

# ROAD TO NOWHERE

**Mark Stephenson**, Digital Printing and Press Systems Product Manager at Fujifilm Graphic Systems EMEA, looks at the growing polarisation of the commercial print industry: automated, high volume efficiency vs ultra-high quality and added value.

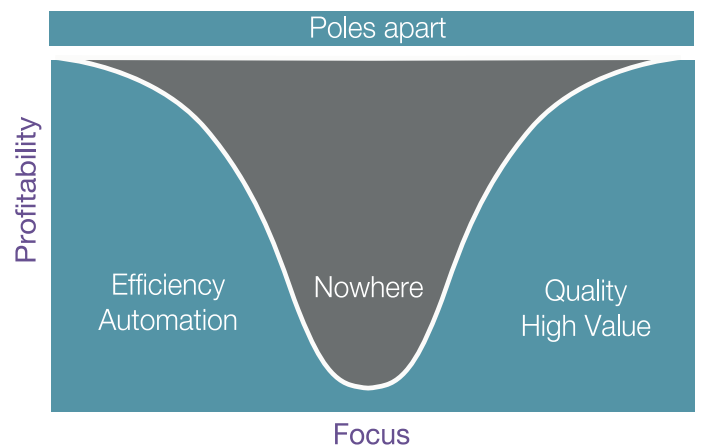


**Are you still in love with print? Truly, madly deeply? Forsaking all others.** Maybe that's the problem. We let our emotions blind us to the fact print isn't what it was: by market share or penetration. How many people start a conversation with: "Did you see that great piece of print yesterday, or that cover of the Economist or Heat Magazine?". More likely the conversation is about a podcast (yes, they're back), Instagram meme or Netflix episode.

Much ink has been spilled in recent years over the many challenges facing the modern commercial print industry and how print businesses need to respond in order to survive and grow. The relentless rise of digital delivery formats and the increasing cost of consumables are notable examples of print's challenges, and they have contributed to the industry's overall contraction in recent years.

All of the challenges printers face play a role in the growing polarisation within the industry: highly automated, large volume,

ultra-efficient, possibly commodity printers on the one hand and short-run, creative, high-quality specialists on the other. It is becoming increasingly difficult for businesses anywhere in the middle to compete, and as many have found out the hard way, there is rapidly diminishing room in the market for traditional, small scale commodity printers. Modern printing companies are, after all, not just competing with each other, but with digitally delivered alternatives to print that can often offer significant cost savings and increased convenience. It's a difficult, and at times, brutal marketplace.





## Go Large

One response to surviving in the current print marketplace, and a strategy that some companies have enjoyed considerable success with – so far at least - is to trim costs ruthlessly through automation and efficiency savings, and then to chase large volumes of business through aggressive low pricing.

This type of work is not necessarily long run but relies on a limited product range of stocks and sizes to attract large volume orders for what is essentially the same thing. Offering flyers, posters, stationery etc. and mixing those multiple orders ganged on a large sheet creates a longer run job and, with efficient automated finishing, packing and dispatch, can be a busy profitable business.

The fact that average print runs have been declining consistently for some years now has created this new breed of high volume, commodity printer. Emphasising this, the sixth drupa Global Trends report issued in April 2019 highlights the fact that, as well as a relentless trend towards shorter print runs and faster turnaround times, there has also now, for the first time, been recorded an overall decline in commercial, sheet-fed litho

print volumes. Though the constant development of digital presses certainly helps here, there is no doubt that pursuing profit through a high number of low volume jobs is less about print and more about workflow and logistics. The temptation, perhaps is that the quality of print can be sacrificed to the gods of efficiency and profitability. It doesn't have to be this way, but we'll return to that point later.





## Add value

In the modern print marketplace, one of the main alternatives to chasing volume is to seek sustainable profit by adding value. Whether through creative applications or simply through ultra-high, take-your-breath-away levels of quality, this approach recognises that as overall volumes decrease, and as society reaches new levels of digital saturation, print offers more targeted, high-value opportunities.

Until recently, the big problem here was that exceptional quality and reasonable levels of productivity required offset printing and therefore could not, by definition, be of any use in small, targeted campaigns. Here, the leaps and bounds in digital print technology are vitally important – the extent to which digital print is now a match for offset in quality opens up a raft of customised print opportunities, while the overall reduction in print volumes means these high-value applications have ever more chance of standing out and are all the more likely to offer excellent ROI.

Marketers and advertisers are price conscious and they often need to stretch budgets across an array of different

media formats, in addition to anything they might consider in print. But they also want to stand out from the crowd in a market dominated by digital delivery formats. So while most are certainly printing lower volumes of marketing materials overall, many are, at the same time, recognising the unique opportunity that print now has to make an impact. Digital advertising, social media and email promotions have their place, but high quality print helps them deliver and reinforce brand values that digital marketing never could. It can even get people opening conversations with, “Have you seen this great piece of print I just got?”





# Forward thinking innovation

First and foremost at Fujifilm our emphasis has always been on helping our customers to add value for their customers. We offer products and services to help businesses of all sizes across the graphics sector to reduce costs and boost profitability. The relentless pursuit of ever greater quality has been the hallmark of the growth of our portfolio of graphic arts products and services over the years, from ink development and plate design, to workflow solutions and inkjet technology.

The great news is that these technologies can benefit both the automated, highly efficient and short run, high-value production environments.

The Jet Press 750S is one of the most powerful examples of our relentless drive for improved quality and productivity. Able to not only replicate but also exceed the quality of offset, it provides an unrivalled opportunity to go beyond what has ever been possible with offset, and to produce, short-run, high-value print to target valuable new business opportunities.

The outstanding quality achievable with the Jet Press 750S comes courtesy of its new generation, state-of-the-art Samba printheads and the high performance VIVIDIA inks that have



been painstakingly developed to match them. Offering consistent performance across the widest range of standard offset papers, ink grains as small as 0.5 trillionths of a litre, invisible to the naked eye, are discharged at high speed to deliver breath-taking quality. Vital also is the enhanced colour gamut – MaxGamut – that allows printers to reproduce more spot colours and produce more vibrant print with just four CMYK inks, without having to add or swap special inks or toners to boost the colour.

It's not only about quality though - the Jet Press blends the best of old and new, boasting up-time figures comparable with a traditional offset press and offering the ability to print on standard offset stocks and fit seamlessly into high productivity workflows.



Whether it's highly efficient production, added value print, or both, the Jet Press prints consistently - sheet to sheet, job to job, day to day - without the added downtime and hassle of so many of the alternatives. All this while boasting green credentials that help printers to meet all of their regulatory and social responsibilities.



## Carpe diem

In the long-term, all print businesses, large and small, are going to have to continually improve their ability to produce added value applications, not just reactively, but proactively pushing their customers to buy into what they can do, to try new things and to take risks. Those who fail to do this will be squeezed out of the market, but for those who truly seize the opportunity, the rewards can be much more than mere survival. It's here that print's future shines brightest and where its sustainable and profitable future lies.

Printers large and small have taken advantage of Fujifilm's Jet Press technology, some in mass production, efficiency-led operations, others in bespoke, high added value environments. Wherever you're headed, the thinking behind their choices can help you make your own decisions about the way forward.



### For further information:

Please contact your local Fujifilm partner.

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