

cost savings...
time savings...
inventory control...
brand control...



Your guide to online print procurement

Who should read this guide?

This booklet is intended for anybody who is tasked with purchasing printed materials for their business or organisation, whether you are a professional print buyer or have been asked to update the company literature, “when you get a moment”.

As anybody who has taken on this task will tell you, it can be a lot slower, more complex and more frustrating than it really needs to be.

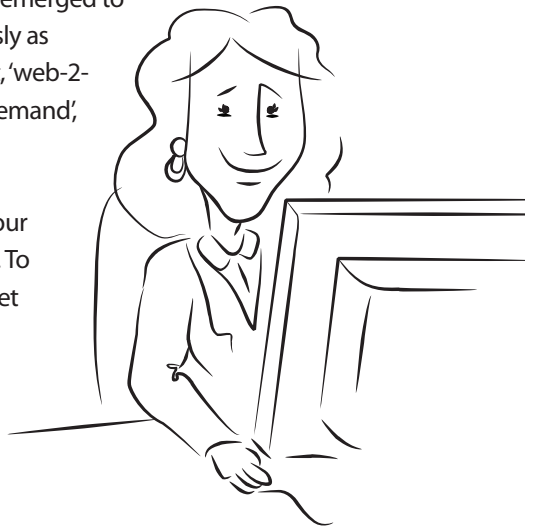
We hope, therefore, that after reading the valuable information inside this booklet, you will have a much greater understanding of the concept of online print ordering and the enormous potential it has to solve many of your print buying headaches.



The future of print buying!

In today's competitive environment, expectations within the print industry are for shorter and shorter print runs, quicker turnaround, personalisation, and more cost efficient workflows. Printing has become a highly technical and specialised industry - even more so with the emergence and development of the digital press, making the short print run a much more attractive proposition.

To meet the needs of this quick turnaround market, new ways of ordering, handling and delivering digital files have had to be developed. Until recently, these digital workflows were restricted to the print provider's internal procedures and print buyers had to rely on the traditional method of obtaining quotes, submitting artwork, and getting proofs and purchase orders for each individual order. The continuing development of the Internet, it's availability, reliability and capacity to handle larger and larger file sizes has lead to the development of web based ordering systems that are revolutionising the way we order print. Unfortunately, as with most emerging technologies, a bewildering array of technical jargon and acronyms has emerged to confuse the layman. Known variously as 'online print ordering', 'web-to-print', 'web-2-print', 'W2P', 'Web-based Print-on-Demand', it is worth pointing out that all these terms apply to the same concept, which is, ordering your job from a printer over the Internet. To simplify this, throughout this booklet we'll refer to this process as 'online print ordering', which we feel is the neatest and clearest description.



How does an online print ordering service work?

The basic setup

Online print ordering is targeted toward both commercial and retail users. At its most basic level, it allows you to select and order an item from a catalogue of products or print items, the details of which are then sent to the print provider for prepress and production. Further functionality may allow you to create, edit, and input personalised data into templates or to upload designs of your own. Templates can be managed either by yourself (or designers within your organisation) or by the print provider and then saved into your catalogue for repeat orders. If the application is sophisticated enough, a catalogue may be branded to your organisation, acting as a retail 'storefront' or an extension of your corporate site, and avoiding the need to set up a costly stand-alone web site.



