

## Make the work flow with cloud driven automation

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**Ricoh Europe, London, June 11** – The printing industry is facing a turning point. The need for speed has become a dominant factor in production with 48% of commercial printers completing over 25% of their digital print orders with a lead time of less than 48 hours according to the [Drupa Print Horizons Report](#).

But only 54% of operations have prepress automation, just 35% have press and post-press automation, and a mere 13% have fully integrated end to end JDF workflows. Our own '[The Automation Gap](#)' research found that while almost 80% of businesses recognise the need to automate for improved efficiency, over half (52%) still rely on outdated manual systems.

With such a significant gap, this first in a series of three blogs explores why now is the time for Print Service Providers (PSPs) to invest in workflow automation to stay competitive. This one focuses on cloud driven automation whereas the following two blogs will take a closer look at how data driven automation and process driven automation respond to today's defining market trends and the impact they can have.

We are leading the series with *cloud* driven automation because it has become the de facto standard in recent years, proving itself the most flexible and scalable approach to driving workflow efficiencies.

Cloud driven automation begins with the Print Service Provider's client by providing a cloud job submission solution that becomes the online gateway to automated workflows – from job onboarding, through pre-press to the printer queue without needing manual intervention.

As well as addressing the previously identified market shaping trend, workflow automation can also help the industry manage these challenges:

1. **Skills shortage** Many PSPs are struggling with a lack of skilled labour leading to workflow bottlenecks, longer turnaround times, and an inability to offer services that require specialist resources. Automating processes from

job submission to production reduces manual touchpoints and removes bottlenecks. Businesses can then streamline their operations, speed up production times, and reduce the need for specialist skills.

2. **Client expectations** Today's print clients demand elevated levels of service, quick turnarounds, more valuable printed output, and solutions that meet their sustainability goals. To deliver on these expectations, PSPs can improve client service by investing in technology that offers 24/7 online job submission with automated status updates. They can add capabilities that remove complexity and automate colour management and variable data printing. Automation also makes it easier to meet sustainability goals by enabling digital printing on demand, which reduces waste, transportation, and warehousing costs.
3. **Low margins** In an industry where pricing is driven by the market, margins need to be protected as much as possible. Workflow automation is key to safeguarding and even increasing margins by eliminating costly manual touchpoints and unnecessary steps in the production process. By automating where possible, PSPs can reduce costs, improve efficiency, and achieve greater financial stability.

Despite the clear benefits, end to end automation is still underused. According to the Drupa Print Horizons Report, while 38% of printers see automation as a priority, only 22% of suppliers are meeting that demand.

Ricoh has recognised this gap and emphasises the importance of workflow automation, particularly cloud driven solutions that start at the client level.

In fact, the industry is signalling a shift towards a future that is less about hardware and more about software. By providing an online portal for their clients to submit jobs 24/7, PSPs can streamline the onboarding process and eliminate manual touchpoints. These files then seamlessly integrate with pre-production workflows, automating processes such as job ticketing, pre-flighting, imposition, and media selection. This removes multiple manual steps and sends print ready files directly to the queue, significantly speeding up production.

Inefficiencies are removed, costs are reduced, throughput is increased, and profit margins are improved.

The benefits extend beyond automation. PSPs can also offer online print catalogues for frequently ordered products, customisable templates, and even full e-commerce solutions to win new clients - all with the same workflow automation. These added services not only improve client satisfaction but also open new revenue streams for businesses.

The future of printing is about smarter, software driven solutions. And nowhere is this more profoundly true than in cloud driven automation. The time to invest is now. Talk to our team of experts to learn more.

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

Headquartered in Tokyo, Ricoh's global operation reaches customers in approximately 200 countries and regions, supported by cultivated knowledge, technologies, and organizational capabilities nurtured over its 85-year history. In the financial year ended March 2023, Ricoh Group had worldwide sales of 2,134 billion yen (approx. 16.0 billion USD).

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

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