

Why the smart companies invest in online print management.

Aristotle is credited with the quote: "We are what we repeatedly do, excellence, then, is not an act but a habit." This is one of the reasons companies specialise – to habitually become excellent at what they produce.

It's also the reason so many smart companies outsource to specialists in services where those companies are not excellent – services such as print management for example. Every company uses print for all types of purposes from stationery to marketing collateral and signage. But unless you are a printer, you're not an expert, let alone excellent at print management.

So, outsourcing print management to a secure software service is the smart thing to do – to save time, money, stock and maintain quality control and eliminate expensive errors. In any organisation, the more staff who are able to create customer documents, marketing collateral or any printed item, the bigger the risk of non-compliance or other branding errors. And these mistakes can sometimes come with hefty fines, as well as reputation damage.

Online print management systems are particularly beneficial for franchise and network groups with multiple offices, where printing often needs to be customised to geographic locations, or advisor-specific documents. And they also suit large organisations with multiple users of different types of printed items.

Easier workflow management

Apart from the security these systems offer, print procurement managers appreciate the controls and workflow for cost centres, approvals, administration and template design. Cost centres provide the structure for each client's account. It means staff can access any number of cost centres if authorised. While each cost centre can have one 'approver' and multiple 'administrators' or other combinations of approval hierarchy.

This process ensures all printed materials meet compliance rules as well as brand guidelines, minimising any risk of individual staff creating non-compliant materials. It's extremely useful for businesses in which staff produce locally customised materials. The last thing a brand needs is signage or marketing collateral designed by a well-intentioned team member in a regional location, who has no idea of brand guidelines or advertising codes of practice.

Warehousing and inventory control

In addition to managing the printing, there is also the issue of storage and distribution of printed materials. This can include anything from letterheads and stationery, to marketing collateral, point of sale, decals, signage and more. In addition to warehousing and delivery, the logistical services provided can include:

- Real-time stock on hand information, providing instant and accurate quantities.
- Inventory images updated automatically without user intervention for accurate real-time updates.
- Variable minimum and maximum ordering quantities to control user ordering.
- Pick slips generated as orders are placed.
- Orders despatched with real-time tracking information.
- Users get confirmation emails detailing despatch and tracking detail links.
- Standard and customised reports are available including:
 - User (User only)
 - Cost Centre (Administrator)
 - Company (Company Administrator)
- Stock report with .csv file download
- Automated low-level stock advice email

This level of secure print management cannot be achieved internally, as it's not an in-house expertise. Consequently, the logical thing for organisations to do is to trust their compliance and brand management for printed materials to the print management professionals. Those print companies where excellence in print production and management is a habit, as well as a profession. The smart companies understand it's better to focus on your strengths to get the best return on your business investment.