

thINK.



FORWARD

INKJET NETWORKING AND KNOWLEDGE

THIRD EDITION | 2025

A REVOLUTION IN EFFICIENCY & SPEED

SPC was the first printer in the U.S. to install the Canon ProStream 3160. Learn how it's changed their business.

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH CANON

Learn about exciting service innovations designed to empower customers and increase uptime.

INKJET TRANSFORMATION

How Universal Mailing Services secured a competitive edge by expanding to comprehensive print-and-mail solutions.

BOOKMARK FOR DESIGN INSPIRATION

This designer-focused website is dedicated to profiles of projects printed on inkjet, with new projects added all the time.

THE ANNUAL INTERVIEW ISSUE

In this edition, hear directly from thINK members, the thINK Board, and Canon subject matter experts on the innovations that are actually driving the print industry.



PRODUCTION NOTES

Paper: 100 lb. Moorim ProDigital Text

Press: Canon varioPRINT iX3200 sheetfed inkjet press

thINK is an independent community of Canon production inkjet customers, solution partners, and print industry experts and Canon is a proud executive sponsor. Led by some of the most successful inkjet service providers in the country, it provides a forum for members to network, gain knowledge, discuss common challenges, and share best practices. Visit [thINKForum.com](https://thinkforum.com) to learn more.

A letter from thINK Board President

PETE STUDER

Hello, thINK community —

Nothing is more beautiful than autumn in Minnesota. This is the season for enjoying the cooler temperatures — as many of you know from the thINK Board’s foray into AI animation, I’m an outdoorsman! But it’s also the season for kicking strategic planning into high gear, both for our customers and for ourselves.

I’ve talked to thINK members who want to use 2026 to...

- Expand into a new vertical market
- Invest in new equipment or software
- Go after a list of high-value target accounts
- Fine-tune their customer experience

Are any of these initiatives on your radar? Maybe you’re saying, “All of the above!” If that’s the case, thINK is here to provide not only resources but a space to share successful strategies and workshop new ideas. This very edition of thINK Forward is full of insights from thINK members who have recently made big moves — and seen big results.

Whether you’re planning for a revolutionary shift or several micro-improvements, I’d love to hear how thINK can support your goals.

And don’t forget to enjoy the season!



PETE STUDER

thINK Board President
CEO of Impact
pstuder@thINKForum.com



2025 thINK Ahead conference

thINK FORWARD

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Customer Spotlight

MAKING SMARTER MAILERS WITH ADAM LEFEBVRE, PRESIDENT OF SPECIALTY PRINT COMMUNICATIONS

Specialty Print Communications (SPC) is no stranger to change. Since 1938, the Chicago-based family-owned-and-operated printer has constantly moved with the times, adapting to new print technologies, emerging print markets, employee acquisition and retention strategies, and how to build a company culture that promotes and recognizes exceptional service to SPC's customers.

This commitment to evolution and growth is evident in that SPC was among the first commercial printers in the U.S. to install a Canon ProStream 1800 web-fed inkjet press, and they were the first to install a ProStream 3160 web-fed inkjet press.

Third-generation proprietor and SPC President Adam LeFebvre recently sat down with us to discuss his customer-centric approach to new print technologies and processes, and the challenges and opportunities printers will likely see in 2026 and beyond.

SPC was among the first commercial printers in the U.S. to install a Canon ProStream 1800 web-fed inkjet press, and they were the first to install a ProStream 3160 web-fed inkjet press.

What is top-of-mind for your customers going in 2026? What is SPC doing to help customers meet their goals and overcome their challenges?

One of the things we're thinking about is how much digital equipment is really necessary to drive business going forward — and, if you're not in the digital print game, I think the discussion will be centered around how you get into the digital space. But I think the biggest question in 2026 — and probably beyond — is what the post office is going to do [with postage rates] and how that will affect businesses. That's the top concern on everyone's mind right now.

What kind of conversations are you having with your customers about the best way to balance postage rate increases?

