-house resources. Quocirca’s study shows that the top reason that organisations use an outsourced provider is to reduce lead times (Figure 2). Industry variations are evident, with reduced lead times rating more highly for the professional services and financial services sectors, whilst reduced risk is the highest driver for finance respondents.

![Bar chart showing the importance of various factors in outsourcing print rooms.]

**Figure 2. What was the importance of the following factors in the outsourcing of your print room (1 = unimportant to 5 = very important)**

Paper to digital workflow transition

Many organisations are looking to accelerate the digitisation of paper-based processes to reduce costs and improve productivity. Quocirca’s survey shows that those organisations using an outsourced provider to manage their print room have made the most progress in digitising their paper-based business processes (Figure 3). Overall, 56% using an outsourced provider operate a number of paper-free business processes compared to 26% of those that are managing the print room internally, indicating that these businesses are already adopting leading edge technology to support digital transformation. The most advanced industry sectors were the financial and professional services sectors, with 79% and 73% respectively, indicating that they have several paper-free processes.
This clearly has repercussions for the print room, as potentially lower demand for printed material means the print room must deliver services beyond print, such as multi-channel and cross-media solutions, and outsourced providers are well positioned to deliver this expertise and resources.

**Figure 3.** How would you describe your organisation’s progress towards eliminating paper from your business processes?

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**Case Study: Aliant Communications – re-engineered customer bills and print production processes**

**Background**
Aliant, one of North America’s leading regional providers of information and communications technology, sends monthly bills to hundreds of thousands of customers in the four maritime provinces of Atlantic Canada.

**Business challenge**
The complexity of customer bills was having a negative impact on customer experience, cash flow, operational costs and the Aliant brand. This led to costly calls to the customer care centre, which spiked after the bills went out in the mail. It was also difficult for Customer Care agents to resolve problems quickly, because the format of the electronic bills on their computer screens was different from the printed bills customers received.

All of these issues contributed to an excessive number of late payments that slowed down the company’s revenue stream. In addition, the company did not have the ability to include targeted marketing messages in its bills. Aliant also wanted to cut the cost of print production.

**Solution chosen**
Aliant turned to Xerox as part of a long-standing partnership. Xerox worked with Aliant to improve and re-design its customer bill. Changes were made to improve the customer experience, facilitate marketing, enhance the brand and create a consistent bill designed for print, on-line and customer care centre applications. Print production was optimised and improved through outsourcing.

**Benefits gained**
Customer feedback proves that bills have been dramatically improved and billing inquiries to the customer care centre have reduced by 30%. The new design supports cross selling as new bills promote new services. The improved production solution optimises efficiency and the outsourcing contract guarantees year-on-year savings.
The value of web to print

One key way that the print room can raise its visibility is by creating an online presence through the use of web-to-print (W2P). W2P simplifies the management and submission of print jobs helping the print room to improve efficiency, improve response times and more effectively promote their products and services.

A W2P solution enables an organisation to build a storefront from which to order marketing collateral, ensuring that corporate branding policies are adhered to. A W2P application covers page design, job submission, online job tracking and delivery. For instance clients can submit print orders and specify printing mode (e.g. simplex, duplex, booklet), finishing options (e.g. stapling, binding) and delivery priority whilst print room managers can easily track, manage and bill print jobs. W2P can also drive efficiencies in distributed printing – for instance by routing jobs to the most cost-effective printer. W2P offers a range of benefits including fewer errors in job submission, automated ordering, on-line proofing and approval, centralised job tracking and reporting and brand control, as well as improved security through greater control of the print job.

W2P can work particularly effectively in a distributed organisation. It can give access to more sophisticated print capabilities than would normally be available at a remote branch office or small office. However, it also means that centralised printed material should reach the distributed location quickly and effectively. If not, local offices may either use a local outside provider or existing devices. Intelligent W2P tools should help the user identify the most cost-effective approach depending on, for instance, turnaround needs.

Quocirca’s research reveals that there is certainly an appetite for web job submission. Overall, 21% currently offer this approach, with 42% planning to offer this in the future. Notably, those outsourcing the print room to a third party provider are more likely to offer web job submission – 37% compared to just 8% of those operating in-house print rooms. By industry, although there is reasonable interest across the verticals, professional services are most advanced in their adoption of web job submission – 45% already offer this compared to just 2% of government respondents.

W2P plays a vital role in supporting the print room of the future. Not only does it provide a platform to build a wider internal customer base and generate greater print volumes (that may otherwise be sent externally), it also can support additional services such as personalised or multi-channel communications.
The MPS link

Many organisations have already taken steps to tackle escalating print costs in the office environment by adopting a managed print service (MPS). MPS is a proven approach to reducing the cost, complexity and risk of operating an unmanaged print environment through the assessment, optimisation and continuous monitoring and management of the printer fleet. However, the print room is often treated as a separate silo, often because of the different stakeholders involved (for instance facilities, operations, and procurement rather than IT).

