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## Where do the challenges in online printing lie?

**Having finally set up an online shop, the main thing is to be able to compete successfully. That this is no easy task was evident from a visit to the 6th Online Print Symposium (OPS) in Munich.**

E-commerce is a completely different world, one that printers first need to familiarize themselves with. The biggest challenges revolve around time, budgets, IT expertise and personnel and, not least, developing expertise in areas such as e-commerce, digitalization and automation. The changes that an online shop brings also require a fundamental shift in culture. This is because for many printers online production must be integrated in current production channels, which doesn't make things easy.

However, printers will not be able to avoid online printing in the future. For customers under the age of 35, there are no products that don't have information available online – and that includes all types of printed materials as well. But launching an online shop takes time – the process cannot be rushed. Clear positioning is important in order to be able to compete with online shops that are allegedly too large and too powerful to take on. This can be done, for example, through customization, environmental aspects, personal appeal and specialties. The printing industry must adapt to the new era and not swim against the tide of change. Online printers will even be able to define the market in certain niches in the future and have better opportunities to compete successfully.



»Online printing already makes up around a third of the market.«

Bernd Zipper, CEO of zipcon consulting GmbH and a co-organizer of the OPS.



### Developments and Trends

The transformation has already resulted in some losers, Bernd Zipper, CEO of zipcon consulting GmbH and co-organizer of the OPS, noted at the Munich event. This most certainly does not include online printers, as online printers have seen the strongest growth rates in the printing industry. For example, open shops in the online printing industry grew by 15.4% in 2017, with revenue increasing to €3 billion in Germany, Austria and Switzerland (DACH). At €1.47 billion, the top five companies accounted for nearly half of this revenue. If the revenue from closed stores is added to this, then total online revenue in the DACH region amounted to €7.5 billion. Thus, online printing already accounts for about a third of the market. However, Zipper forecasts lower growth this year, with the market volume leveling off at around €7.85 billion in 2018.

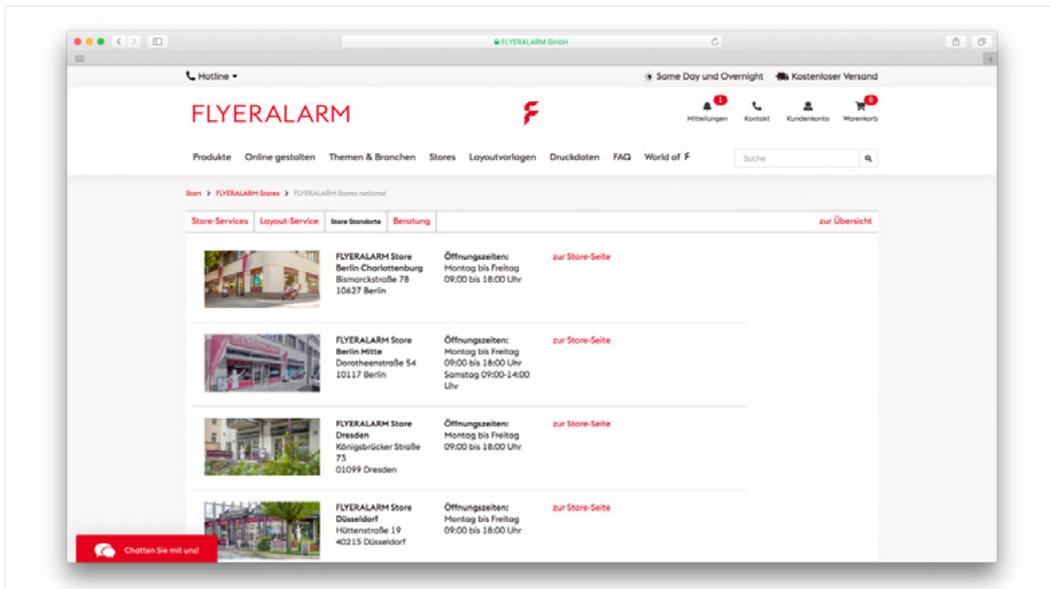
### Digital and Other Transformations

Bernd Zipper noted that “just because a company operates an online shop does not mean that it has been transformed.” Above all, small and medium-sized companies in many places lack sufficient capital, the necessary infrastructure and the know-how. While IT knowledge is important, the primary factor for the success of an online printer is e-commerce know-how.

Companies that want to be successful in the fast-paced online print market need to have strategies for increasing and securing their market share. In addition, they need to develop new products, tap new markets and implement innovative products and services. For printing plants, all this needs to be done at a breath-taking pace while also taking account of a wide range of issues. Among other things, online printers must consider whether, in addition to their online shop, they also want to have a physical presence. The “local online printer” that people can also visit is becoming increasingly popular. With its physical shops, Flyeralarm is exemplary in this regard.

The proximity to customers provides companies with the opportunity to deepen their service and make market access more personal.





With its physical shops, successful online printer Flyeralarm is exemplary: the proximity to customers offers new opportunities.

Same-day delivery will be a decisive success factor in the future. However, requirements related to speed and quality assurance will also rise. B2B customers will reward such service with a higher price, but this market will remain limited to metropolitan regions for the time being.

### The Mass Customization Megatrend

Dynamic pricing based on customer profiles or order patterns has long been used in e-commerce. As a result, excess capacity can better be utilized in the short term. Digital assistants will also have an effect on the printing industry. In the future, Alexa will search for low-cost business cards or flyers for consumers.

In addition, robots will have a significant impact on the mass customization megatrend, forcing companies to achieve the necessary agility and flexibility. Online printing will help develop and tap this market, which holds potential for the printing industry. Mass customization has a substantial influence on customer loyalty and is based on the fact that everyone is different.



### **It's Never Too Late**

At the Online Print Symposium, a number of case examples were used to show that it is never too late to enter this growing market. The only questions are: How can companies participate in the growth? And how can the business model be scaled? As customer print product requirements go beyond paper and cardboard, there are new opportunities for printing companies. And that is just what the industry needs.

The 7th [Online Print Symposium](#) will be held on April 4-5, 2019.

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## **Finishing 4.0**

### **Finishing 4.0 für Ihre Geschäftsidee**

In order to remain flexible and agile as a graphic design company, given the digital transformation and trend toward mass customization, stable production processes are required. With its Finishing 4.0 concept, Muller Martini has the intelligent production solutions that you need to achieve this. In a future blog entry, you'll learn more about Finishing 4.0. Maybe you'll find the perfect system for bringing your business idea to life?

