

# Web-to-Print Solutions

## Driving page volume & revenue growth

by: Denine Phillips, Tech-Write

From the mailroom to the boardroom, everyone in business faces tight deadlines on print jobs. The question: How can you manage that workflow to minimize turnaround times and maximize efficiency? Online printing tools have emerged in recent years to answer that call. Referred to as Web-to-print solutions, this technology is rapidly gaining traction in the production-print arena.

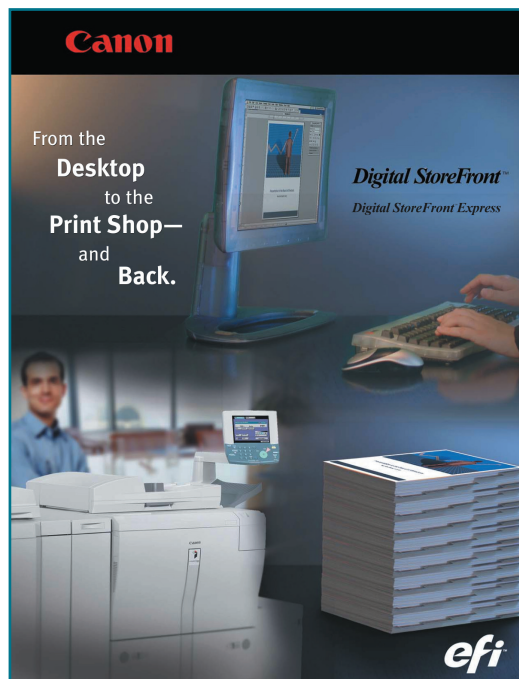
Using Web-to-print services, print buyers have a valuable resource at their fingertips, one that saves time and money. And print providers have an efficient way to quickly capture, process, track, report and bill orders; there's no more struggling with incomplete e-mail messages or phone orders.

### How it Works

In brief, Web-to-print enables users to upload files (from home or an office PC) directly to a remote print center, along with a complete set of instructions (job ticket). They can also order pre-printed media from a catalog, request an estimate or track job status.

From a user perspective, the Web-to-print process is simple, much like ordering a book online, complete with shopping cart and checkout. However, there are sophisticated back-end processes taking place with every print e-commerce transaction.

Monitoring, management and much more goes into a



*The cover of Canon USA's online brochure for EFI's Digital StoreFront product.*

complete print e-commerce solution. And optional modules are available to extend that functionality, adding features like variable data printing (VDP), credit card billing, purchase approvals, transaction authentication and automated pricing. The focus of this article, however, is on the big picture — the value proposition that makes Web-based print job submission an attractive revenue opportunity.

### Two of the DSF Players

“With print e-commerce, we're talking about centralizing workflow, creating a conduit for customers to order print media from a staffed print center,” says Jim DiGruttilla, Ricoh Corp.'s high-volume product marketing manager. “The unique buying

experience provides customers with a convenient on-ramp to the digital production workflow. So, besides attracting and retaining customers, we're driving increased document volume on the back-end.”

Ricoh offers EFI Digital StoreFront (DSF) and MicroPress solutions through its direct and dealer sales forces, across all its brands. Doing so, says DiGruttilla, provides Ricoh with “an easy turnkey solution that is attracting a lot of attention in our high-volume production environments.”

Canon U.S.A. Inc. is attracting similar attention. “We are seeing a lot more interest in the Web-to-print space with in-plant CRDs that are servicing the various functional areas of the organization, as well as print providers,” says Forrest

Leighton, product marketing manager for the Production Printing Division. “For the print providers it provides a critical link to their customers and enables them to benefit from the recurring revenue stream these types of systems enable.

“Our EFI Digital StoreFront solution gives users a very simple GUI, or Web interface, to order their print materials,” he continues. “Receiving a print-ready PDF makes it much easier for the print center, and on items that are used over and over again, they can actually set up a catalog.”

### The Developer’s Perspective

Jennifer Matt, EFI’s senior product marketing manager, sees a parallel between Web-to-print and ATM machines. “I think of Digital StoreFront as being the ATM machine,” she says. “All those easy jobs — people taking \$20 out every day. Banks taught us that we don’t have to go in and talk to a teller and it saved them a lot of money. Likewise, the printer needs to have a segment of its work where the only labor that touches it is someone taking the finished product off the output tray.

“The data drops into a print queue in Digital StoreFront for the operator to view,” she explains. “If the job is approved, with one click the operator can push the job and the instructions to the Fiery controller. There’s no duplicate entry at the controller; proactive communication that doesn’t involve labor at the print center means less room for error and higher productivity.”

Matt emphasizes that EFI’s focus is on providing print buyers with an intuitive front-end that blends seamlessly with the back-end. “What we’ve done with Digital StoreFront is create a single portal so that anything that’s going down to the print center gets funneled through one place,” she says.

Renee Heiser, manager of workflow marketing for Xerox Corp., echoes Matt’s comments: “Print shops have jobs coming in from all directions.” She explains that after print buyers specify their requirements, Xerox’s Web-to-print solution, FreeFlow Web Services 5.0 (powered by Pressense), passes that information all the way down the production chain, without having to type it in, saving time and reducing errors. “Web-to-print solutions are really about automating the process and making it easier for both the print buyer and print provider,” she says.

