

thINK.



# FORWARD

INKJET NETWORKING AND KNOWLEDGE

FOURTH EDITION | 2025

## FILLING THE GAP

Canon's Michael Patrissi on the ideal applications for the new varioPRINT iX1700.

## NAVIGATING CHANGE

We spoke with Quantum Group on moving business forward during times of change.

## HOLIDAY PRINT INSPIRATION

Three distinct cards offer recipients nostalgia, interactivity, and a little something sweet.

## SAVE THE DATE

thINK Ahead 2026 will be here before we know it! If you're dreaming of warm weather, plan to join us in Boca Raton.

## PROFITABLE PRINT: 5 INDUSTRY TRENDS THAT WILL DRIVE VALUE IN 2026

Market trends are favorable for printers who want to stop chasing price-driven, high-volume commodity jobs and move toward delivering high-value, high-margin print.



## 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

Fellow thINK members,

Did you catch the demo of the Canon varioPRINT iX1700 at PRINTING United? If you were impressed with the speed and quality you saw, you won't want to miss our interview with Michael Patrissi, Technical Marketing, Product Manager at Canon. Michael pulled back the curtain on the product development that went into this press, how Canon's close customer relationships shaped that development, and what technological innovations might be coming next.

Speaking of the near future, 2026 is almost here and we've got the data on industry trends, from marketers' wish lists to emerging vertical opportunities. Flip to page 17 to get a jumpstart on next year's big ideas.

We love shining a light on thINK member success stories. This issue of thINK Forward features an interview with Cheryl Kahanec of Quantum Group, whose investment in Canon production inkjet has enabled them to differentiate on speed and service. I hope you're as inspired as I was by the way these thINK members are facing challenges head on, with grit and tenacity.

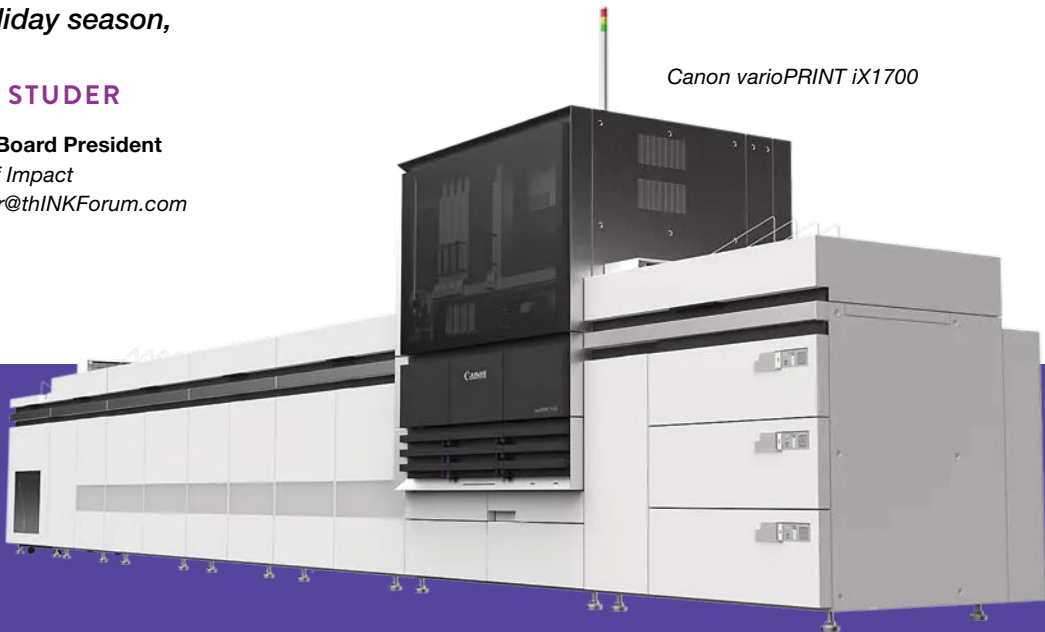
Finally, we take a closer look at a set of show-stopping holiday cards printed by Century Direct. Do you have a success story or innovative project we should know about? Email me so thINK can help spread the word.

