
BIG TAKEAWAYS FROM PACPRINT13

By Brett Dashwood edp, [OutputLinks Asia Pacific](#)

(*Inside: Profit Solutions; Augmented Reality, QR Codes*)

Every four years, [PacPrint](#)—Australasia’s largest print show—is held in Melbourne, and the theme for PacPrint13, held May 21 – 25, was “Think Print, Know Print.” Of course, show organizers themselves summed up the event pretty well, stating that “[PacPrint is] Australasia’s most comprehensive showcase of the power of print! Digital, offset and wide format. Labels, packaging and consumables. MIS, workflow and finishing. Cross-media, 3D printing, e-commerce and much more. It’s all covered at PacPrint!”

Digital? Absolutely. Wide format? Lots of it. Offset? Not so much.

Until recent years, like many of its counterpart trade shows globally, PacPrint has been a show almost exclusively the domain of commercial printers and their businesses. This year, however, PacPrint was very reliant on digital technology, with only one manufacturer showing an offset press...and even that had a digital front end.

Whether a continuation, a shift or an addition of technology, I think the biggest takeaway from the show was inkjet. Indeed, many manufacturers were talking about or showing their inkjet printing solutions. Continuous, large sheet, flat bed, wide format or a mix of them.

For many years, photo prints have been created with inkjet technology, so the technology for quality has been there, yet what’s been needed is to get wider and faster. And now it’s happening.

Short run static jobs, backed up with personalized jobs, combined with embellished jobs can all now happen with inkjet, and the quality is now very close or as good as offset.

Everyone Now Has Broader Hardware Capabilities – We’ve been used to manufacturers having different printer ranges for different customer needs, however it seems that every major vendor now has both cut sheet and continuous offerings, dry toner, as well as pigment and die based inkjet. Even traditional cutsheet-only companies now have inkjet and/or continuous machines that are quickly becoming entrenched in the market.

Our business is fundamentally about putting an image on a substrate. With the enhancements in inks, drying technologies, transports, web speeds and so much more, the key is now about getting the image to the substrate in the most efficient way. Focusing on the process rather than the design, this will lead to cost and time reductions, as well as more seamless workflows.

If a vendor’s solution looks too hard or inappropriate for your environment, look next door and see if the competitor’s solution fits better. These days we can be assured that the print quality should be good enough in most cases, so that can almost come out of the equation.

Expanding Business Services – Although there were cross-media and multi-channel communication solutions at the show, it didn’t feel like many were hitting it hard, focusing more on their print based solutions, which I guess is

understandable from a print show.

Some forum and workshop presenters, like **Anders Sorman-Nilsson** from [Thinqe](#) and **Kerim El Gabaili** from [Prografica](#), definitely gave attendees plenty to think about if they are looking to expand their service offerings.

In my view, the key in expanding...

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PACPRINT13 – COVER STORY (Cont.)

...any print or document based business beyond its current capabilities is to not just dabble but commit and become an expert. If that is not something you are comfortable with then look at partnering as an option, before committing to a path that may not fit your business.

Two Hot Technologies – There were two other technologies presented at the show that were getting some great buzz, but how relevant are they—at least at the moment—to personalized customer communication?

1. Augmented Reality and Image Recognition – Regardless of the printed medium, augmented reality (AR) and image recognition (IR) increase the value of a printed document by taking the viewer online or simply increasing the value with additional information. At PacPrint, there were a number of AR and IR offerings on display this year, most using real life examples of the technology, giving visitors an awesome interaction with a printed object. You could try on different engagement rings or position a new lounge suite in your room. These examples aside, I felt that most didn't offer much more of a solution than a QR code.

I do believe there are great options with both technologies, in areas like newspaper ads, catalogues and even packaging. For example, you could scan a section of a product's box (or even the product itself) to pull up the online manual. That said, I think the technology—cool as it is—needs to go another step into personalization before it will have a bigger impact on our industry.

2. 3D Printing – For a long time, I have believed that 3D printing simply isn't printing; however, I think I'm coming around. If you forget about commercial print techniques like lithography, flexography and even digital xerography, and just think of inkjet printing, then 3D printing is pretty close.

3D printing is an additive manufacturing method—compared to subtractive such as carving or turning—where a “print head” builds up layers. I realized that 3D printing is basically printing without the substrate.

3D printing definitely has value in our lives as the technology continues to evolve, particularly in the medical field—such as the recently reported “printed” splint that saved a baby's life—but does it have value in the personalized customer communication space? I guess time will tell.

Overall, PacPrint13 reported that more than 10,000 industry professionals (only seven percent from overseas—the rest from Australia) visited the event over five days. And **Ian Martin**, PacPrint13 chairman, said after the close of the show, “PacPrint13 has provided a positive and optimistic ‘shot in the arm’ for the industry in a time of unprecedented transition. There has been a constant buzz around the stands, not only generated by good numbers of visitors, but by the genuine interest and expectation shown by those people in what PacPrint exhibitors had to offer.”

And my big call for PacPrint's next evolutionary stage in 2017 is more personalization across a wider range of existing and new industry technologies. There were some great workshops and forums this year; however, I also believe that there will be an increase in the education for attendees and possibly some more face-to-face peer group discussions, too.

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MULTI-MEDIA: CREATE IMPACT WITH PRINT IN A DIGITAL ECOSYSTEM

By Redicka Subrammanian, [Interakt Digital Communications Group](#)

More than any other industry or sector, print service providers have felt—some channel options.

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