MPS adoption

Today, the MPS market is growing in maturity, particularly amongst larger enterprises. Quocirca’s study reveals that, overall, 62% of organisations were using MPS for their office print infrastructure, with adoption reaching 85% of very large enterprises (20,000 plus employees). Those organisations already outsourcing the print room to a third party provider are most likely to be also using an MPS, reflecting their relative maturity with respect to outsourcing the print environment. Figure 5 shows that 97% of organisations that are outsourcing their print room were also using MPS, compared to just 34% of those operating an in-house print room. However, in many cases, organisations may be using separate providers to manage office printing and the print room.

Figure 5. Does your organisation use an office managed print service?

The benefits of an integrated MPS

Certainly, greater benefits can be achieved by extending an MPS engagement beyond the office print environment to encompass the print room under a single enterprise MPS contract. By combining management of the print room with the office print infrastructure, an organisation can ensure that document production is optimised across the enterprise. This requires a different class of MPS provider, one that has the capabilities to optimise and manage both the office and production printer fleet. In addition they must help an organisation evaluate all their printing activity (across the office, print room and commercial print) to identify where cost-savings and productivity improvements can be made. Determining which documents should be produced by centralised print rooms and which external print jobs can be brought back in-house requires integrated workflow tools. These enable complex print jobs to be re-routed from office printers to the print room, ensuring optimal device utilisation and minimal business disruption.

What to look for in an integrated MPS platform

The MPS provider should have an MPS platform that supports high volume output devices, as well as sophisticated software tools to manage and control job routing, job ticketing, cost recovery and a range of document finishing options, such as binding and laminating.

Print routing enables IT managers to control the volume of print and, as such, re-direct it to the print room where appropriate, leading to improved user service. Meanwhile, rules-based printing can determine the most efficient printer for a print job,

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ensuring it is produced in the most timely and cost-effective manner. This can also reduce the occurrence of jobs failing, improving user productivity and minimising disruption to business processes.

Web-based job submission enables documents to be sent directly to the print room and also provides users with the ability to view cost comparisons for printing a job locally or in the print room.

Although few organisations currently use a single provider for both office printing and the print room, there is certainly growing interest in doing so, with an overall 31% indicating that they plan to use the same provider for both environments. There is stronger interest in regions such as the US and UK, (Figure 6). Nevertheless, there is still a substantial majority who do not plan to use a single provider. Given the high adoption of organisations using MPS, they are potentially missing out on the opportunity to gain further cost savings and productivity improvements by integrating the two environments under a single MPS contract.

Figure 6. Does your MPS cover both office printing and the print room?
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Case Study: Global Professional Services Firm

This global professional services firm is present in well over 100 countries. The company sees its people as its strength and is committed to helping them give of their best. Because it is an information-centric and document-heavy business, their people’s productivity can easily be affected by their ability to scan, copy or print documents quickly. The firm’s professional image can be enhanced – or undermined – by the quality and finish of its documents.

Business challenge
In one of its key European locations, where the company has 20 offices, the approaching end of several print-related contracts created a golden opportunity for the company to take greater control of its print, copy, scan and fax requirements. The company recognised that the business would be best served if people could easily make the right choices between printing on an office device, using the company’s own production facilities, or paying for the services of an external supplier. Its overriding objective was to replace the traditional silos of office printing, central reprographics and external print procurement with an end-to-end enterprise print service that would be much more fit for purpose.

Solution chosen
Xerox was chosen to provide an enterprise managed print service. The first step was to put an end to the chaotic multiplicity of devices and ensure that the right print services were available in the right places to meet actual needs. Xerox standardised all office devices to just six different models and closed almost half of the firm’s in-house production print centres. A single Xerox team manages all services using a common set of technologies, standards, operational processes and service level agreements. A single usage policy promotes environmentally friendly practices and gives guidelines on when to use office devices, central in-house facilities and procured print. For example, when a production print job is submitted it is produced at lowest cost based on when and where it is needed, not when and where it was submitted. Before procuring print, Xerox critically evaluates each job: some jobs previously printed externally at high cost are now produced at a fraction of the cost in-house.