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### The Value Proposition

Steve Adoniou, a consultant with market research firm InfoTrends, believes that the value proposition with this technology is efficiency. “Web-to-print is one of the significant workflow components of an efficient print production environment,” he says. “In the past, by the time the customer service rep picked up the phone, wrote down

some basic job information and posted the received file to an e-mail, five to ten minutes or more had passed.

“With Web-to-print solutions, that same job is in the print queue within seconds, making print production far more efficient and employees more productive,” he continues. “In this process, other solutions come into play that allocate and manage production resources and monitor productivity. These reporting and management tools go beyond just strictly print e-commerce.”

The main message is that there is an opportunity for dealers to not just sell a box, but to generate revenue from the many pages that are being printed, says Adoniou. It behooves dealerships to make it easier and more accessible for people to drive page volume to high-end printing systems, he says.

“Dealers must view print e-commerce as an easy way for the print buyer to order more media from a print center,” says DiGruttilla. “That means more clicks and bigger production engines. Dealers will make money not only on the initial sale of Digital StoreFront, but also on hardware sales and support, including service and supplies.”

Adoniou notes that some revenue can be obtained by offering technical support. Depending on the solution provider, they may offer the dealer a percentage of the annual maintenance agreement. The dealer is then responsible for providing first-line support, delivering updates, upgrades and new versions of the software.

“If the dealership is allocating resources to support one license, it isn’t making money,” says Adoniou. “But support 10 or 20 or more licenses a year and the fees are coming in. That’s where the push is, to get at that piece of the pie.”

Xerox’s Heiser feels very strongly that when you put in a Web product you use it and you make sure your customers are aware of it — and you are going to drive up the page volume. Ultimately, that increase in volume drives more engine placements. And as print providers realize greater workflow efficiencies, they can offer responsive,

24/7 service that creates a recurring revenue stream.

“Dealers can make money on all phases of the sale, depending on their participation,” says Kay Fernandez, Toshiba America Business Solutions’ director of product marketing. Toshiba also offers the Digital StoreFront solution. “If a dealership has someone certified for DSF, it can retain the incremental profits from the professional services portion of the installation and maintenance.”

“Also, certified dealerships can make plenty of incremental profits by contracting themselves as the programming element for their customers using DSF,” she says. “When modifications need to be made to the system, the customer would rely on the dealer to implement the changes; the dealer would charge professional services for those changes.”

Leighton agrees. “Dealers who are certified by EFI to support Digital StoreFront have an opportunity to build a revenue stream,” he says. “Though more dealers are relying on EFI for support, we’re beginning to see that change.”

### Where’s the Action?

“We are seeing a lot more interest in the Web-to-print space, particularly in variable data printing (VDP),” says Leighton. “Looking at VDP from a printer’s perspective, they are looking for ways to add value. You keep hearing about the commoditization of print. What’s happening now, especially in the small- and mid-level print shops, is they are looking for ways to differentiate themselves. Just consider the ‘Do Not Call’ legislation that was passed. Companies that had relied on telemarketing to generate revenue ported that over to direct mail — with color devices playing an important part.”

Nobody is just going to “buy a copier” anymore, says EFI’s Matt. “They want to hear a bigger story or a more integrated story,” she says. “People want one place to provide all the products and services of their print shop, and that goes from the copy shop in the basement of a law office all the way to large commercial printers.”

Heiser notes that Xerox has had a lot of success with FreeFlow and its DocuTech line in government, school and healthcare accounts, both in in-plant and enterprise environments. “Now, with the introduction of Web Services 5.0, we have some unique capabilities that will open up new

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markets,” she says. “FreeFlow Web Services 5.0 has the ability to integrate with some of our document repositories that are prevalent in a lot of in-plant customer accounts. We can link Web Services to DocuShare, which makes it easy for users to view, order and print their documents.”

With the launch of 5.0, Xerox is going after the commercial printers as well.

“Commercial printers have got to be making sure that they are easy to get to, and the Web is certainly the way to do that,” says Heiser.

EFI targets four vertical markets within in-plant and facility management (FM) operations — legal, health care, financial services and education — what Matt considers “captive audiences.” She adds, “We also target two groups of non-captive audiences, where people do business with anyone. That’s your retail print for pay, including mom-and-pop franchises, and the huge box stores, like Staples, Office Max and FedEx Kinkos. Then you have the commercial offset sector that are now getting into digital workflows.”

With its entire Aficio line, Ricoh is pursuing the usual suspects — commercial printers, print-for-pay, CRDs, data centers and in-plant shops. “The objective is to add value to the Aficio installation by enabling the customer to improve customer service and streamline operations,” says DiGruttilla.

Regardless of your target market, an important message that must be communicated to every potential customer is the ability to control costs through print e-commerce. EFI’s Matt stresses that the user can control costs in an office by printing to the right device. “A lot of people may be printing lengthy black-and-white documents to a color multifunctional device because it’s right around the corner,” she says. “Consider the money savings when you get that file to the production-level machines. The labor is sitting there, already paid for. Those are fixed costs. You’ve got to extend your services to reach a wider audience, and at the same time enable your customers to rein in costs.” ■

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