

International Survey of Industry Consultants Reveals Predictions For The Future Of Print

Brussels (Belgium) March 05, 2013 - duomedia, a leading agency specializing in public relations and marketing communications for the graphic arts, industrial, and technology markets conducted a survey in the fourth quarter of 2012 to gain insight from key consultants in the graphic arts industry. The results of this international survey make it absolutely clear that print must adapt in order to continue to play a crucial role in the communications mix. Print professionals and influencers from 10 countries shared their expert opinions on how print will evolve in the digital age, in this study conducted by pan-European communications agency, duomedia.

Lutt Willems, partner at duomedia, comments: "The duomedia end-of-year survey provides an accurate snapshot of the status of the print industry. By soliciting the opinions of professionals and influencers from around the globe, we can help print houses identify the most important areas of focus to drive revenue and to ensure that print remains a highly effective component of the cross-media communication mix."

Moving from a manufacturing to a service industry

Many survey respondents identified the need for print houses to adopt a new strategy. They urged printers to go beyond being just a supplier, and to work more closely with customers and brands to establish themselves as value-added service providers in the marketing and communication supply chain.

Eddy Hagen, Director and Trendwatcher at [VIGC](#) (Flemish organisation for Graphic Communication), comments: "Print houses need to change their mindset and focus on offering solutions and services rather than selling products. A marketing manager doesn't need a printed brochure, he needs a solution to convey his message to his (potential) customers. Identifying the real needs of their customers, will lead to new and interesting offerings. I recently spotted a simple but very effective example of this solutions-oriented mindset: a printer solved the number one issue of a small winery - missed sales - by simply changing the layout of the label. A small change with a big impact. Of course, a change in mindset means investing time and resource. But it's well worth the effort if it means your company is seen as a high-value link in the marketing and product development chain rather than as just a supplier of printed paper or of printed packaging. This industry will evolve from a product industry to a solutions and services industry."

Print on-demand is in demand

Many survey respondents flagged the growing trend for short-run, on-demand work, which is being facilitated by advances in digital printing technology. High volume printing will decrease over time as more print is produced on demand.

A perfect example of why short-run, on-demand work is proving so popular are school books. It doesn't make economic sense to hold on to thousands of copies

when it's highly likely they'll need updating before too long. With digital, the school can print as many copies as they need, when they need them, and be able to update content as needed to keep educational materials as relevant as possible.

A market for print products with added value

Respondents highlighted that there are growth opportunities in producing products to which people attach a new function, an added value or an emotional value, such as photos.

Ed Boogaard, [freelance](#) journalist in the printing industry, believes some people will always value print over digital: "For example, for many people, printed photos hold a special place. Looking back at pictures on a laptop just isn't the same as seeing them in an album or photo book. Also magazines will become more and more functional for people, especially with the trend towards short run printing."

Making Print Interactive

Whether you are talking about magazines, commercial print or packaging, QR Codes, personalized URLs or augmented reality; there are a variety of ways to make print interactive and blend it more seamlessly with digital communications strategies.

According to Cary Sherburne, Senior Editor at [WhatTheyThink](#), "Printers view digital alternatives to print as a threat and worry about cannibalization of their printing business. The truth is, this cannibalization will continue to happen, with them or without them. Making print interactive will extend the life and value of print, and it's not that hard to do. Additionally, adding value by supplementing a printed brochure with a tablet or smartphone app that overlays rich content such as audio, video and more, can add high margin revenue streams and increase customer loyalty."

Packaging and labelling sector to continue growing

Those surveyed predicted that while commercial print volume will continue falling, the opposite is true for packaging and label printing.

As one respondent summed up: "No matter how much digital evolves, you can't download an ice cream. You're always going to need packaging."

But with environmentalists pushing for ever-smaller packaging, does this mean a smaller market? Not necessarily, according to one respondent. "You only have to look at Easter eggs to see how packaging has shrunk. But this doesn't spell the end for packaging printers – it just means there's more emphasis on creative packaging. Packaging designers and producers can add value to brands' products by producing creative, attractive packaging, despite having a much smaller 'canvas' to work on."

Sustainability - a crucial battleground

According to the survey, sustainability will become even more important, with brands using their green credentials to glean a competitive edge.

To this end, respondents suggested that all companies operating in paper-based industries should be more vocal in communicating their sustainability accreditations and initiatives, particularly as digital-based companies will come under greater environmental scrutiny in future than they are today.

Among the public, paper is still seen as the 'bad guy', despite the fact that paper production isn't nearly as harmful to the planet as people think. The U.S. grows more trees than it harvests, for example. By comparison, digital gets a much easier ride because many people are totally unaware of the environmental impact of electronic waste. Paper industries can turn this situation to their advantage. They've been defending their position for so long, they've a host of sustainable initiatives that prove their commitment to greener practises.

Education and embracing digital is key to a brighter print future

A common theme that ran throughout the survey was a greater need for everyone in the print industry to spread the word on the latest developments in print technology. This means closer collaboration among everyone in the print supply chain in order to sell the benefits of paper communication, because most printers don't know how to do this.

Ed Boogaard adds that resisting digital is futile: "There's no point fighting digital. It's here to stay. Print and digital can certainly co-exist and complement each other. Print houses and suppliers should focus on areas where paper and print can play an important role and add value in ways that digital can't."

About duo media

Founded in 1999, duo media's mission is to create visibility, awareness and market share for its clients through a cross-media multichannel approach. We want to achieve this by engaging people across industries, cultures and technologies through strategic, creative, channel and event services. These include strategic consulting, media training, newsroom and media relations, media campaigns, social media, testimonials, newsletters, localization, and press/trade events. The office is located in Brussels (Belgium), and supported by regional teams in Munich, Frankfurt, Milan, London, Paris, Barcelona and its U.S. Partner in Boston.

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