The most important thing we do is help our customers be successful — that's what we're here for. Our job is to make every single penny a customer spends as valuable as possible. We can optimize a lot of other elements of direct mail to help businesses get the most out of it. Achieving this starts with making direct mail smarter, and that starts with the hygiene of a mailing list. There's so much wasted cost in mailers that don't go anywhere because you have bad data.

If you have a bad address — or data — you already lose. And the same goes with mailing to people who you know won't respond. This kind of optimization is what we provide customers and it's something we know saves a lot of time and money.

“If you have a bad address — or data — you already lose. And the same goes with mailing to people who you know won't respond. This kind of optimization is what we provide customers and it's something we know saves a lot of time and money.”

ADAM LEFEBVRE



As President of SPC, Adam LeFebvre ensures the balance of serving the customer today while improving the value proposition for both the customer and SPC in the future. Adam has been focused on achievement throughout his career and challenges the team to continuously improve systems and offerings.



What do you take into account when you consider investments in new technology, be it equipment or software?

The technology may change but our methodology has always been the same...I can remember back in 2003 when we bought a Kodak press because everyone thought page growth was going to be exponential, even though we're probably just reaching those projected numbers now.

But, for us, everything comes back to two main factors. The first factor is: What does our customer want? We buy certain tools, technology, and equipment because our customers tell us that's what they want — and we go where our customers go. Of course, one thing that's key for our customers is cost, especially with inflation.

For some reason, when costs go up, people think print should get less expensive. This means everything we do — be it new technology or equipment — is about increasing the efficiency of our output. One thing people forget is that new technologies are there to help you make money, and you have to invest in new technologies to grow — or at least maintain — the value of your company.

“The most important thing we do is help our customers be successful — that’s what we’re here for. Our job is to make every single penny a customer spends as valuable as possible.”

ADAM LEFEBVRE

What new capabilities does your expanded fleet of presses and finishing equipment offer your customers?

The biggest part of our business — both in terms of sales and piece count — is driven by printing the highest quality, full-color pieces. Of course, standard cut sheet print is available in commodity form across the country, which is where our ability to do a lot of really sophisticated things in-line really sets us apart. We're very heavily invested in in-line finishing — things like folding, gluing, and die-cutting, all of it in-line in one process to create unique finished pieces.

“We buy certain tools, technology, and equipment because our customers tell us that’s what they want — and we go where our customers go.”

ADAM LEFEBVRE



SCAN TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SPC AND THEIR PRINT SERVICES.

specialtyprintcomm.com



thINK MEMBERS GET SOCIAL

From inspiring thought leadership to celebrations of company culture, see how the thINK community uses social media to connect.



FOLLOW thINK!

Don't forget to connect with thINK on LinkedIn, Instagram, and Facebook for regular updates from the community.



FEATURED INKJET PROJECTS

Have you explored Dots + Pixels, the thINK-sponsored site for inkjet-centric graphic design inspiration?

From marketing collateral and magazines to packaging and signage, inkjet projects get the spotlight they deserve at dotsandpixels.design.



A Mini Magazine with Much to Say



A Boca-Inspired Sketchbook



An Editorial Approach to Direct Mail



An Augmented Reality Children's Book



EXPLORE MORE PROJECTS!

Explore featured projects and share this free creative resource with your designers.


dotsandpixels.design


MELODY OWNBY AND DAN PRZISLICKI ON THE LATEST CANON SERVICE INNOVATIONS


Last year, Canon announced several service innovations that are fundamentally altering the traditional customer-service relationship. The goal was a deeper partnership between Canon and its production inkjet customers.

The pilot programs have been underway for about a year, so we sat down with Melody Ownby, Senior Product Marketing Specialist at Canon U.S.A., and Dan Przislicki, Senior Director, Service Support Operations at Canon U.S.A., to hear about progress and learnings.

