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Printweek

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Solving print's pain points



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Solving print's pain points

Printweek research revealed that high costs remain a huge challenge for print clients, a challenge that savvy printers can capitalise on, with the right investment

Earlier this year, *Printweek* promoted a piece of research on behalf of Xerox titled *The New Formula for Production Success*, which set about identifying the key pain points facing commercial print business leaders.

While the report was largely based on the US print market, the challenges highlighted were truly universal:

- Accelerating productivity
- Beating profitability targets
- Championing sustainability
- Data and product security
- Winning more business by differentiation and growing print volumes through innovation

However, one print leader's challenge is another's opportunity. So, *Printweek* interviewed four business leaders from a variety of businesses, three in the UK and one in the US, to look at what they had done to rise to the opportunities identified in the original report.

- Rob Pryer of The Printed Word
- Danny Kirkland of Encompass Health
- Rob Moules and Lance Hill of Eight Plus and Eight Days a Week Print Solutions (EDWPS)

Before we undertook those interviews, we asked *Printweek* readers three questions around digital transformation; investment strategy and customers priorities.

The reason we did this was to add some context to the interviews, because while it's clear that digital transformation is key to the evolution of the print industry, whether it be through the automation of repetitive tasks or the implementation of AI, it means different things to different people.

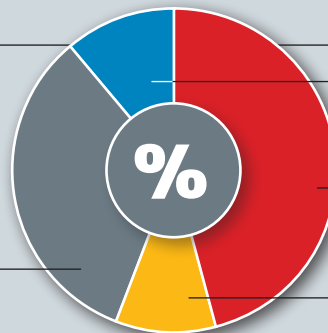
So perhaps it's not a massive surprise that just under half of respondents are yet to begin their digital transformation journey.

Equally unsurprising in the current climate is that for almost half of business leaders, the key driver for investment is cutting costs, although it's encouraging to note that

POLL

Where is your business on its digital transformation journey?

Well advanced, but still a way to go
33%



Nearing completion
11%

Not started and no plans to
46%

Plan in place and just starting
10%

despite the economic turbulence more than half of respondents are looking to add new applications/products and boost productivity or automation.

Perhaps most eye-opening of all the poll findings, however, was that just shy of 75% of printers said their customers' key priority right now is reducing their costs, which represents a significant opportunity for print businesses.

“The key driver for investment is cutting costs”

In summary, it's clear that the challenges faced by commercial printers mirror those faced by their clients, internal and external, which presents an opportunity for both.

The difference is that the power is quite clearly in the printers' hands because it's up to them to change the proposition.

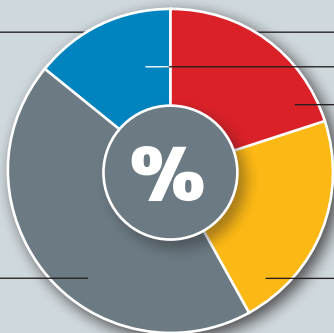
Which, as detailed in the interviews, is precisely what our featured business leaders have done, either through changing their technology offering or changing the conversation by developing a new business model. **P**

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POLLS

What is your key investment driver?

Cutting costs
44%



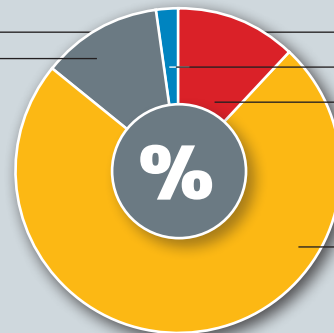
Increasing automation
14%

Adding new applications/products
20%

Increasing productivity
22%

What typically is your customers key priority right now?

Growing revenue
12%



Data security
2%

Sustainability
12%

Reducing costs
74%

Accelerating productivity

A carefully considered investment in inkjet is yielding big benefits

According to Rob Pryer, managing director of West Sussex-based printer The Printed Word (TPW), the company has been “geared-up nicely” and running very smoothly for a good few years. So much so that the 12-strong team has navigated the seemingly relentless economic and practical hurdles of the past few years and pushed on to a period of significant growth. This however, meant that expanding printing volumes began to push the limits of its equipment and indeed its people power.