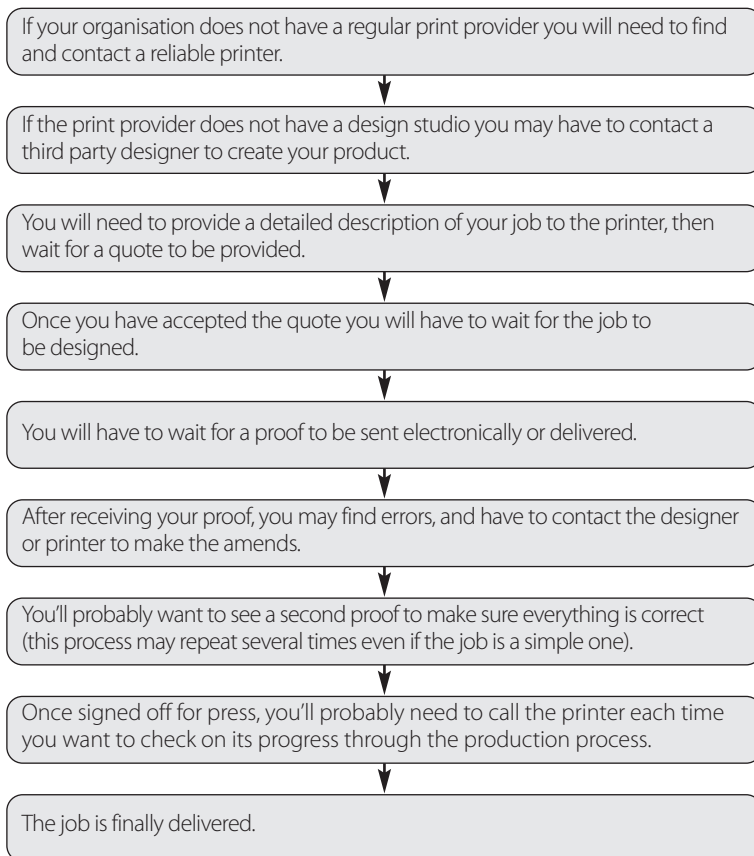
Within your catalogue, you may be able to choose pre-designed templates that allow you to alter the typeface, text, images and layout on a page. For example you could input your personal details into a business card template, and view an instant onscreen proof for you to either approve or amend. Whilst most online print ordering applications allow you to customise pre-designed templates it is also frequently possible for you to upload your own unique content for submission to the print provider.

If a digital press is to be used, the template is usually converted to a PDF (Portable Document Format) and enters a streamlined workflow at the print provider who, if the job is approved, submits it to the press for production. In more traditional printing processes, like offset printing, the template is used to create printing plates that are used to produce the final printed product.

Online ordering vs. conventional print ordering

So how does an online procurement solution differ from a conventional one, and what benefits could this bring to you and your organisation? The best way to illustrate this is to compare two possible workflows and the number of steps they may involve.

The conventional ordering model:



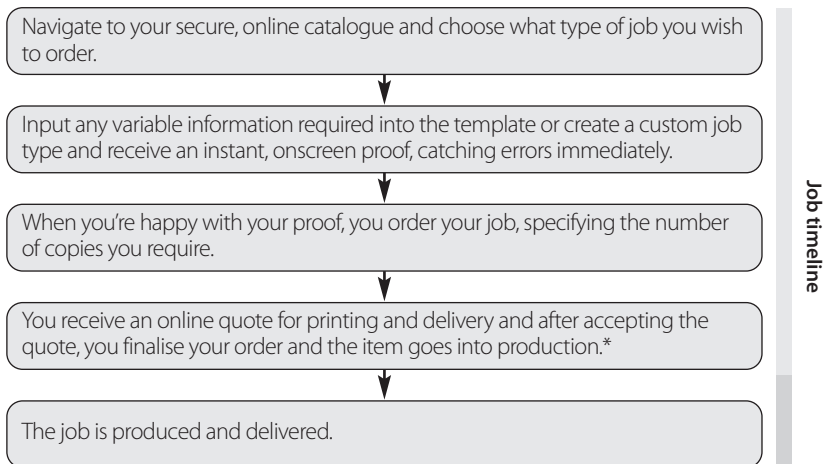
Job timeline

Let us look at the conventional ordering model

You can see from the workflow that the conventional process is a potentially lengthy and complex one. The workflow relies on the involvement of a number of individuals all needing to interact with one another. These individuals may not always be available when needed, or may not have all the information they require to complete their particular part of the workflow on time. The result may be that the print buyer feels compelled to learn more than should be necessary about the printing process in order to be a confident procurer of print.

Although the number of steps in any job will vary, the workflow illustrated here is not particularly unusual, and most steps will be needed for the production of even the smallest and simplest of print jobs. Even a simple reprint of the same job could potentially involve the majority of the steps illustrated in this workflow, creating an unnecessarily time-consuming and complicated task.

A typical online solution:



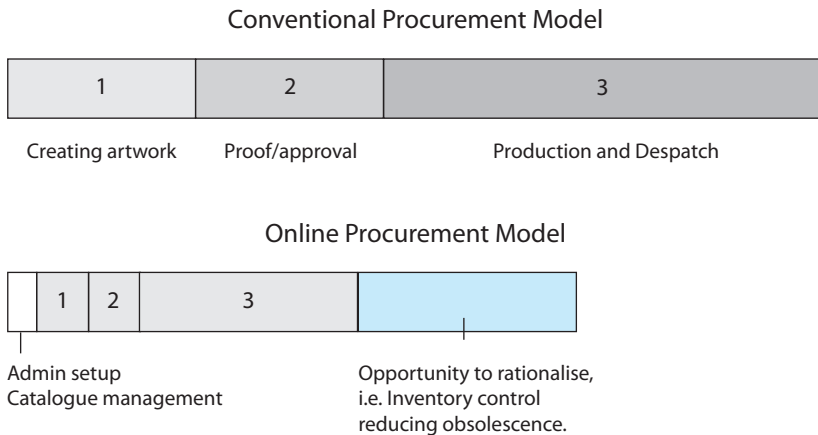
* You can log on and track your job through the production process, whenever you choose, through to final delivery.