The strategy has involved rolling out three new service programs:

- 

OPERATOR PRO+
- **Operator Pro+**, an advanced operator training for ProStream operators that helps them learn basic preventative maintenance tasks, allowing customers to gain control of their preventative maintenance schedule
- 

CUSTOMER TECHNICIAN PROGRAM
- **The Customer Technician Program**, a shared maintenance model where customers go through the exact same training course as Canon field service technicians so they can work collaboratively with Canon Service to maintain equipment and solve issues
- 

Self-Maintenance Program
- **The Self-Maintenance Program**, which allows customers to take control of all service and labor activities and is a good solution for those who are far from a Canon service center

Canon also opened a brand new Service Training Center for the ProStream in Boca Raton, Florida, where technicians and customers can be trained together.



First, what inspired the creation of these new service programs?

Dan: Previously, Canon offered a standard maintenance agreement with two- to four-hour response times, but we know that one size does not fit all. Especially with the introduction of advanced production inkjet presses like the ProStream and the iX3200, which are targeted toward commercial print, there is a customer expectation for faster, better service. Customers began asking how they could assist, prompting us to consider a shared service model.

Melody: Shared service is a way to improve response times and create more efficiency, and it also allows us to reach new geographical areas, including remote locations Canon Service couldn't have reached before. In addition, we wanted to solve a few specific customer problems. We knew that labor retention has been top-of-mind for customers. The Operator Pro+ program emerged as a way to incentivize operators by offering them clear growth opportunities.

How do these programs change the traditional service relationship between Canon and its customers?

Dan: These programs are designed to foster a partnership rather than a transactional service agreement, giving both Canon and the customer ownership in maintaining the equipment. The idea is that this collaborative approach will lead to a shared, vested interest in maximizing press uptime.

“Customer technicians go through instructor-led training provided by Canon-certified instructors in dedicated training centers located in Boca Raton and Itasca. This training is the exact same training, both in content and in length, that Canon’s own field service technicians receive.”

DAN PRZISLICKI



Melody: Canon will continue to provide support at all levels (levels one, two, and three) when needed, emphasizing that it is a truly shared maintenance model.

Dan: One thing to note is that the traditional service model remains an option for customers who prefer Canon to handle all maintenance. With this range of new options, we believe that each customer really can choose the best fit for their business.

How did Canon ensure customers would feel confident with their new maintenance responsibilities?

Dan: The training is key. Customer technicians go through instructor-led training provided by Canon-certified instructors in dedicated training centers located in Boca Raton and Itasca. This training is the exact same training, both in content and in length, that Canon’s own field service technicians receive. Customer technicians are also granted full access to the same tooling, documentation, and resources as Canon technicians.

Melody: We’ve also developed a new help desk that serves as a “one-stop shop” for customer technicians, offering troubleshooting support.

Dan: Yes. The help desk is staffed by experienced Canon employees who can order parts, provide tracking information, and monitor machine data. All customer technicians will need is this dedicated line; so need to call around to different parts of the business to get the help they need.

What internal changes at Canon were necessary to make these programs possible?

Dan: We did a lot of preparation to ensure the program was right before launch. In terms of tools and technology, we developed a brand new API that connects the machine UI to its host systems, which allows our help desk to monitor machine data, process part requests, and proactively offer efficiency improvements. This API eliminates many manual tasks for customer technicians. Additionally, new systems were built for shared customer site stock kits for maintenance and high-use parts, with Canon retaining ownership of these parts under the service program.

Melody: This is also a cultural shift here at Canon. We’d had certain processes for a long time, but it’s also important to reevaluate those processes if they’re not providing the best possible service for the customer.



How is the pilot program going? What lessons have been learned so far?

Dan: It’s going great. Our pilot partners have reported increased uptime and increased productivity, in some cases significant increases. The flexibility of having an on-site technician who is empowered to address issues immediately has increased these customers’ self-sufficiency. We’ve also had very positive reports about the level of investment customers are seeing from their operators; understanding how to fix equipment oneself is leading to a greater sense of ownership over the press and the work, and that’s a win-win for everyone involved.