The challenge

“There were certain times of year that we were pretty much at capacity and having to put in a lot of overtime – we were almost at 100%,” Pryer recalls. “As a business we are not interested in running beyond a 40-hour, five-day week, we never have been; we don’t have aspirations to be a £20m business,” he says, adding that TPW has always “boxed a bit above its weight” because it invests in technology and software.

Founded around 35 years ago, Horsham-based TPW was originally a B2 offset litho business printing and mailing work predominantly for the motor industry. The firm moved into B3 around a decade ago and has since evolved to provide a wide range of commercial print and transactional print and mailing services, particularly in financial sectors, as well as a web-to-print offering.

The company’s recent boom has come as a result of knocking on doors and proactively going out and winning new business, explains Pryer. But with pressure building on its digital setup of Xerox Versants, Versalinks and Nuvera monos the company needed to step up its production offer to reduce pressure, while supporting its growth trajectory and productivity.

The solution

Pryer says because the business has built trust with Xerox since adopting digital some years ago, he was happy to listen when it suggested a technology upgrade last year. “Because our volume was going up so significantly, they said we were ready to look at the next tier in the Xerox offer, and that was the Baltoro inkjet device.”

Pryer says that while he’d looked at inkjet a few years ago, he felt the quality wasn’t good enough to consider investing, but seeing results from the Baltoro changed that



PRYER
Baltoro “ticks so many boxes for us”

perception. So, six months ago the company changed the shape of its digital plant list, removing two of its three Versant 3100s and installing its first inkjet device, the Xerox Baltoro HF, at TPW’s 650sqm facility.

“We went for it because of quality and because it prints duplex at phenomenal speed,” he explains. Heading a print business, he says, means you have to remain versatile, have the ability to plan ahead but be ready to listen to the market and make the necessary changes to keep ahead, something he feels the new device is facilitating.

The result

“To say the Baltoro has transformed our production and productivity would be an

understatement,” Pryer says. “It’s generated probably another 25% capacity and we’re not even breaking a sweat. It’s created capacity, lower unit costs, the click charge is down with the increased volume and related sales are up. It ticks so many boxes for us.”

Pryer also highlights the Baltoro’s “terrific” reliability. He says it was important not to rob the other presses of work and that the firm is still in the process of transitioning work across to it. “It’s just eating up the work,” he states. “We are still doing significant volume on toner as well, but I can see

“We were pretty much at capacity and having to put in a lot of overtime – we were almost at 100%” Rob Pryer

us migrating completely, over the next five years, to inkjet technology as Xerox really brings it on board. I think we’ll just soak it up,” Pryer adds.

One of the major benefits of the Baltoro is the ability to print onto a wide range of stocks, something Pryer says the business will be exploring further in the future, because until now it has been mostly limited to uncoated paper for its digital work. “It will open up a lot of opportunities,” he adds.

The TPW team has also felt the benefits of the new device, Pryer explains, as overtime has been significantly reduced, easing pressure, and while it might have resulted in a drop in pay, the business implemented a pay rise to offset the reduction in hours.

“It’s a happy ship here. It’s taken pressure off. It’s not as frantic. We’re not running, we’re walking and still meeting all deadlines with comfort,” says Pryer.

COMPANY PROFILE

Business name: The Printed Word

Interviewee: Rob Pryer, managing director

Business location: Horsham, West Sussex, England

Size: £2.2m turnover, 12 employees

Products and services: B2B and B2C digital, litho and wide-format printing including business cards, letterheads, posters, flyers, reports and brochures; personalised printing and mailing; W2P services

Kit: one Xerox Baltoro; one Xerox Versant 3100; two high speed mono units; and two litho presses

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Championing sustainability and winning new business

Putting sustainability front and centre was key to a successful launch



GREEN BUSINESS
Sustainability is no longer just a nice-to-have, but a key differentiator

Sustainability is no longer just some eco-jargon or a tick-box exercise that businesses can throw around in the hope it will reflect well and attract more business.