With warm wishes this holiday season,



PETE STUDER

thINK Board President  
CEO of Impact  
pstuder@thINKForum.com



Canon varioPRINT iX1700

thINK FORWARD

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Project Spotlight

# HOW CLASSIC TREATS INSPIRED SOME VERY SWEET HOLIDAY WISHES

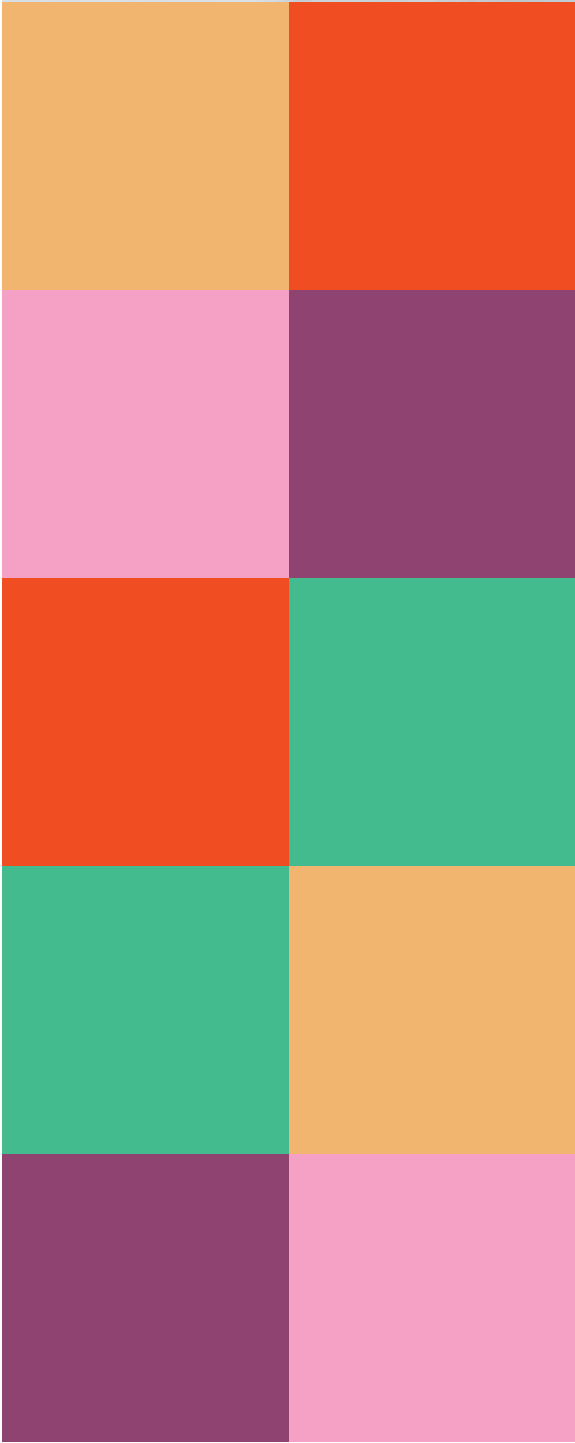
Nothing pairs better with the holiday season than a little something sweet. Hot chocolate, gingerbread houses, and festive cookies transport people back to childhood and holiday moments shared with family and friends. This nostalgic quality is exactly what Canon wanted to deliver with their annual holiday cards.

Printed by full-service direct mail marketing firm Century Direct, this year's Canon holiday cards stand out both in concept and execution. Utilizing augmented reality, specialty finishes, and unique folds, this year's cards prioritize interactivity and superior print quality to deliver a memorable seasonal greeting.

Printed on Canon's varioPRINT iX3200 sheetfed inkjet press, the three holiday cards are warm, elegant, and inviting. The combination of playful design with Canon's digital press technology proved the perfect pairing for some truly sweet holiday wishes.

**“The most unique part of this year’s Canon holiday card project was the packaging. We had to think beyond printing to create an experience that felt festive, professional, and giftable.”**

**YELENA CHAPKIS, CENTURY DIRECT**



## Card #1: Hot chocolate

The hot chocolate card features a QR code that launches an augmented reality experience, replicating the joy of enjoying a fresh cup of cocoa. The card's exterior uses soft, holiday-themed colors and illustrations of mugs filled with hot chocolate to whet the appetite for a truly unique AR experience inside.

The end result is a fun, immersive holiday message that demonstrates how incorporating digital elements into print can add a touch of whimsy and leave a lasting impression.