Melody: Customers who are involved in the pilot can and do still engage Canon on more complex issues, but we’re seeing fewer calls for lower-level issues. This tells us that the program is working as intended.

Where can Canon customers who are interested in one of the new service programs get more information?

Dan: Customers with in-house technical staff who are capable of supporting equipment — think intermediate to advanced operators — are good candidates for the shared service model.

Melody: Customers who want to learn more can reach out to their Canon sales representative, who can begin the qualification process.



DAN PRZISLICKI



“These programs are designed to foster a partnership rather than a transactional service agreement, giving both Canon and the customer ownership in maintaining the equipment.”

ahead25

On Demand | REPLAY
WATCH THE REPLAY

of the thINK Ahead 2025
Canon Service Innovations session.

thINKForum.com/online-learning
/canon-service-innovations

Get to know your thINK Board at [thinkForum.com/member-directory](https://thinkforum.com/member-directory)



Taking a larger role in thINK as a Board member and in the planning of the event is a privilege for me, because I believe in this community.

What was your favorite session at this year’s event?

Don’t make me choose! There were so many fantastic sessions. Of course, multiple sessions this year addressed AI and how print service providers are using it for everything from response optimization to custom AI agents. I also really enjoyed the panel on counterintuitive ways to reduce admin costs.

Really, though, the Partner Pavilion has to be my favorite part. Seeing all these end-to-end solution providers in one place just gives you so many ideas about how to maximize your equipment investment. Between the sessions and the Partner Pavilion, thINK Ahead always gets my wheels turning, and this year was no different.

What do you have planned for thINK Ahead 2026?

It’s top secret! What I can say is that planning begins early. It takes a lot of hard work and collaboration to make thINK Ahead the successful event we all know and love. And the Board loves input from thINK members, so if you have suggestions for speakers or sessions, let us know.





Boca Royale

FUN FACT

You can thank Eric Hollingsworth for this year’s Boca Royale themed party — it was his idea!

WHAT ERIC HOLLINGSWORTH THINKS ABOUT thINK AHEAD



Eric Hollingsworth is Vice President of Operations at RevSpring, a transactional mail service provider based in Nashville that specializes in financial communications for healthcare organizations. He’s also a Director of the thINK Board, and, as the thINK 2025 Conference Chair, he played a big part in making thINK Ahead 2025 happen. We spoke with Eric about this year’s event.

How many thINK Ahead conferences have you attended?

This year was my seventh thINK Ahead. While the conference has grown each year and we’re always welcoming new thINK members, what stands out to me most is actually the consistency of the community. This is an event where I know I can look forward to seeing my industry peers — many of whom have now become good friends — and coming together each year in person allows me to witness their businesses grow and evolve over time.

What’s the best part of seeing the annual conference come to life?

Without a doubt, it’s the people. Being able to learn from other people who are in the same boat — to ask, “What have you tried? What worked for you?” We’re certainly not facing the same challenges we were seven years ago when I attended my first thINK Ahead, but I know I have a good group of people to turn to no matter what challenges the industry throws our way, because we’ve helped each other in the past.



Save the Date

JULY 13–15, 2026 | BOCA RATON, FL



“Exhilarating, informative, inspiring.”



“Wonderful community to be plugged in to.”



“It’s my favorite show of the year.”



Sample the 2025 sessions and hear what attendees had to say.
[thinkForum.com/attend](https://thinkforum.com/attend)



Canon

PURSUE OPPORTUNITY

LEAD FROM STRENGTH

Confidently go after today’s high-end, in-demand applications with the **Canon ColorStream 8000 series** web-fed inkjet platform. Its classic strengths—designed for uninterrupted productivity, cost efficiency, expansive media range, and stunning print quality—also help drive adaptability and the flexibility to pursue creative new opportunities in emerging markets.

