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Will there be a need for printing plants in the future?

Our high-quality and durable print finishing systems often give rise to the following question during the purchasing process: Is it worth investing now? Many customers sense the great uncertainty over the future of the printing industry. Will printing houses still exist in 2040? To what extent will machines purchased today be compatible when the next major technological revolution occurs?

Since humans have existed, there have always been disruptive technologies that have replaced entire industries and professions. Until the end of the 20th century, however, such processes of change lasted decades or even centuries. But today the incredible technological advances in storage and computing capacities are leading to disruptive technologies having the power to establish themselves in the global market within one to two years.

The printing industry has also changed dramatically as a result - or thanks to - digitalization. Digital printing has decisively weakened the monopoly position of large publishing and printing houses. Prices for end customers have fallen drastically, customized single copies and ultra-short runs are standard, finishing options are a must, and the demands on employees in terms of IT, network and programming skills are consistently increasing. On the other hand, digital printing has also made new products possible, such as photo books or self-published books.



The answer is Finishing 4.0

At Muller Martini, we are responding to the digital revolution with our [Finishing 4.0](#) development strategy. The strategy includes the vision of producing individual products in runs of one copy, which is, to some extent, already a reality today. This is made possible by maximum automation. Thanks to smart connectivity with [Connex](#) productions with our print finishing systems already run fully automatically and without manual intervention.

Our highly specialized, agile family business with a worldwide network is also at the pulse of new markets, technologies and trends. We use this foundation to develop productive solutions and implement them promptly into our customers' supply chains.



Muller Martini is responding to the digital revolution with its Finishing 4.0 development strategy

Looking into the crystal ball

Numerous trends are already today having a major impact on the requirements of the printing industry. To answer the question of whether printing houses will still exist in 2040 would be like taking a look into the crystal ball. However, we are certain that we will see further technology-driven changes in the industry over the next 10 to 20 years.

We consider the following trends and social changes to be a great opportunity for growth in the printing industry.

- ▶ **Augmented reality in product design:** The combination of printed and augmented reality has already been impressively implemented several times in the design of innovative product catalogs.
- ▶ **Additional possibilities thanks to 3D printing, both in terms of maintenance and in the design of one's own offer:** Today, 3D printing not only allows the production of spare parts quickly and cost-effectively on site (short downtimes, no external assembly costs). We also see the expansion of our own product portfolio as an opportunity for innovative printing plants.
- ▶ **Artificial intelligence in all printing processes:** Will enable 24-hour operations without high personnel costs and still ensure the highest level of quality.
- ▶ **Ecological printing processes:** Can be implemented thanks to more efficient printing and print finishing systems with more ecological printing methods and lower printing error rates.



- ▶ **Solutions-as-a-service platforms:** Have already led to higher capacity utilization in numerous industries and enable companies to master production peaks and special production runs in a cost-effective manner.
- ▶ **Predictive maintenance thanks to blockchain technology:** Enables a faster return on investment and minimizes follow-up costs for expensive repairs and downtimes.
- ▶ **Digital detox:** Printed matter is becoming a luxury, and with it the willingness to pay for high-quality print products is increasing.
- ▶ **Increased data security requirements:** Demand for smart overall solutions as already offered by Muller Martini today.
- ▶ **Sharing economy:** Leads to more efficient supply chains and thus to lower purchasing and production costs.

Developing skills, strengthening mindsets

Despite all optimism, the challenges posed by technological change remain. We therefore promote and require high engineering, IT and industry skills from our employees and exemplify the mindset of accepting the rapid changes in the industry as an opportunity and consciously help to shape them. Despite welcoming further developments, it is certainly advisable to always keep a watchful and critical eye on them in our industry. After all, nobody wants to wake up one morning to discover that a technological revolution has made us obsolete.

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