## The Details Hot Chocolate

Designer: Alyssa Watkins  
Agency: Trekk  
Paper: 100 lb. Silk Cover  
Standout feature: AR

**“With this year’s holiday cards, we wanted to bring some favorite holiday treats to life, and the hot chocolate card definitely accomplishes that with its whimsical design, bright colors, and interactive experience.”**

**MADISON BRUDI, TREKK**





**“When selecting paper for holiday cards, we focused on thickness, texture, and print compatibility. The stock needed to feel substantial and fold cleanly, while also working seamlessly with the press technology to produce sharp, vibrant color.”**

YELENA CHAPKIS

**Card #2: Gingerbread house**

Gingerbread is arguably the quintessential winter holiday treat. The gingerbread house design was perfectly suited for a die-cut finish, creating a flap on the front of the card that, when opened, reveals the holiday message. When selecting paper, it's essential to balance superior color quality with durability, especially when considering finishing techniques.

**Card #3: Holiday cookies**

Holiday cookies carry a nostalgic magic that instantly transports many people back to cherished moments from childhood and family gatherings. This transportive quality is heightened by the holiday cookie card, which emphasizes tactile, sensory appeal. Its retro design evokes a welcome return to the simple pleasures of holiday gatherings, creating a cozy vibe that warms the heart.

**“The silk cover stock was just the right balance of being soft to the touch with a subtle sheen that complemented the print quality of the Canon iX3200 press. It delivered vivid color without sacrificing usability, which is key for a product that blends design with personal interaction.”**

YELENA CHAPKIS



**The Details  
Gingerbread House**

Designer: Michael Wilson  
Agency: Trekk  
Paper: 100 lb. Silk Cover  
Standout feature: Die-cut



**The Details  
Holiday Cookies**

Designer: Aurelia Tauscher  
Agency: Trekk  
Paper: 100 lb. Silk Cover  
Standout feature: Offset Bifold





# Save the Date

JULY 13-15, 2026 | BOCA RATON, FL



think ahead

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# CANON'S MICHAEL PATRISSI ON REACTIONS TO THE varioPRINT iX1700

What generates the most excitement at the annual PRINTING United Expo? It's got to be the equipment demos.

Canon chose this year's expo for the global debut of the new Colorado XL-series, as well as to showcase new innovations like the Canon varioPRINT iX1700 sheetfed inkjet press.

We caught up with Michael Patrissi, Technical Marketing/Product Manager, on the show floor to learn more about the iX1700.



Tell us about the technological breakthroughs that made the varioPRINT iX1700 possible. What sets this press apart from its predecessors?

The varioPRINT iX1700 is a newly designed sheetfed press, built from the ground up, that incorporates innovative new Canon technology called Qualinx. Qualinx is the combination of many different Canon improvements, enhancements, and features designed to work together in a unique print process.

What problems was Canon trying to solve when designing this press?

There is a gap in the market between production toner presses like the imagePRESS and high-volume inkjet like the varioPRINT iX3200. The varioPRINT iX1700 was designed to fill this gap and help expand the adoption of high-quality inkjet to a broader range of print providers.



Which Canon customer segments stand to benefit most from the iX1700? Which applications do you see migrating to this press first?

The high quality of the varioPRINT iX1700 and its ability to print on a wide range of media makes it ideal for an expanded list of applications. Some of the first areas we see migrating are photo cards and books, as well as direct mail applications, which can leverage the larger 14.33" x 26" sheet size.

Where do you see the sweet spot in run length economics?

Average monthly print volumes for this press will fall in the range of 300K to 2M (LTR), making it ideal for competitive end-of-life replacements. Customers currently running several smaller volume presses will also be able to move into this one, versatile, automated engine.

What sustainability features were built into the design?

Many environmental aspects were considered in the iX1700 design. From the inclusion of recycled plastics and non-hazardous water-based inks to low power consumption, the iX1700 is built for the environmentally conscious customer and print buyer. The press also does not require any external exhaust or ventilation, allowing for a wider range of pressroom installation locations without the need for additional infrastructure.



Canon varioPRINT iX1700

**iF DESIGN AWARD 2025**  
The varioPRINT iX1700 was recently recognized with the internationally renowned iF Design Award. This award highlights the varioPRINT iX1700's design and innovation towards the future.







### For customers who may want to add an iX1700 to their fleet and are thinking about the long-term investment, is the platform designed to be upgradable with new inks, heads, or automation?