MOVE FORWARD WITH CANON
[CANONPRODUCTIONPRINT.COM/PURSUE](https://canonproductionprint.com/pursue)



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5 QUESTIONS WITH UNIVERSAL MAILING SERVICE



An Interview with Mike Maroney, Jr.
Owner, Universal Mailing Service

We sat down with Mike Maroney Jr. of Universal Mailing Service, Inc. (UMS). Based in Piscataway, NJ, UMS has been a leader in direct mail for 47 years. They recently announced strategic investments in Canon production inkjet technology, including a Canon varioPRINT iX3200 sheetfed inkjet press.

Tell us about the evolution of your business over the last few years.

Around six years ago, we merged with Prompt Direct, which allowed us to expand our business and enhance our digital print capabilities. At the time, we were doing a lot of sheetfed laser on smaller equipment throughout the print facility. We would get letterheads printed from the outside, bring them in, and laser black ink on them.

After the merger, we invested in a Canon varioPRINT i300 sheetfed inkjet press. This enabled us to start keeping work in-house that we would have normally sent out. It just makes more sense to do it all in one shot; it's more affordable, it's more economic, and it's just a better solution.

But the jobs got bigger and bigger and we needed quicker turnarounds. That's why, earlier this year, we invested in the varioPRINT iX3200, and we're very glad we did. The 3200 was a no-brainer. We knew it was a good investment for us.

How has the business changed since you added the iX3200 earlier this year?

Not only can we deliver the product more quickly and more efficiently, but it's enabled us to produce print quality that offset printers are producing. We actually have a client that prefers inkjet to offset. In their particular case, one of their colors is much brighter, much more vibrant; it pops on the inkjet versus offset.

Quick turnarounds, high quality — what else sets UMS apart?

I think a lot of it is the team's customer service. You're only as good as the people that work for you; that's rule number one. We have a very, very good team. They're loyal, they've been with us a long time. They like helping the clients, and it just shows.



A lot of our clients have been with us for many years. One of our biggest clients has been with us for 30 years now, and they stay because they know we take care of them. That goes back to our customer service team and how supportive they are. We're always asking, "How do we make it better? What can we do to improve this? How do we make it more powerful, more meaningful?"

How have you cultivated that culture, especially with an acquisition?

When we bought Prompt Direct, we established some common practices and made sure people understood we were one company. But we also deliberately let it run as the two organizations did because we didn't want to make a lot of changes right away or upset clients. Over time, we started working together more and it worked well because Prompt had good people and good processes, as did Universal. Ultimately, we had the opportunity to cherry-pick solutions that were good for everybody.

What's the next big challenge you're trying to solve?

The postage rates going up has put restrictions on marketers, because typically their marketing budget does not go up year-over-year. So, if postage goes up 7%, that proportion of increase is likely to be taken out of the volume of mail.

Because of our equipment investments, even though we're not seeing an increase in mail volume, we're getting a bigger piece of the pie. Where we may have done 50,000 pieces that we weren't printing, we now have the opportunity to print and mail 45,000 pieces.

We're also enhancing our offering with digital integrations like IP targeting, and we're one of the biggest users of Informed Delivery with the Postal Service. We've embraced all the new postal technology, starting with the intelligent mail barcode and tracking. We were one of the first Seamless Acceptance partners in New Jersey.

We pride ourselves on our longstanding relationship with the Postal Service. I and others at UMS have served as Chair of the Postal Customer Council. If there are any issues or problems, I can get on the phone with somebody and normally get it taken care of. Little things like that count. You do it for the purpose of having the client satisfied.

The key is keeping the customer first and adding value. For example, we institutionalize a lot of our ongoing programs so that we can keep costs down and minimize touches. A customer file may be sent to us automatically, processed automatically, output to the production area automatically, and proofed automatically. It gets done a lot faster, but from a customer perspective, it's not just speed; it's cost. Something that may have cost hundreds of dollars and hours can now be done for a few dollars in minutes.

"The 3200 was a no-brainer. We knew it was a good investment for us."

MIKE MARONEY



"The key is keeping the customer first and adding value."

