

Can Netflix predict the path our industry will take?

By John Blyth, Ricoh Graphic Communications, [Ricoch Europe](#)

Ricoh Europe, London, May 28 2025 – Are you a fan of Black Mirror?

This British Netflix series imagines how technology might evolve to create near future dystopias.

It tends to extrapolate existing phenomena like social media and virtual reality and speculate where current trends might take them; and it's always somewhere dark.

I have been wondering how the Black Mirror team might deal with the print industry. They might envisage a bleak future dominated by AI, machine learning, and automation.

Productive but soulless. Entirely touch, and therefore, human free; a small number of huge sterile factories that effectively run themselves.

Is this the way our industry is heading?

Its prevailing direction of travel might make that seem a plausible outcome as we all focus on harnessing innovative technology to enhance productivity, and efficiency and minimise the risk of errors and waste.

And yet I for one do not see that austere vision of the print industry becoming reality, and I have three main reasons.

Firstly, the print industry has always drawn entrepreneurs and mavericks, creative and unorthodox types, who are generally not compliant. Recognise yourself?

They have been attracted by the variety, creativity, energy, and dynamism of the print industry. They have rejected careers in more predictable sectors, and are unlikely to allow the industry they love to mutate into something entirely regimented and characterless.

My second reason for optimism is that projecting current trends into a robo-centric future takes no account of the fact that print businesses thrive on client satisfaction, and many clients can be satisfied only when they are served imaginative and distinctive solutions that enable them to stand out from their competitors.

There is nothing to suggest that in the future commercial competition will not be as intense as it is now, and therefore brands will still vie to gain cut through and impact. AI may be starting to make its mark in graphic design but ultimately the wisdom and experience of print experts will remain critical for brands, safeguarding this rich and vibrant industry.

And thirdly, print's inherent superpower - its ability to engage with consumers on an emotional level - will also help to protect it from a Black Mirror doomsday vision.

Fresh approaches, unusual substrates, and Digital Print Enhancements will excite recipients indefinitely and therefore brands will continue to require their deployment. And consequently PSPs will remain entrusted to deliver novel solutions in a customised way that is not compatible with the grey futuristic scenario outlined initially.

So, is a Black Mirror scenario coming for our print industry?

As outlined above, I do not think so. And that's not because the technology can't facilitate it but because of the human factor. The people operating in print; working for brands; and consuming media. They will become the guardians of a print industry that can remain cherished and vital.

| About Ricoh |

Ricoh is a leading provider of integrated digital services and print and imaging solutions designed to support digital transformation of workplaces, workspaces and optimise business performance.

Headquartered in Tokyo, Ricoh's global operation reaches customers in approximately 200 countries and regions, supported by cultivated knowledge, technologies, and organisational

RICOH Europe www.ricoh-europe.com

20 Triton Street, London, NW1 3BF. Phone: +44 (0) 207 465 1153
E-mail : press@ricoh-europe.com

capabilities nurtured over its 85-year history. In the financial year ended March 2025, Ricoh Group had worldwide sales of 2,527 billion yen (approx. 16.8 billion USD).

It is Ricoh's mission and vision to empower individuals to find Fulfillment through Work by understanding and transforming how people work so we can unleash their potential and creativity to realise a sustainable future.

For further information, please visit www.ricoh.com