

## Vendor's View: New technologies can raise print's value

1 Nov 2013 | [Mark Katralis](#) | [Comment now](#)

Printers need to learn how to add rich content to printed pieces or find partners who can.



For those who continue to lament the slow painful death of print, I have good news and bad news.

The good news is print isn't dying.

According to research conducted by the Australian Catalogue Association in the lead-up to Christmas 2012, more than 70% of Australians over the age of 14 prefer to read printed catalogues over online versions. Another report, by the Association for Data-driven Marketing & Advertising, found that printed direct mail is more effective than email marketing.

The bad news, however, is that print alone isn't enough. Well, it's not really bad news. It's good news because there are growing opportunities for print providers that didn't exist a few years ago. With improving technologies for rich media content, print providers can become an integral component of their customers' marketing campaigns.

This is due to the rapid explosion of 'content', which covers everything that's delivered to a customer or prospective customer in any form available: print, online, video, outdoor, radio, TV and of course the ever present social media, such as Twitter and Facebook.

There are so many great ways to reach an audience. What is changing is that you have to approach them differently and in different ways. Hitting an audience with an ad or a flyer is not as effective as it used to be. We can now combine various channels to develop a rapport with a specific audience.

Here's a key differentiator in today's vast landscape of content: anyone can create it. Anyone can write a review of a business, whether it's a service provider, printer or power tool, with no background or context if it's bad or good. There is a shift to content being generated by users rather than single point experts. The 'crowd' shares opinions and determines the popularity of products, goods and services rather than a supplier promoting those products, goods and services and rewarding loyalty.

Where does print sit in this mix?

In many cases, print can't always stand on its own. For the full value of print to be realised, it needs to exist within a larger and richer context.

Just as the content is segmented by relevance, the media vehicle also must be selected by relevance – what will most effectively transport the message or the content? The target audience may be more responsive to a printed piece, where more information can be shared. The ability to customise print is what still makes it an attractive medium. It adds to the differentiation.

If a printed piece cuts through more effectively, someone is more likely to pick it up and consider it.

Now, add rich content to that printed piece. You can raise its value.

With the development of rich content, the print and online worlds are able to mesh and complement each other. Where QR codes started 20 years ago, embedded media continues to evolve. There are now technologies available that link paper to online content through image recognition. What some people don't realise is that you can do this without the intrusive design element of a QR code. The images on the paper can become 'smart' and simply be recognised; you just point the smartphone reader at the images on the printed page and a database is checked for linked content and information. I liken it to a visual version of Shazam.

These links can be to YouTube videos to see live demos or reviews, transaction sites to purchase, opinion forums – all delivered from the printed piece in your hand that you received in the mail or the advertisement in the magazine. Print achieved the first step, rich content achieved the next.

Print delivers on its value, particularly when combined with other media. The opportunity for print providers is to offer these services or partner with those who deliver them.

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