MIKE MARONEY



LEARN MORE ABOUT UMS

Find out more about Universal Mailing Service.

umsmail.com

INTEGRATING AI IN PRINT SERVICES: ESSENTIAL STEPS FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

How Print Service Providers Are Optimizing Operations, Estimating, and More

Recent thINK Academy workshops have covered how to select, implement, and leverage artificial intelligence (AI) tools for faster project bidding, streamlined client communications, and enhanced operational planning — all while ensuring data security. Here, we summarize insights from several thINK Academy facilitators.

Selecting the Right AI Tools for Your Print Business Tech Stack

AI tools are proliferating at a dizzying rate. Every time you turn around, a new AI software is knocking on your door, selling a service you’re not even sure you need. Meanwhile, your tried-and-true tools are rolling out AI “upgrades.” But how do you know which tools will actually help you — and which are simply an expensive waste of time?

Instead of starting with the solution, think about the problem. What are the specific business problems you need to solve?

Once you’re clear on the problem, audit your current tech stack for existing capabilities and evaluate options that require zero or minimal added investment. You may very well be paying for an AI feature you weren’t even aware of. If not, look to the market for AI tools to solve your problem. Either way, run a small pilot program with a clear goal, end date, and accountability, and only roll the solution out team-wide if the pilot is successful.

Key Questions for Evaluating AI Tools for Print Operations

- Does the tool directly solve your business problem?
- How will it impact existing workflows and tech stack?
- Can success be measured with clear metrics?
- Will your team actually use it?



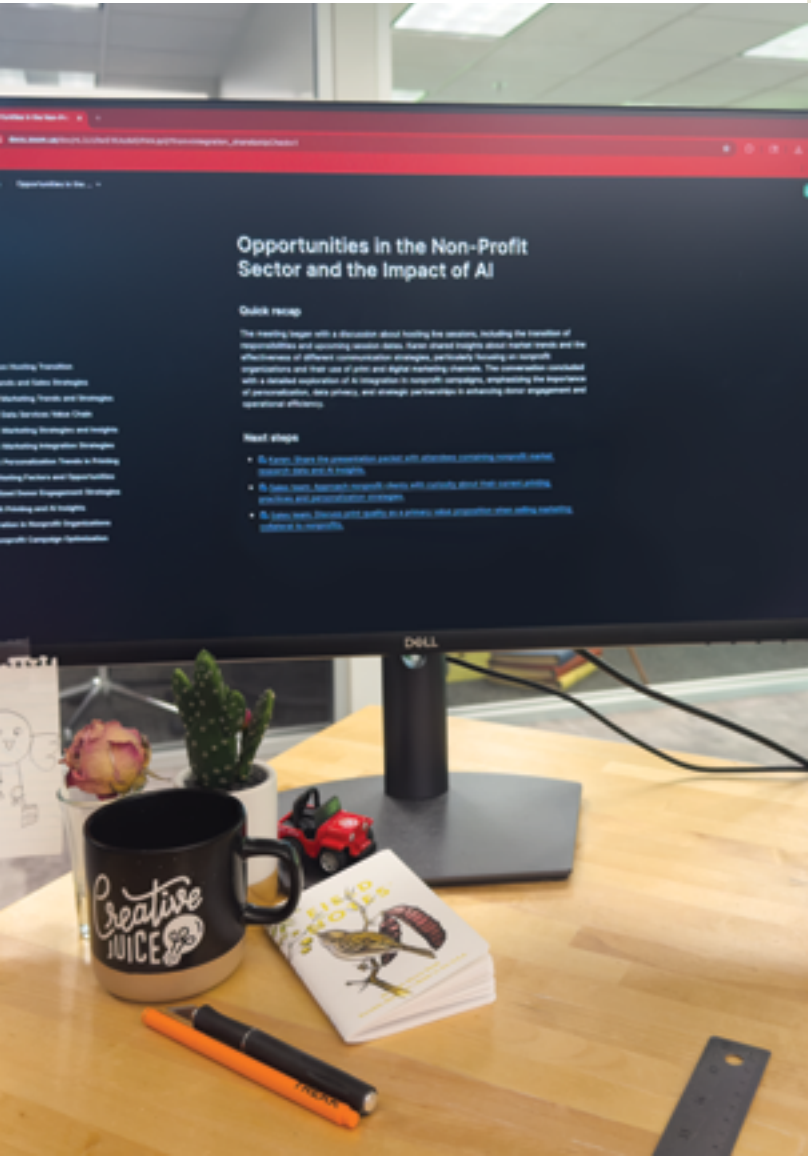
A Quick Win for Print Service Providers: Microsoft Copilot