Benefits
Overall, the company is seeing a reduction in total cost of ownership of around 29%. It is also meeting corporate responsibility objectives by recycling 100% of used consumables and reducing the amount of paper and consumables used. Employees are experiencing a much more consistent and reliable enterprise print operation that meets their needs better than before. For example, there are more colour devices available, they have new scan-to-email and follow-me print capabilities, and they have much easier access to sophisticated and flexible central print facilities. Office device availability averages 99% and helpdesk calls have fallen by 60%. User satisfaction with the central and procured print service stands at 99%.
Future outlook

The print room has a real opportunity for transformation, and many organisations are looking for significant improvements – irrespective of whether they outsource the print room or run it internally. By far the overwhelming majority are looking for improvements in paper to digital workflows (Figure 7). Not only does this reduce costs but also improves productivity and, with the right tools, print rooms are well positioned to support a transition to digital business processes. This highlights the strong need for business process automation and how organisations are looking for the print room to better support these enterprise initiatives.

The Quocirca research reveals some distinct variations by industry – 73% of professional services firms are looking for better paper to digital workflows, whilst over half of both professional service and financial sector respondents want better use of digital customer communications. Certainly, print is now just one aspect of marketing communications and delivering cross-media communications is a growing opportunity for the print room. Through the use of multi-channel document composition tools, the print room can promote extended services and become an extension of the marketing department. Ultimately, by implementing automated workflow tools, creating an online presence and becoming more proactive, print rooms can raise their game and become an integral part of an organisation’s communications strategy.

Figure 7. In which areas would you like to see improvements?
Recommendations

Organisations can take a number of steps to transform their print room operations. By expanding services, the print room can deliver a more relevant and services-driven operation. This maximises utilisation of the print room, increases customer satisfaction and enables it to demonstrate its strategic business value. Quocirca recommends that organisations consider the following to run an efficient print room:

- **Consider an outsourced provider.** In-house management of the print room is not a core competency for most enterprises and can be costly, inefficient and a drain on resources that would be better focused elsewhere. By using an experienced outsourced provider, an organisation can leverage skills, expertise and technology. Their economy of scale can give an organisation an important competitive advantage.

- **Gain executive buy-in.** To change negative perceptions of the print room it is necessary to promote the value proposition of the print room. Involve executive sponsors such as those running IT, procurement and marketing communications. The IT department is vital to ensure tools such as W2P are deployed effectively; procurement can identify and minimise costly external print purchasing; and marketing communications are key to exploiting extended services such as multi-channel communications.

- **Conduct an assessment.** An in-depth analysis of enterprise document usage (across office, production and external printing) is necessary to understand the types of documents, print volumes, how often and where they are created. The analysis should cover quantitative and qualitative information to understand the current situation and establish the total cost of ownership, which will be used as the baseline. This measurement of print usage, workflow processes and cost is vital to identify better utilisation opportunities for the print room, and ensure that inappropriate jobs are not sent to MFPs or an outside printer.

- **Understand customer needs.** To remain relevant, a print room must build new services to adapt to changing customer needs. How do internal customers perceive the print room? Are they aware of its services? How satisfied are they with the services? How do costs compare to external print services? By better promoting its services, the print room can work to close the gap between the perception and reality of its capabilities.

- **Embrace multi-channel communications.** Multi-channel communications can help to create a broader service portfolio, new revenue streams, drive print volumes and deliver more efficient and measurable ways of communication. Ultimately, success of a multi-channel approach rests within an organisation’s data. In-house print rooms are better positioned than commercial printers to leverage the sources, security and accuracy of that data. Consider modular and scalable solutions that offer the flexibility to start small and simple but expand to other channels and functionality as business needs require.

- **Deploy and promote the benefits of web to print.** Building an on-line presence for the print room is key to raising its profile and promoting its products and services. With W2P, the print room can be an extension of the marketing department providing easy-to-use, template-driven processes for creating up-to-date, versioned or personalised marketing collateral that adheres to corporate brand standards.

- **Measure and manage.** All print rooms should measure and track their financial and operational performance to demonstrate value and ensure they remain competitive with outside providers. Through proactive management, an outsourced provider can take responsibility for this.

- **Training and education.** Without educating end users, any transformation project will fail. As the print room expands its services and increases its visibility, employees will need to be made aware of the new technology and processes. Ensuring staff are aware of, and committed to, using print room services as a cost-effective alternative to commercial or office printers will be key to the success of the next generation print room.

Conclusion

The print room of the future is one that maximises productivity and embraces the digital world, moving beyond print. By using the experience and expertise of an outsourced provider, new services such as web-to-print, multi-channel communications and automated workflows can be introduced, to provide more flexible and cost-effective personalised services. By moving with the times, the print room has the opportunity to change perceptions from a glorified printing and copying department to one that is relevant and integral to an organisation’s core business.

References:

1 Quocirca Print Room Study, April 2013. 250 respondents UK, France, Germany and the US
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Reference Charts

Figure 8. Is your print room outsourced or managed in-house?

Figure 9. How do you expect your production print volumes to change in the next 12 months?
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Figure 10. How do you expect your production print volumes to change in the next 12 months? (Colour)

Figure 11. Which extended services would you be interested in? (By Vertical)

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