In a typical online solution

In this workflow, although there are still a number of steps to go through, you can see from the timeline that many of the operations are either automated or can be completed at the click of a button during the same session on your PC, thereby saving a huge amount of time and greatly reducing your own administration costs.

Savings in time, cost and waste

The diagram below helps to illustrate the relationship between administration, artworking and production. We can see that a large proportion of the job in a conventional workflow is taken up with artworking and approval cycles that can significantly increase the overall timeline.



Time savings - With any automated or semi-automated system there is an initial investment of time in setting up your customer portal and product templates. But from then on, significant time will be saved due to extremely short artworking, proofing and ordering cycles. A pricing structure for your products will have been agreed between the print provider and your organisation, meaning the only cost variables will be

the quantity of the product you wish to order and its resulting shipping costs, thus simplifying the process from start to finish.

Cost savings - Using an online print ordering system, your artworking and prepress costs should be significantly reduced or eliminated altogether. Coupled with a digital press' suitability to shorter production runs this means that small jobs become much more cost effective, reducing the amount of cash you have tied up in printed stock.

Less waste - Significantly shorter print runs not only save you money by freeing up your cash but also result in less waste. It is a sad fact that 40% of printed materials are discarded without ever being used, often because they quickly become obsolete. Online systems allow you to amend your materials more often and produce fewer units. If you are then able to store your products in an inventory that controls stock levels, this will result in maximum efficiency.

Let's compare some typical print ordering scenarios

Scenario 1: Michelle and Sam are both busy employees, but have been asked to update their respective companies' letterheads because the telephone numbers and emails are to be changed in one week's time.

Michelle orders the letterheads in the conventional way:

Day 1

First Michelle has to find out who printed the letterheads previously, but the person who dealt with the job last time is away for the day.

Day 2

Once Michelle has the contact details she calls the printer and finds that the account handler is away from their desk, but will call her back.

The account handler calls and emails Michelle a quote for the job. Michelle checks with her manager that the quote is acceptable and emails over the details of the letterhead changes. The account handler enters the job onto the system, and inserts it into the 'jobs to do' list in the pre-press studio.

Day 3

The letterhead artwork is amended and a PDF proof is emailed to Michelle to check. Michelle receives the proof and discovers that the designer has made an error in the new email address. She emails the printer to let them know.

The job re-enters the prepress studio to be amended, but it has to wait as the designer is

Sam's company uses an online print service

Day 1

Sam logs on to her branded, online print-ordering service and navigates to the template for her company's headed paper.

She amends the telephone and email details and is given a PDF proof of the job on screen. Unfortunately she notices that she has mistyped the email address. She goes back to the template and corrects the address. She is shown another PDF proof, which is correct.

Sam initiates the order process and tells the system how many copies she requires. The system gives Sam an online quote for the job. She checks with her manager that the quote is acceptable and completes her order.

The letterhead artwork enters the digital workflow and the job is automatically prepared for the digital press.

Day 2

The job is printed and moves through to the finishing department to be trimmed.

Sam logs on to the online print service and using the order tracking utility she can see that her job has been despatched.

busy on another rush job. The designer sends Michelle a new PDF at 5.30pm, just after she has left for the day.

Day 4

Michelle is happy with the new proof and emails the account handler to give them the go ahead, stressing that the job is now very urgent. The job is prepared for press and moves through to the press production queue.

Day 5

Michelle calls the printer to check on the progress of her job and gets through to the account handler straight away, but unfortunately he needs to leave his desk to find out where the job is in the production process, so will have to her a call back.

The account handler calls back – the job has been printed and is waiting to be trimmed and will be delivered to her first thing Monday morning.

Day 6

The letterheads are finally delivered. But only just in time!



Day 3

The job is delivered to Sam's company first thing, well in time for the change of contact details.



The benefits of an online ordering service are clearly demonstrated in this scenario. Because the company literature is template based, Sam is able to complete the artworking, approval and ordering tasks all within the same session. This enables her job to be delivered in half the time.

