

# Article



## Leading with Cross Media Strategy

*By: Barb Pellow*

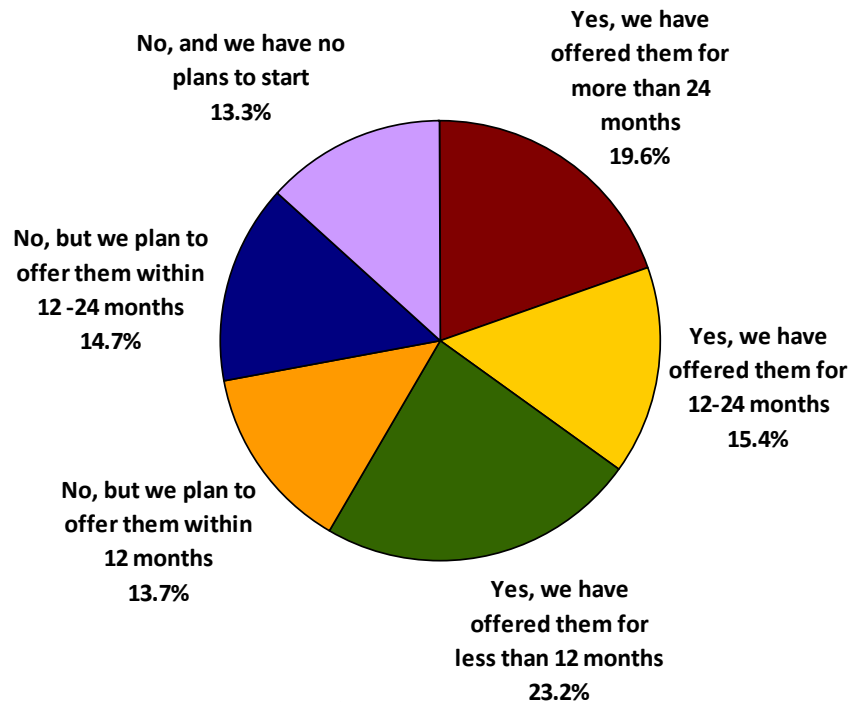
## Introduction

Businesses are finding that reaching customers via multiple touch points has a profound effect on their marketing efforts, and they are seeking service providers that can deliver their message using multiple channels beyond print. This capability is quickly becoming an essential factor for successful marketing. To optimize business potential, print service providers are finding that the movement into marketing services is not an option.....it is becoming a necessity. It requires reassessing skills, infrastructure, and processes as well as the partnerships required to participate in the complete marketing value chain. Over the past several years, we have heard about making the transformation to a “marketing services provider” with a focus on 1:1 communications and variable data and cross-channel solutions. The question is how to ultimately “get in the game”.

## The Facts

InfoTrends just completed a study entitled *The Evolution of the Cross-Media and Marketing Services Provider*. This study surveyed more than 280 print/cross-media service providers to understand the current state of cross-media and the evolution taking place in the graphic communications market. The first key message is that service providers as a community understand the critical importance of getting into cross-media services. Of the 285 respondents, 58% are offering some level of cross-media services today. Furthermore, 87% of respondents were either offering these services today or had plans to offer them in the next 24 months.

**Figure 1: Do you offer cross-media marketing services?**



N = 285 Print Service Provider Respondents

Source: *The Evolution of the Cross-Media Marketing Services Provider*, InfoTrends 2011

The providers surveyed understand that print is still a very relevant medium, but they have also acknowledged that print is evolving. As print evolves, print service providers must transform. Print used to be the only tool in the toolbox, but now it's one of many integrated tools in the marketing solutions mix. It is clear that there is a good understanding of the technology available today, and that enables printers to take advantage of all cross-media channels to help customers market smarter with relevant 1:1 content.

### The Keys to Success

The statistical data as well as in-depth interviews highlighted eight key critical success factors for those making the move into cross-media. This article is designed to share key findings from those that have started the cross media journey.