In an industry constantly under scrutiny for greenwashing and a world where environmental quotas are legally binding, print companies have an opportunity and a responsibility to lead. It is an ethos that Eight Plus co-founder and sales director Rob Moules says is fundamental to the business.

The challenge

Eight Plus is a division of Nottingham-based, direct mail, digital print and multichannel marketing provider Eight Days a Week Print Solutions (EDWPS). The division specialises in outsourcing, print management and consulting predominantly for the long-run market.

Eight Plus launched in Q1 2022 amid the fall-out from the collapse of YM Group's web division. YM's former group sales manager Rob Moules co-founded the new business with EDWPS managing director Lance Hill. Some handpicked former colleagues from YM also joined the new setup.

Moules says that with the seven-strong team's impressive level of industry knowledge and expertise it is placing sustainability at the heart of everything it does.

"When we look at RFQs and tenders now, sustainability is very high on the agenda, whether it's a charity or a PLC. Print is perceived as having a big impact on the environment, whether its carbon footprint, energy use or delivery emissions," he says.

"More and more customers are asking about renewable energy and calculating carbon. For one of our customers,

COMPANY PROFILE

Business Name: Eight Plus, part of Eight Days a Week Printing Solutions (EDWPS)

Interviewee: Rob Moules, co-founder and managing director of Eight Plus; Lance Hill, co-founder Eight Plus, managing director and owner EDWPS

Business location: Nottingham, England

Size: £5.9m; seven staff [Eight Plus]

Products and services: print management and consultation services

the importance placed on the sustainability of the work is as much, if not more, than the actual commercial proposition. They are a conservation charity but we see this creeping more and more into the commercial world,” Moules adds.

He says that because quality is a fairly level playing-field, customers are looking for differentiators and to align themselves with printers that have the same values around sustainability.

“If there’s one printer that has made that commitment – made a big investment in solar panels, for example – then that’s going to tip the balance on winning that business.

“If someone is making no changes then you have to wonder where they are going,” he continues.

“The future is sustainability. Anyone can offer cheap prices but having come from manufacturing we have a responsibility to trade with ethical and sustainable partners and people that are going to be there in the future.”

The solution

Moules’ team takes an almost forensic view of every job it works, analysing each one through an efficiency and sustainability lens.

“We’ve always been at the sharp end of manufacturing so we know what works, the right formats for cost efficiencies, the right presses, workflows, materials and inks. We look at things from the beginning to see how we can optimise formats and print them differently to give customers the same result but more efficiently,” he explains.

The company aligns itself with printers that are going the extra mile and investing heavily in alternative energy for their facilities and fleets, he says, whilst examining the whole supply chain such as paper sources and identifying the most economical and eco-friendly forms of transportation to the UK.

“A lot of our customers will ask these questions, it’s a

“We have a responsibility to trade with ethical and sustainable partners and people that are going to be there in the future” Rob Moules

constant discussion we have to have. There is a lot of greenwashing and we work tirelessly with organisations like Two Sides and the Strategic Mailing Partnership to highlight the fact that if print is done correctly the impact can be a lot less than an email campaign,” Moules says.

As a BPIF member, the company also has access to ClimateCalc, a print-specific carbon calculator, which it uses to work out emissions data for each job.

All this is time consuming and Moules says it can’t just be about ticking boxes. The firm wants to ensure customers are not just going for the cheapest job but making informed decisions to meet their stated objectives.

He says: “We want to make print work as hard as we possibly can for our customers in their budgets. Our job is to make it as sustainable as possible, in every sense.”

The result

Since its inception, the company has built 25 new customers and billed sales of £5.9m, expecting to hit £7.5m by the end of 2023. Not only that, but with around 10% of its



NEW OFFERING
Lance Hill (left),
owner of EDWPS and
co-founder of Eight
Plus together with
Rob Moules (right)

work going to EDWPS, Eight Plus has helped its parent company surpass its own growth objectives.