One quick win for many print service providers is adopting Microsoft Copilot, which offers time saving potential for your sales, marketing, and customer success teams. If your business is a Microsoft shop, this AI assistant is already baked in, lowering the barrier to entry for employees who may be slower to adopt brand new tools — and helping them use the tools they have more efficiently.

Use Copilot to:

- Update prospect pitch decks in PowerPoint
- Draft blog posts and social posts in Word
- Summarize client email threads in Outlook
- Summarize meetings and next steps in Teams
- Run “what-if” scenarios for machine capacity, overtime planning, or paper inventory in Excel

With one helpful AI assistant and zero new software investments, you can accelerate print project acquisition and streamline client communications.



“We’re at an inflection point with AI right now. People call it the iPhone moment because it’s very apparent to a majority of the world that we’re turning to a new chapter with what is possible with technology.”

COLE MEDIN
TECHNOLOGY LEADER AND
ENTREPRENEUR | AI EDUCATOR
& CONTENT CREATOR |
FOUNDER OF DYNAMOUS AI

The Next Step: Enhancing Meeting Efficiency with AI Summarization

PSPs have a lot of meetings. From sales meetings with prospects to internal meetings to plan projects and align on priorities, there is a lot of communication happening each day, and it’s easy to miss important updates. This is where AI can help.

There are now built-in AI meeting summary and/or transcript features in most meeting software, including Zoom and Teams. Turn these on and reap the benefits of more efficient meetings and more in-sync teams.

If the native meeting summary features don’t meet your needs, consider a third-party notetaker like Otter.ai or Fireflies.ai. These sync with various meeting platforms and integrate with many CRMs. You may also want to consider a smart CRM that can “learn” from your meeting summaries and update your database accordingly.

**Next-Level Profitability:
AI-Powered Estimating**

AI is the modern estimator’s best friend. Estimators are using AI tools to standardize, templatize, and scale their processes for increased efficiency and greater profitability.

Try using AI tools to:

- Draft boilerplate content for frequently bid areas (e.g., vertical-specific, application-specific)
- Provide prompts for teams to customize proposals for specific clients or prospects
- Create charts or visualizations from complex ideas like timelines or cost options
- Continuously improve proposal templates by inputting feedback from proposals or bids

“Machine learning AI has so much data on everybody that it can predict what you want. It can predict your buying habits. It can predict whether you’ll scan a QR code or bring a coupon into a store.”

CHRIS WELLS
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT
DS GRAPHICS | UNIVERSAL WILDE

**Ensuring Data Security and Confidentiality
in AI Adoption for Print Service Providers**

PSPs are rightly concerned about data security and confidentiality, but that doesn’t mean AI tools should be completely ruled out or forbidden.

Remember that free AI tools are never free — you pay with your data. Make strategic investments in the tools that are right for your business, and properly vet them to be sure they aren’t training on your data and abide by the security protocols you’d expect any other vendor to follow.

Other best practices to keep in mind when rolling out AI tools to your team:

- Formalize an official review process for all AI tools used within the organization
- Create an AI policy that clearly communicates best practices or rules for everyone using the tools
- Create cheat sheets, set up “lunch and learns,” and maintain open communication regarding AI tool usage across the organization



**FOR MORE ON AI
ADOPTION IN PRINT**

think members can download the recent report *Artificial Intelligence in the Printing Industry: The Journey Begins*.

thinkForum.com/market-research