### Strategy and Repositioning

The first step is clearly delineating the right products and service portfolio for your customers. The majority of cross media providers have been at it for at least 24 months a robust full service portfolio that includes customized and interactive online and print communications, as well as mailing and fulfillment. They are focusing on providing mobile and social experiences for customers in the next stage of evolution. Once the hard decisions have been made about products and services, positioning becomes essential. It is how you differentiate your offerings from others in the minds of your prospects. It's not your perception or your organization that matters—it is the *prospect's* perception. Cross-media decisions are being made by marketing executives who are reluctant to trust a printer with executing their multi-channel marketing campaigns. The successful PSP is repositioning and rebranding their organization to change how they are viewed by today's decision-makers.

### Solutions for Customers

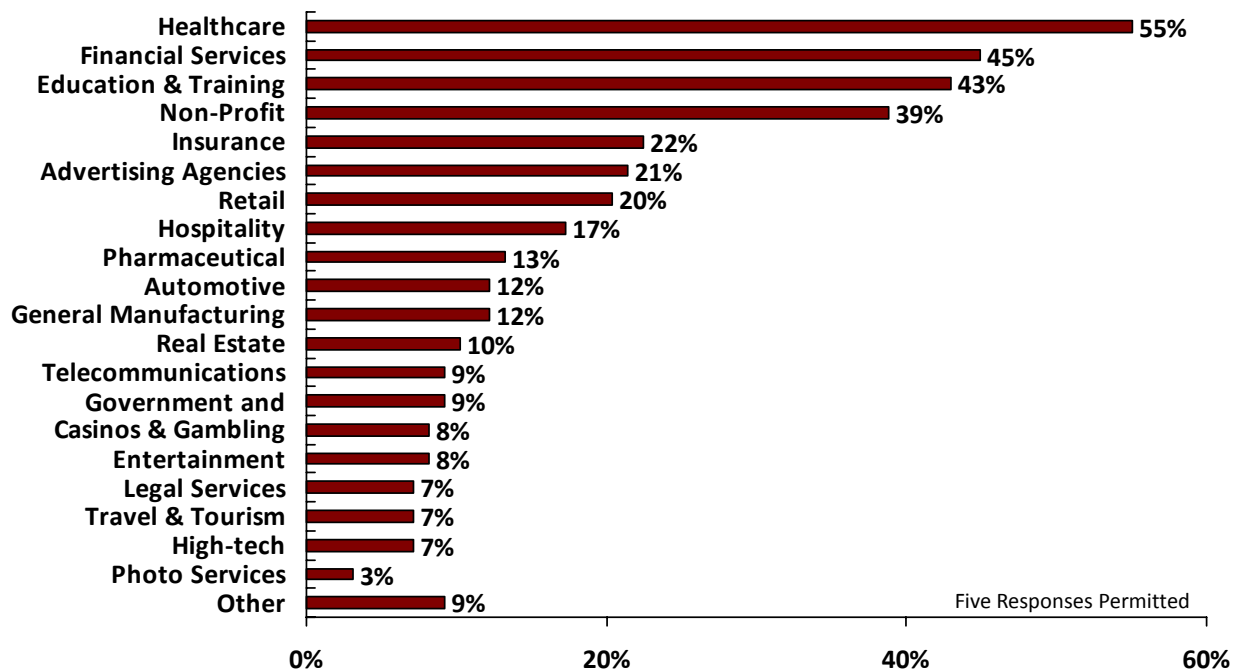
Firms that have successfully evolved into cross-media marketing service providers reported that a key catalyst to capturing business is identifying a unique business problem in a particular vertical market and solving it.

Of the PSPs offering cross-media marketing services, 59% reported having a vertical market focus. A vertical market focus is defined as targeting a particular industry or group of enterprises in which similar products or services are developed and marketed using similar methods (and to whom goods and services can be sold), such as insurance, real estate, banking, heavy manufacturing, retail, transportation, hospitals, or government.