With advances in automation, Canon will continue to offer new solutions and technologies through PRISMAsync, the digital front end that drives the varioPRINT iX1700. On the base engine, there are also plans to include finishing options in the future.

### How are installs going?

The varioPRINT iX1700 will be generally available to the market in the first half of 2026. Canon has strategic customer trial installations underway and will be ramping up with even more locations in the months ahead. We have been excited by the positive feedback and seeing these presses in a production environment.

### What has been most surprising about the rollout so far?

Here at PRINTING United Expo, it's been encouraging to see so many positive customer reactions to the press. Many have been impressed by the larger sheet size, while others are intrigued by the no-exhaust ventilation. But what stands out the most is when customers tell us, "This is exactly what I've been looking for."



**"The high quality of the varioPRINT iX1700 and its ability to print on a wide range of media makes it ideal for an expanded list of applications."**

**MICHAEL PATRISSI**

## The varioPRINT iX1700 at a glance

### Quality

2400 x 1200 dpi  
high-definition print head

### Speed

Up to 165/73 ipm LTR/B3 size

### Sheet Size

Up to 14.33" x 26" from any tray

### Media Support

Up to 24pt  
Coated and uncoated media

### Sustainability

No ozone operating emissions  
No exhaust ventilation



Learn more about the new varioPRINT iX1700 sheetfed inkjet press.  
[usa.canon.com/business/products/production-printing/varioprint-ix1700](https://usa.canon.com/business/products/production-printing/varioprint-ix1700)





## Customer Spotlight

# THE NEXT RIGHT THING: AN INTERVIEW WITH CHERYL KAHANEC, CEO OF QUANTUM GROUP

With over three decades of history, Quantum Group has experienced virtually everything the print world has to offer — the changes, the evolutions, the pitfalls, and the possibilities. This depth of experience is part of what makes Quantum's Chief Executive Officer, Cheryl Kahanec, confident that the company can embrace whatever the future of print holds.

Cheryl recently talked with us about the changes in the print industry over the past decade, where she sees print headed, and why it's essential for printers to work as strategic partners.

### What are some of the current trends in print right now?

From a 50,000-foot view, the industry is in an odd place right now — it's a place of massive change. Inkjet print technology has changed the world — we can combine high-speed, roll-fed devices with automated finishing with very few interventions, and we can personalize pieces very quickly. So the technology is there and we're extremely prepared to print a variety of projects, from books to direct mail.

At the same time, customer demand is changing. People aren't buying large, bulk work and then finishing it — this has to happen in a single process at a single time, and it has to happen immediately. We're also in a time of great indecision, and that can make it difficult to create long-term relationships.

### How is Quantum navigating the current state of the print industry?

Perhaps now more than ever, price, quality, and schedule are linked, and that hasn't always been the case. We're prioritizing quickness and versatility. We've prided ourselves on being able to produce a lot of different things. We're not thinking five years down the road anymore — we're thinking about the next few months. That changes a lot. It changes how you look at capital expenditures, it changes your approach to process, and it changes the conversation you have with clients, because they're dealing with similar changes. For the first time, we're all in the same boat.

It also means people are ordering less but there are more people ordering, and that makes every job different.



Quantum Group's fleet of production print technology includes a Canon ProStream 1800 web-fed inkjet press, a Canon imagePRESS V900 series cutsheet color press, and a full suite of finishing equipment.

### What are some of the more impactful projects you've been able to create using a Canon press?

Canon presses have opened up some unique opportunities for us — for example, the ability to run jobs on a heavier coated stock, which helps us create really amazing images. In-line finishing capability has helped us develop our direct mail offers, particularly with postcards and self-mailers.

It's also opened up the opportunity for more book publishing work. With our ProStream, we can print the inside pages on one stock and the cover on another stock without sacrificing quality or consistency. Being able to do the book block itself and then coat and add the cover has been a real advantage for us.

I don't think there's a scenario where we wouldn't recommend using our ProStream, provided it makes sense for the customer and their project.







**What do you think the print industry will look like during the next 5 years?**

I think we're going to see more and more automation driven by AI. I think we're also going to see more and more localization. That's something we haven't really seen before and something that makes total sense. With postage and transportation costs, I think we're going to see product that is made and delivered locally, and that's not something the print space is used to. It's something that we're going to have to figure out, but it's something we're really excited about.