Scenario 2: Sales representatives, Bob and Peter both have a mail shot to send out to their respective customers inviting them to their stands at the annual trade exhibition.

Bob decides to save time and money by merging a covering letter using the office laser printer.

Day 1

Bob has taken a lot of care over writing the 'perfect' sales invite and he has high expectations that it will draw a lot of interested customers to the stand at the show. He has also had to spend time updating and tidying up the database of contacts, which annoyingly was not current.

Although he uses his word-processing package every day, Bob has rarely used the mail merge feature and can't quite remember how to do it. Unfortunately, his colleague who does have the experience is not in the office today, so Bob can't get started.

Day 2

Bob is shown how to merge his data to the office printer. It looks straightforward enough and he is confident that he will have the job done in no time. Bob starts to send his files to the printer and all seems to be going well. Unfortunately the office printer only has a small input tray, so every few minutes Bob has to replenish the paper trays and empty the output tray.

Although the printer is quite a reliable one, on long print runs it is prone to miss feeds and Bob has to repeatedly return to clear the paper jams. This is slowing the whole process down and by the end of the day Bob has printed only half of the mailing run and there have been many starts and stops. He is also having trouble finding the space to stack the printouts and

Peter uses an online print ordering service with a digital print provider and regularly sends out mailshots to his clients.

Day 1

Peter has also spent valuable time constructing an effective sales letter. He logs onto the online print ordering service and uploads it to the print provider's server. He specifies the name and address fields of the letter as the areas that are to be personalised. Next the system prompts him to choose the database file containing his customers' details. The online service merges the two together to create a PDF that Peter can then view onscreen. Peter is happy with the merged PDF and approves it for press. The mail shot artwork enters the digital workflow and the job is automatically prepared for the press.

Day 2

The job is printed and moves through to the finishing department to be trimmed. Peter spends the day preparing for the show and organising a drinks reception for his most important clients.

At the end of the day Peter logs on to the online print service and using the order tracking facility can see that his job has been printed and is now ready for despatch.

Day 3

The print provider sends the mail shot out to Peter's customers. Not only does it look great, it will be sent out well in time to invite his customers to the show.

more than once stacks have toppled over, creasing some and getting others dirty. Bob is beginning to lose his patience.

Day 3

Bob's colleagues in the office are frustrated that they cannot send anything to the printer either, so several times Bob has had to halt his mailing to let others print their work, which is then confusing Bob as to what has been printed and what has not. By the late afternoon he has got the majority of the mailing done, but the toner in the printer is starting to run out and his last few batches of letters are printing out grey and streaky. This is not going to give a good impression, so these will have to be resent when the new toner arrives and has been installed.

Day 4

The letters are all printed but still have to be delivered to the mailing house. Bob decides because of the time constraints that the quickest way to do this is to take them there himself in his car, but this is an extra call on Bob's time and patience and he's not had the time to organise that drinks reception that the MD wanted to give for their most important clients!



Bob's decision to print his mailing in house was to save both time and money. In the scenario, Bob encountered many problems and one could say that he was rather unlucky. But his calculation that this would be a cheaper option than getting the job professionally printed is also called into question. The cost per sheet of a standard laser printer will almost always be many times higher than the per sheet cost of a digital press. Take into account the slower output speed, the wear and tear to the machine, the cost of buying the paper at undiscounted rates, not to mention Bob's time, means this was by far the more costly option.

Scenario 3: Sheila and John are both busy marketing executives representing their respective companies at the annual trade show. They are hoping to make a big impact.

Because space is limited, John only holds a small number of brochures in the office, and stores the rest in the warehouse.

John is very busy gathering all the materials he and his team will need for the stand at the trade show in two weeks' time. He knows he needs to make sure that he has enough copies of the marketing brochure but other things keep getting in the way; besides he's pretty sure that he has enough as he has seen the boxes in the warehouse many times.

John finally gets a chance in his busy schedule to check on the brochure stock. He counts the number of boxes and calculates that he will have just enough. But when he actually investigates the boxes he's horrified to discover that some of



Space is also limited in Sheila's company but she uses an inventory control system that her online print-buying system provides.

Two weeks before the trade show Sheila's online service sends her an email informing her that stock of the company's marketing brochure has fallen to the minimum agreed level.

Sheila logs onto her online print ordering system and navigates to the brochure template and orders 500 copies. The company's marketing brochure is saved as an inventory item, which means that when Sheila places her order, instead of being sent directly to her, the brochures are stored elsewhere by the print provider ready to be called off.



them are empty or only half full. The rest of the department have been helping themselves to the brochures without letting John know.