EDWPS boss, Hill, says he had budgeted for a small loss, or at best break-even, in the first year but the group “smashed year one” with Eight Days’ sales of £6.2m bringing group turnover to £12.1m.

“On this basis it has massively exceeded expectations,” he adds. “The benefit of doing what we’ve done is that it gives the core EDWPS business other opportunities that slot into our main market of direct mail, digital commercial print and data.

“Plus we have won new business that we wouldn’t have won before, which is working both ways. For example, in 2022 we had 70 new clients across the group, 50 were EDWPS and 20 were Eight Plus, which for me is very satisfying,” says Hill.

He underlines sustainability and diversification as core to the group ethos and key to winning new business.

In this way, while Eight Plus’ key purpose is to fulfil high run work, it has diversified to offer consulting, POS and packaging to facilitate existing print jobs, expanding the scope of work it can offer to each customer.

Moules says: “The appetite is not to get too big. At the moment we want to stay within the same customers we have but do a lot more with them. We are spreading risk and diversifying, not just relying on two or three big customers.”

“With Eight Days, it’s the perfect marriage because we have all the benefits of having a long-standing financially secure business but have access to new relationships,” he states.

Hill concludes: “With Eight Plus and the expertise of our people there was an opportunity to use the collective skills and relationships with large organisations to differentiate ourselves from the rest of the market.

“We really are doing that, by applying the EDWPS award-winning customer service to the often tired web-offset market model – there are exceptions – we have built a model that our customers enjoy.

“It’s built on trust, quality and an above and beyond service experience. Not rocket science at all.” **P**

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Beating profitability targets and accelerating productivity

A move into a new technology upped productivity and delivered ROI

6

Encompass Health is one of the largest providers of post-acute health-care services in the United States with more than 150 specialist rehabilitation hospitals across nearly 40 states.

Employing a workforce of around 30,000 and a potential reach in the millions, the company has a huge print requirement to fulfil in terms of traditional marketing products, brochures, business stationery and employee training documents as well as branded promotional products and apparel.

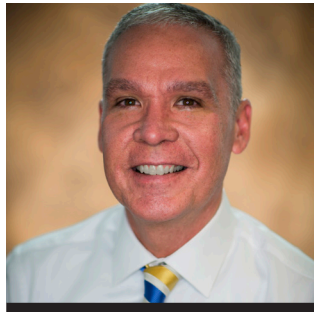
The challenge

For the Birmingham, Alabama, US-headquartered firm's implant facility, a projected period of intense growth, with bed expansions in existing hospitals and 22 new hospitals planned over a three-year period, meant related print demand was increasing.

At the start of 2022, national director of print services, Danny Kirkland, says with his team of 12 pushing out 5,500 projects a month and work increasing, he was faced with two challenges: how to keep up with increasing demand without expanding his footprint at the already-full 3,400sqm facility and how to ensure a return on investment for any new technology that would bolster future profitability.

"When you're trying to get an ROI it's one thing to convince yourself that you need a machine, it's another challenge to convince a healthcare company that they need to spend a large amount of money on something that is not getting people back to health," says Kirkland.

"I couldn't just put more copy machines in there, so I had to have something that was going to be more productive and not require



KIRKLAND
Baltoro exceeded expectations

more people but also keep consistency and repeatability."

He highlights a key issue with such high-volume work being printed on a mainly toner-based fleet as the degradation of quality over time, something he's been trying to address for nearly a decade without finding the right solution.

"Inkjet interests me because of the consistency of output. I have a

"In order to get to an ROI, not only did I need to be cheaper in clicks... I also needed to not have to pay out for more equipment" Danny Kirkland

very unique job that is mixed-plex and mixed-media, specifically with index tabs, which is the perfect combination not to work on inkjet," he says.

The solution

Kirkland assessed his fleet to see how it could be reconfigured to increase and optimise throughput without expanding footprint. At the time the circa \$10m-turnover operation was running a Xerox Iridesse and HP Indigo for its premium work, four Xerox Versant 3100s and two Xerox D125 copier printers. The business also runs wide-format kit, including a Fuji Acuity Flatbed and an HP Latex 360.