Those respondents who did have a vertical market focus were asked which markets they targeted for cross-media marketing services. Healthcare (55%), Financial Services (45%), and Education/Training (43%) were the most common verticals targeted for cross-media

marketing services. This finding is not surprising given that these firms are big users of direct mail, and therefore a visible target for adding other media channels linked to their print marketing.

**Figure 2: Which of the following vertical markets do you target for cross-media marketing services?**



N = 98 Print Service Providers who have a vertical market focus

Source: *The Evolution of the Cross-Media Marketing Services Provider*, InfoTrends 2011

**Walk the Talk**

Educating customers and demonstrating credibility are critical success factors in offering cross-media services. In many cases, customers are not asking for cross-media services because they don't know what they are, or they don't realize that the firms they buy print from offer these services. To fill in the customer knowledge gap, the cross-media marketing service providers that we interviewed reported creating a mix of self-promotion efforts that included developing educational events, creating contests to awards competitions to gain recognition, producing promotional pieces that demonstrated competency in the ability to deliver on all facets of a cross-media campaign, and documenting efforts in a case study that is accessible to clients and prospects.

Pulp (Bristol, Tennessee) has truly redefined itself and has a very different story to tell than it did in the past. When interacting with clients and prospects, the firm describes itself as a communications company that rose from the ashes of one of the most trying times in history to become a new breed of marketer with expertise in strategy, storytelling, creative, technology, and execution. Pulp considers itself to be the only choice for marketing professionals who want great business results for their companies,

and it combines logic and magic to offer the most effective marketing solutions available. They do that using an array of cross media channels including web, online, social and mobile.

**What Makes  
PULP  
Best-of-Breed?**

**We Understand What You Need, Really**  
Every step of the way, we think about your interests. We listen as you explain your day to day issues. We look at the challenges you face in your business. We look at your ideas for managing these challenges and take that thinking a step further. We address risk, complexity, and how we manage them. We expect a realistic level of client effort to get the job done.

### **Educate, Educate, Educate!!!!**

Educating customers is a critical success factor in offering cross-media services. In many cases, customers are not asking for cross-media services either because they don't know what they are, or don't know that the firms they buy print from offer these services. To fill in the customer knowledge gap, service providers are beginning to develop comprehensive customer educational offerings.

Rider Dickerson, Bellwood, IL, created an ongoing customer education forum and branded it printForum ([www.printforum.info](http://www.printforum.info)). The program consists of a conference event, ongoing Webinars, e-newsletter, educational Website, and a printed magazine.

Associates International, Wilmington, DE, launched Ai University offering, a monthly educational service program for its clients. Ai University classes are held in a live classroom environment to facilitate learning; replays of those classes are available to clients on the Ai's Website.

### **It's All About the People**

Educating and training staff beyond technical training was a common practice among top providers. Successful cross-media providers are participating in formal education, forming peer networking groups, and working with groups aligned with their vertical market focus. Overcoming resistance to change was identified as a real challenge among firms making the cross-media transition. The culture in the printing industry fosters a

resistance to change. Staff members are not always receptive to the unknown, and service providers must educate employees to help overcome this challenge.

### **Use the A-Team**

Successful providers of cross-media marketing services report that placing full responsibility for selling these services on the sales team has not worked. Instead, they are using a team selling approach that includes its various project experts (e.g., marketing, data, IT). In most instances, the sales person is focused on relationship building and having the right level of discussion with a marketing executive to identify cross media opportunities. They are backed by a combination of marketing resources, database and IT professionals to ultimately create the proposal and “seal the deal”