Now there is just one week before the show. It's probably going to be impossible or a real struggle to get more produced in time. Also, because the boxes have been sitting in the warehouse, many of them are rather dirty and tattered and the brochures are unusable.

A week before the show Sheila logs onto the system and asks for 20 brochures to be sent to her office so that she can post them out to prospective clients who can't make it to the show and asks for a further 400 copies to be sent directly to the venue. This saves Sheila all the hassle of transporting the heavy boxes to the stand and also means the brochures arrive in top condition.

I'm sure many of us can empathise with John's situation. Both Sheila and John are very busy and neither feels they can afford the time to go and physically check on the stock levels of their brochures week in week out. The automatic prompts and accurate stock level information available to Sheila means she can get on with preparing for the trade show, not having to worry about the availability and quality of the printed materials, their transport or their delivery to the venue.

Features and benefits of online applications

So what features are available in an online ordering service and how can those features benefit you or your organisation?

Control over branding

Keeping control over branding is always a headache, especially if you belong to a large organisation. Unless you have a team who procure all your printed materials and are able to keep a tight control over layout and design considerations, it is very easy for jobs to stray away from the design guidelines. Take business cards, for example: you might want to give employees the freedom to order their own, but you risk ending up with numerous variations and a diluted brand.



Because online ordering is template based it allows companies to give staff the freedom to create their own literature whilst adhering to design guides.

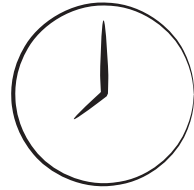
Less waste, less obsolescence

The lower costs associated with digital printing have enabled smaller print runs to be much more cost effective. Customers are able to order less and less quantities of a product at any one time. Consequently, you can update your printed products more often, as and when information changes. In this way you can keep your printed materials up to date, reducing waste and costs. (40% of printed materials are discarded without ever being used.)



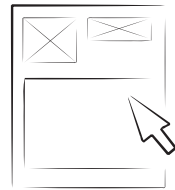
Available 24hrs a day

Your online ordering service should be available to you 24hrs a day, seven days a week. This is particularly useful if you have a tight deadline to meet but have spotted errors in a job. Sometimes this can happen at the end of the business day or week and there may not be anybody available to make the amendments. With your online service you can make these amendments at any time.



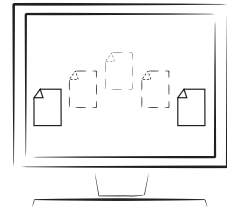
Template creation and amendment

The best systems allow specified users to create and modify templates. This means that whilst you might choose for the print provider to manage your templates for you, you have the ability to do this yourself or have a designer of your choice do it.



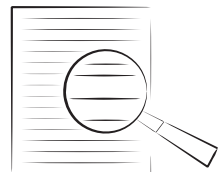
Uploading of digital files

Often, you can upload artwork for unique, one-off jobs to the system. As long as it conforms to certain basic criteria (type of job, size, binding, number of pages) the system can give you a reliable quote for production and delivery. This is particularly important if you do not have a prearranged business account with the print provider.



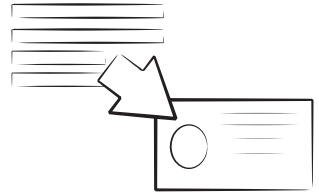
File pre-flight and checking

The service should be able to pre-flight (analyse) the files for you, catching layout problems, font problems, etc. It should then be able to offer you suggestions on ways to correct a problem without having to contact the print provider directly.



Personalisation of jobs and instant previews

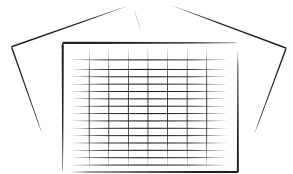
One of the most powerful features of online print ordering systems is the ability to personalise the information within a template. This is usually done by inputting data into fields within the application, for instance your name, position, email and contact numbers on a business card.



Depending on the sophistication of the application, you may be able to see a 'live' preview of your card as you input the data, or at the very least, be able to view a PDF preview in Acrobat Reader. This means you can review your artwork immediately and make any amendments straight away.

Database upload for multiple jobs or mailings

If you have multiple personalised jobs to create, some systems will allow you to upload the information using a spreadsheet such as Microsoft Excel. This removes the mundane task of inputting data into the system and means you only have to keep your database file up to date, so you can use it again and again. This is particularly useful for mail shots where you can upload the names and addresses to the system, which combines them with your chosen design or template. It is also useful for departmental personalisation.



