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## **Five Tips for Selecting a Print Management System**

*Print management solutions were created to help organizations gain more control of their overall print spend and provide a streamlined, standardized, and automated process for purchasing print. These solutions should also allow for business flexibility by adapting to the peaks and valleys of the business cycle. This article provides you with five tips to aid in your analysis and selection of a print management solution.*

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**Tip #1: Know your goals before beginning the evaluation process.**

It's critical to understand your print procurement goals before investing in a print management system. Typical procurement goals include reducing overall print spend, simplifying the procurement process, improving cycle times, and improving relationships with current suppliers. You will need to determine the goals most applicable to your organization, which could include all or just one of these examples. Involving both the decision-makers and individual print buyers will allow for communication of the goals and pave the way for upfront buy-in and quicker user adoption across the organization.

For example, one company decided their goals around implementing a print management system were to centralize their print purchasing and manage their supplier base. Before using a print management system, the company allowed anyone in the company, which has locations nationwide, to buy print from anyone. Essentially, each buyer was running his or her own business unaware of other print purchases and supplier relationships within the company. In less than a year of implementing a print management system, they were able to reduce the number of suppliers by 60 percent, allowing them to better manage their print suppliers and drive down cost.

During the selection process, you will need to analyze the way you are currently purchasing print and managing your suppliers. This analysis could possibly require you to change your current process. While change in your organization may be difficult, commitment to change is necessary for a print management system to be effective.

**Tip #2: Find a system that is easy for everyone to use.**

Selecting a print management system that's easy to use for everyone in your organization is a critical part of the selection process. Organizations select systems for various reasons, sometimes not thinking about the end user's experience. Systems that are difficult to use won't be used, quickly becoming shelfware and enticing people to revert back to old processes, wasting your company's time and resources.

One company witnessed the enormous impact an easy-to-use system can have in procuring print. The company wanted to determine if the print management and procurement system they had put into place a year ago was truly saving them time. With a stop-watch in hand, they took two similar print jobs – sourcing one the old manual way and the other through their Web-based procurement system. The Web-based system demonstrated a time savings of nearly 40 percent for their print buyers and the project managers associated with the job.

**Tip #3: Match reporting tools to your organization's needs.**

Print management systems are all about streamlining and improving print purchasing processes. Be sure to select a system that provides the data your organization needs to make decisions. Unlike manual processes that use e-mails, faxes, and hand-written notes, a print management system offers a centralized repository of data relating to all print and production spending for your entire organization. In addition, select a system with robust reporting capabilities, which allows this data to be displayed in a way that matches your organization's decision-making process. A centralized repository of information, along with detailed reporting mechanisms, makes it possible for the entire enterprise to have real time information on how much is being spent with which suppliers – information necessary to leverage your print spend and achieve cost reductions. Having this information easily available with the reporting tool will also drive out "maverick" spend, which refers to spend that takes place outside of organizationally established purchasing procedures.



**Tip #4: Choose a system that meets your unique business needs.**

Your business needs are unique and the print management system you select must have the flexibility to meet those needs. With the exception of small companies that have modest printing needs, a “shrink-wrapped” solution rarely delivers the results most organizations require. The ability to create product templates for whatever print projects your organization needs should be a basic functionality of the system. Because buying print is not a commodity item, the Web-based system you deploy must be customized to match your business requirements.

In addition, your organization must be confident that the print management system you select can grow and change as your organization evolves. Flexibility and scalability are values that cannot be overstated. In today’s business world, nothing stays the same for long, and you don’t want a print management system that can’t change with you, whether that means going global, acquiring companies, or adding to your product offering.

**Tip #5: Remember, value includes more than cost.**

Creating a realistic ROI is always a prudent strategy. Organizations often focus on the cost or price of a system and forget to include the intangible value a print management system can bring. A comprehensive ROI must include quantifiable costs as well as intangible benefits. Determining the intangible benefits can be difficult but can also be enlightening. According to recent research studies, a Web-based print management solution can deliver anywhere from 10 to 30 percent cost and time savings. This comes from better relationships with fewer suppliers, more efficient resource allocation and productivity, reduced cycle times, enhanced reporting capabilities, and balanced scorecards for supplier comparisons.

Use these tips to narrow the selection of possible print management solutions. Determine the solution that seems to best fit your organization’s unique business model and ask for a free trial. A company with confidence in their product should be more than willing to let the benefits of their product speak for themselves.

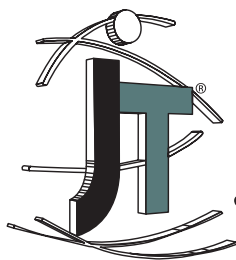


### About James Tower

James Tower is a technology solutions provider offering complete, customized and innovative technology solutions for the print industry. The company has developed Web-to-Print technology-driven solutions to simplify the print production and management process for Fortune 500, medium and small companies. James Tower's extensive knowledge of the print industry along with its customer-intimate focus allows them to work in concert with its customers to achieve superior results while forging lasting partnerships.

### Questions about this paper?

If you have any questions or comments about this article, please contact Greg Thomas, Director of Business Development at James Tower. Call 507-344-5412 or e-mail [gmthomas@jamestower.com](mailto:gmthomas@jamestower.com).



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