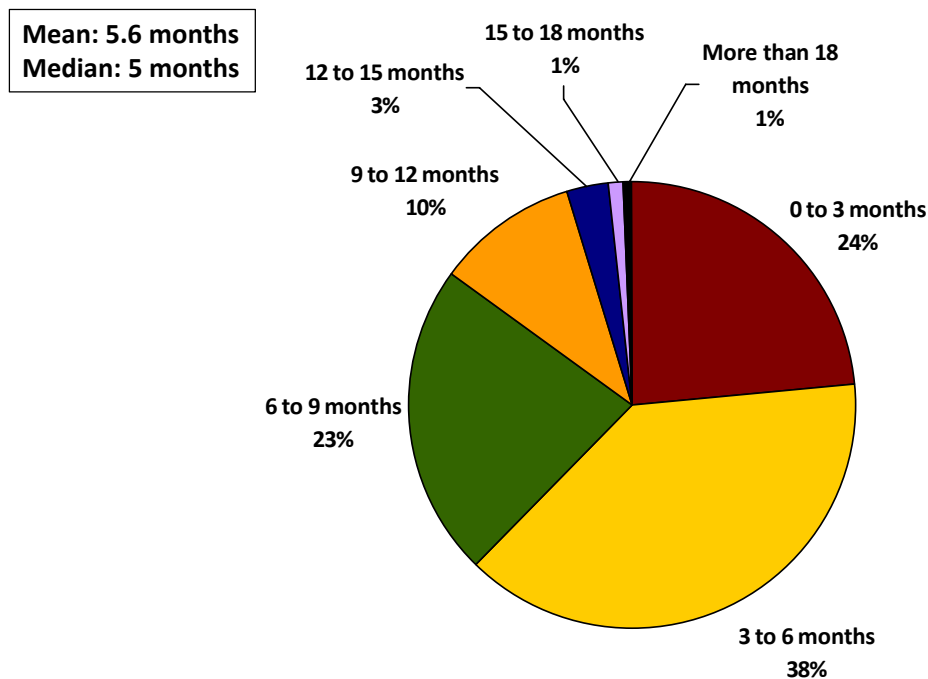
### **Solutions—Tactics, Strategies, Goals—NOT Print**

A common message among leading cross-media marketing services was to stop talking about print. At the same time, however, print is not something that should be forgotten because it is not going away. Profitable firms acknowledged that while print will remain a staple of their offerings, the trick is focus clients on the actual solution and its potential results rather than stressing the print component.

### **Patience is a Virtue**

The firms that we interviewed were quick to point out that success was the result of trial and error. A number of firms reported investing in services that they thought clients would rush out to purchase, like personalized URLs and database-driving multi-channel marketing campaigns... only to find that the sales process took much longer than anticipated. On average, print service providers reported that the entire process for selling cross-media marketing services took 5.6 months. This underscores the message that cross-media marketing is not an easy sell. It takes time to convince the customer and build the relationship.

**Figure 2: When selling cross-media marketing services, how long does the entire process take?**



N = 166 Print Service Providers who offer Cross-Media Marketing Services

Source: *The Evolution of the Cross-Media Marketing Services Provider*, InfoTrends 2011

## Conclusion

Cross-media marketing services are the here and now. Rather than a revolution, the shift toward cross-media services is an *evolution* that starts with simple offerings and then branches out into more complex services. The move into cross-media marketing services creates new opportunities and revenue streams for print service providers, while at the same time expanding print's functionality to create valuable, engaging experiences that drive results. The lingering questions are what are the best practices and strategies essential for making the transition.

Strategy, repositioning, customer and employee education, teamwork, a solutions focus and patience are all part of successfully transforming from a print services provider into a cross-media marketing services provider. InfoTrends just released research on the critical steps, go-to-market strategies, and best practices essential for the successful evolution. The results of the effort are reported in the *"Evolution of the Cross-Media Marketing Services Provider"*, released in July 2011.

## About the Author

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A digital printing and publishing pioneer as well as marketing expert, Barbara Pellow helps companies develop multi-media strategies. She assists companies in creating strategies to launch new products, building strategic marketing plans, and educating their sales force on delivering value.