Books, sets or combining multiple files

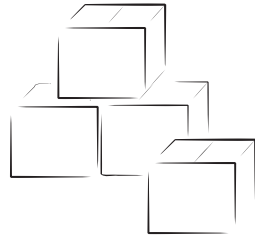
Some applications will allow you to combine multiple files into a book or a manual to create one file, which is then sent to the print provider. This feature is great for creating products whose contents are based upon a library of separate files that may change or be added to regularly. Once selected, the order of the files may be changed, dividers inserted and the binding type



chosen. This feature also has the benefit that you are in control of your file library, thereby reducing errors made by a third party due to version control.

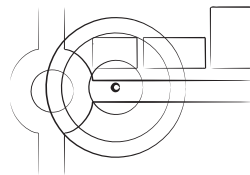
Inventory management tools

Some applications and print providers offer Inventory Management Services. These tools allow you to order products from your catalogue, but instead of having them delivered to you immediately, the products are added to stock held usually by the print provider. The tools within the application allow you to monitor the quantity held in, and order from, the inventory stock. This is a particularly useful feature if you have a large number of products to monitor or if storage space is at a premium. The system should be able to warn you if stock of a particular item has fallen below a certain level and you are in danger of running out. These tools should mean you'll never be short of those important brochures or manuals ever again!



Order tracking tools

Once you have submitted your order to the print provider you will have the ability to track the progress of your order. In the conventional workflow this would have probably meant repeated calls or emails to your print provider, but with an online service your job is tracked through the system.



Important considerations when choosing an online solution

When choosing the online system that is right for you and your organisation there are some important things you need to consider.

Security

Whichever service you choose, you need to have the confidence that the information that you upload or is stored in your catalogue is secure and private. It should be impossible for another organisation to gain access to your files and the system needs to have plenty of customisable approval and access restrictions for users within your own organisation. The best systems offer a tier of access restrictions ranging from total administrative control, through to creation of templates and order approval rights, down to the ability to only view the products.

Reliability

Reliability of the service is extremely important. Your service should be available 24hrs a day for you to view, amend and order your products. With the introduction of faster and faster Internet connections, many online ordering systems are now fast and responsive, offering a stable retail experience.

Usability

Whichever service you decide to use it is important that the technology is user-friendly and can be easily implemented within your organisation. After all, the technology is there to make your life easier and to take away the headaches associated with conventional print ordering. There should be a good level of training offered to both you and your colleagues, backed up by effective training materials. There should be a suitable level of technical support offered to sort out any problems you encounter with the service.

What extra work might an online service involve?

Set-up with a print provider

Of course, to really capitalise on the use of an online print ordering system you will need to have agreed some principles with the print provider offering the service. You will no doubt have to set up an account with them, even if you are ordering a product only once. If on the other hand, you wish to implement a catalogue of repeat order products you will need to agree with the print provider whether you intend to create and manage the products in the catalogue yourself or if you would prefer them to do this for you.

The important thing to remember is that once you have these basic agreements in place and cost structures are agreed, then the savings in time, costs and efficiency will far outweigh the work you have to do in advance. It is also worth pointing out that the benefits of this 'groundwork' will be felt across your whole organisation with an unlimited number of print buyers/users able to utilise the service.

Training

As with any new technology there is a certain amount of training to be undertaken, especially if your organisation is going to be managing your own products and catalogues. Your chosen print provider should be able to offer you all the guidance you need. Online ordering systems are becoming more and more intuitive and easy to use as the technology develops and more and more people become familiar with operating within the web environment.

Summary

We hope this document has given you a clear insight into the huge possibilities that an online ordering service can offer you. Savings in time and cost, coupled with the extra benefits of brand and inventory control are revolutionising the print industry.

The most convenient way to order print has been redefined, putting you firmly in the driving seat.

If you would like to know more about online print ordering and specifically cle^{printflow}, then call 0845 643 4558 or visit www.cle.co.uk/printflow.

This booklet was written and produced by the team at CLE Print Ltd – *a leader in online digital solutions*, and your copy was personalised for you using cle^{printflow}.

- › Save on time and costs
- › Reduce waste and obsolescence
- › Get control over your inventory
- › Procure print anytime, day or night
- › Control your branding
- › Expand customer base and loyalty
- › Make your marketing campaigns more effective with personalisation.

Find out how cle^{printflow} could transform your business...

To find out more or to arrange a demonstration visit www.cle.co.uk/printflow or call **0845 643 4558**.

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