After testing offers from two manufacturers, Kirkland opted to

COMPANY PROFILE

Business Name: Encompass Health implant
Interviewee: Danny Kirkland, national director, print services
Business location: Vestavia Hills, Birmingham, Alabama
Size: \$10m (£7.9m); 12 employees
Products and services: Marketing print, brochures, business cards and training manuals as well as branded promotional items and apparel.
Kit: HP Indigo; Xerox Iridesse; Xerox Baltoro; two Xerox Versant 4100s; one DTW D125; Fuji Acuity flatbed; HP Latex 360 roll-to-roll

take the leap to inkjet with a Xerox Baltoro, while removing one D125 copier and the four Versants and replacing them with a brace of 4100s.


"In order to get to an ROI, not only did I need to be cheaper in clicks and all those types of things, but I also needed to not have to pay out for more equipment. So I needed a machine that could net a certain number of books per day. No one else in eight years was able to do that until we found the Baltoro from Xerox," he says.

\$6,500 and \$9,000 per month from click charges, even when factoring in depreciation costs.

"One of the things I unexpectedly netted out of this process is that we had an existing workflow system in place for the rest of the fleet and had only anticipated using Xerox's Freeflow for the Baltoro, but once we got it installed, the interface was so user friendly compared to our existing one that we imported everything onto Freeflow.

"It saved me a \$14,000 licence fee, so we're probably going to save around \$92,000 in the first year, which is fantastic," he states.

Kirkland says the Baltoro has exceeded his expectations in terms of speed and consistency and that moving forward he will look at building inkjet further into his fleet, with the hope that as quality increases he can perhaps utilise the technology for his premium work.

"The HP and Iridesse require a decent amount of operator maintenance and a lot of downtime," he says. "The Baltoro has had an as-expected uptime percentage; I thought it would be 80% plus, which it has been. Oftentimes you are disappointed in that expectation in this game, so I would like the majority of our workflow to eventually be inkjet because of that consistency of our uptime," he adds. 

He first refreshed the toner setup and ensured that it was running smoothly before then installing the Baltoro at the start of 2022.

"I had no experience with inkjet and my operator hadn't run one so I wanted to make sure we had some of the old with the new before we were ready to go with the Baltoro," he says.

The result

Kirkland says he couldn't have hoped for better, with no more colour inconsistency, a 60% increase in book production speeds and, crucially, savings of between

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What are your PAIN POINTS?

Accelerating productivity

- Is your press downtime increasing?
- Are your production runs generally getting shorter?
- Can you charge more for faster turnarounds?
- Has the number of human touchpoints for individual jobs generally stayed the same or increased in the past two years?
- Do you have any production bottlenecks?

Beating profitability targets

- Have your staffing costs increased in the past two years?
- Are you looking to multi-skill your employees?
- Have your profit margins decreased year-on-year?
- Have your material and consumable costs increased in the past two years?
- Are you looking to implement a new business plan/strategy?

Championing sustainability

- Is your carbon footprint getting bigger?
- Is your energy consumption increasing?
- Have you lost work to greener rivals?
- Are your clients increasingly stipulating you have specific environmental credentials?
- Is running business that has sustainability at its core important to you?

Data and product security

- Do clients increasingly ask for data processing accreditations?
- Are some clients looking to implement product security features?
- Have you lost clients due to data or product security concerns?
- Does your business apply for public sector tenders?
- Would your business like to start applying for public sector tenders?

Winning more business by differentiation and growing print volumes through innovation

- Are clients pushing you for innovation?
- Are you looking to add a new revenue with no significant outlay?
- Is your technology restricting your growth opportunities?
- Are you looking to grow existing business by increasing your order values?
- Are you looking to win new business?

If you answered yes to one or more of the above questions, you may benefit from confidential discussion with a Xerox business development advisor. As well as expert advice, learn more about the best-in-class, comprehensive technology solutions Xerox provides at www.xerox.co.uk/productionpainpoints

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