



## Online printing: The new “DNA for print”

**The 8th Online Print Symposium (OPS) was held in Munich earlier this month. First of all: making the trip was again worthwhile. Exciting talks, new insights, stimulating discussions – what more could you want!**

The illustrious world of online printers meets at the [OPS](#), a co-production of [zipcon consulting](#) and the [Bundesverband Druck und Medien e.V.](#). This year, the event was attended by around 300 visitors. The symposium now has a strong European orientation – and that applies to both the speakers and the visitors. Guided by the motto “Transforming the DNA of Print”, the speakers conveyed the power that online-based business models can unleash to build new customer relationships.

### **Online printing thrives on partnerships**

Bernd Zipper (see image above), the expert on the subject of online printing, presented the current status quo to the visitors and, at the same time, pointed out the trends in store for the graphics industry. These trends will not only keep the sworn community of online printers but the entire printing industry on its toes in the future. For Zipper, online is not an option but a must. Online is the interface to the customer, and as a printing house, you can't escape this trend. The internet is already the ubiquitous platform via which a large part of communication and business is conducted.

Zipper warned the attendees not to make the same mistakes as German retail groups. Twenty

years ago, when the dotcom bubble burst, they closed down their online stores and left the field to Amazon. A grave mistake, from which they still haven't recovered to this day. Online printing thrives on partnerships, and there are many ways to get involved as a producer, specialist or broker. Zipper believes that the positive market performance definitely speaks for itself.

### **Conurbations are the growth hot spots**

For 2020, zipcon consulting is forecasting growth of around 7 percent in B2C business in the DACH region (Germany/Austria/Switzerland). In the B2B sector, the figure is even expected to hit 8.5 percent. The strong growth in B2B can also be explained by the fact that traditional printers have established closed portals. The total turnover of online printers in the three DACH countries is expected to reach 8.74 billion euros this year, which corresponds to more than 30 percent of the industry's turnover. But online printing is also performing very positively in France, Spain, Italy and the Baltic states. The hot spots here are above all conurbations with their well-developed network infrastructure.

In Zipper's view, mobile and social media printing are two central topics that online printers should urgently address. The fact that platforms need to have a responsive web design should have become known by now. The younger generation, in particular, want to print off chats or photos from their social media apps – and that is only possible from mobile devices. Here, there are already interesting business models such as [FreePrints](#) or apps such as [Ink Cards](#) to create photos or personal postcards.

### **Smartphones: The key to mass customization**

As a rule, the online print expert sees smartphones as the key to finally implementing mass customization in print, and that goes far beyond images. Generation Y, Z or Alpha find individual, exclusive and high-quality products simply "cool". And the combination of inkjet printing and web-to-print makes runs of one affordable. This may well be true, but further developments in print finishing also make a significant contribution to achieving this goal.

One of the major challenges for online printers is to reach customers on the channel they are currently using. Only in this way is it possible to generate new sales, but this also requires simplification of the still complex processes. The cloud provides interesting approaches to optimizing processes. As examples, Zipper referred to [PrintQ](#) or [Printformer](#). Robots are what will make a big impact in online printing in the coming years, but also in the entire printing industry.

All these trends are enormously important for establishing the "New DNA for print", which stands for agility, individuality and cooperation. In all likelihood, this will not only be true for online printers but for the entire industry. In this respect, the OPS is also an opportunity for classic printers to look beyond their own horizons. The next opportunity to do so will be in spring 2021.

Your

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