

How Print-on-Demand Is Leading the Me-Commerce Revolution

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Every day, millions of Web users log on to sites like Zazzle, Cafe Press, and Coveroo expecting a perfectly tailored e-commerce experience. When they first appeared, these print-on-demand sites offered a pedestrian array of personalization options—print your name on a phone case or upload and buy a poorly rendered photo of your cat on a mug.

All that's changed. One of the primary, but often overlooked, influences driving that transformation lies within the expansion of major brands affording consumers the flexibility they want in customized printing. Printing platforms now offer consumers the quality and flexibility to personalize major brands, and online retailers possess the technology they need to blend print-on-demand into their Web experience.

Let's start with quality. Highly recognizable brands demand a high degree of print quality. If you're a quality control manager for, say, the University of Notre Dame, you have very specific color requirements for the Fighting Irish Blue and Gold. To date, many print-on-demand sites simply haven't had the ability to match those colors on a consistent basis.

Rendering a design on a device exactly as the user previews the product online is the great concern for all print-on-demand shops. Speed and power are critical to capturing and printing the perfect image. To compete effectively in this arena, you have to be able to produce top quality designs while delivering exceptional print quality on a wide variety of products.

Consumers now seek the flexibility to upload their own art (photo assets, designs, and patterns) with the expectation that their source files will appear perfect on the product. Also, in most cases, they may only order one or two designs. This latter problem has set a barrier for e-tailers wanting to enter the customization space. But print-on-demand technology makes it viable for retailers to sell a singular design at a profit.

Yet in order to make print-on-demand work, retailers need printing partners who can work as an extension of their ordering process, assuming they are not doing the printing themselves. Coveroo, for example, takes orders from third-party retailers like HelloKitty.com to be processed, printed, and shipped within 48 hours. And it's seamlessly integrated into the HelloKitty online process. The consumers of HelloKitty products do not know the Web experience "front end" is software from Coveroo.

Print-on-demand is leading the me-commerce revolution where customization is king. The advancements in both print quality and printing processes make it simpler than ever for e-tailers to offer personalized products to their customers in a timely and cost-effective fashion. And they can do all of this while protecting the big, important brands that fans love to celebrate. Every day.

Christopher Boone is the CEO of Coveroo, Inc. He was the founder, President & CEO of Cimbal, Inc., a secure mobile payment and promotion network delivering a software-driven transaction product for use in-store, online, person-to-person and across all media. Learn more about Coveroo at www.coveroo.com.



Coveroo's SwitchBack Case gives users the opportunity to swap out covers. With customers supplying their own artwork and text, there are near limitless customization options that can also faithfully recreate the look of well-established brands.