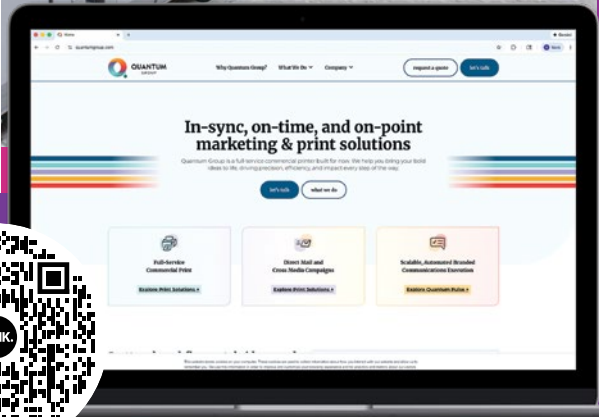
**What do you hope customers take away from working with Quantum?**

I hope they see that we're a high-quality printer that cares about what we do. I hope that when they partner with us they know we're gonna take care of them and their project. We get involved very early in the print process. We're a true partner that will help advise clients if they start going down the wrong road. We build long-term partnerships that will help our clients make the best decision for their needs.

The world is changing, right? With Quantum, you get an entire team focused on helping you discover the right thing to do and the steps that are required to do that right thing. I think that's the kind of relationship customers are looking for today.

**"I don't think there's a scenario where we wouldn't recommend using our ProStream, provided it makes sense for the customer and their project."**

**CHERYL KAHANEC**



**LEARN MORE ABOUT QUANTUM GROUP**

[quantumgroup.com](https://quantumgroup.com)



Cheryl Kahanec, CEO of Quantum Group, is an industry recognized expert in digital technology and solutions as well as frequent speaker who has been featured and quoted in many leading industry publications.



# PROFITABLE PRINT: 5 INDUSTRY TRENDS THAT WILL DRIVE VALUE IN 2026

Fortunately, market trends are favorable for printers who want to stop chasing price-driven, high-volume commodity jobs and move toward delivering high-value, high-margin print. Here's how you can leverage these five trends to capture more of your customers' marketing and communication budgets in 2026.

## Catalogs Are Back, and They're Here to Stay

Many of us have been celebrating the comeback of the catalog. Large retailers like Amazon, luxury brands like Neiman Marcus and RH (formerly Restoration Hardware), and high-end lifestyle brands like Parachute Home and Schoolhouse have all doubled down on print catalogs in recent years. In fact, the RH catalog, which the brand calls its "Sourcebook" can easily run 300-400 pages, and the company treats the release of each new Sourcebook as a major PR event.

But catalogs are not just back; they're growing. Keypoint Intelligence data projects an 11.2% CAGR for full-color digital catalog applications from 2019 to 2029. We can expect continued growth, especially from premium brands that want to offer a tactile, curated experience.

And catalogs are not the only promotional print application experiencing growth; brochures and direct mail are also growing, in part because marketers have seen how effective they are at not only driving conversions but also lifting response rates on digital channels.

The 2024 Customer Communications Experience Consumer Survey from Keypoint Intelligence found that 70% of consumers ages 18–26 and 62% of consumers ages 27–68 said that receiving direct mail or a catalog from

Profitability in print is no longer about volume; it's about value. The formula for moving from commodity printer to strategic partner is simple: to create more value for your business, start by adding more value for your customers.



## How Premium Brands Are Reinventing the Catalog

- The editorial look and feel.**  
Brands are embracing the magalog — part magazine, part catalog. Featuring editorial-style photography and an emphasis on storytelling over product specs, the goal is to create something the recipient will want to keep longer and return to often.
- Special editions.**  
One-off summer, holiday, and back-to-school "issues" that depart in small ways from the regular catalog capitalize on the brand's biggest season — and stand out in the mailbox.
- Limited access.**  
Taking their cue from luxury brands, marketers are experimenting with invitation-only catalogs, which provide a feeling of exclusivity for the customer and help sales teams nurture relationships.



a brand makes them more likely to open a marketing email from that same brand. And by tracking interactions via QR codes, PURLs, and unique promo codes, it's easier than ever for marketers to prove that ROI. Printers who can help brands streamline mailing logistics while personalizing catalog content stand to win recurring catalog business.

## Print Buyers Want Shorter Runs of Uber-Targeted Pieces

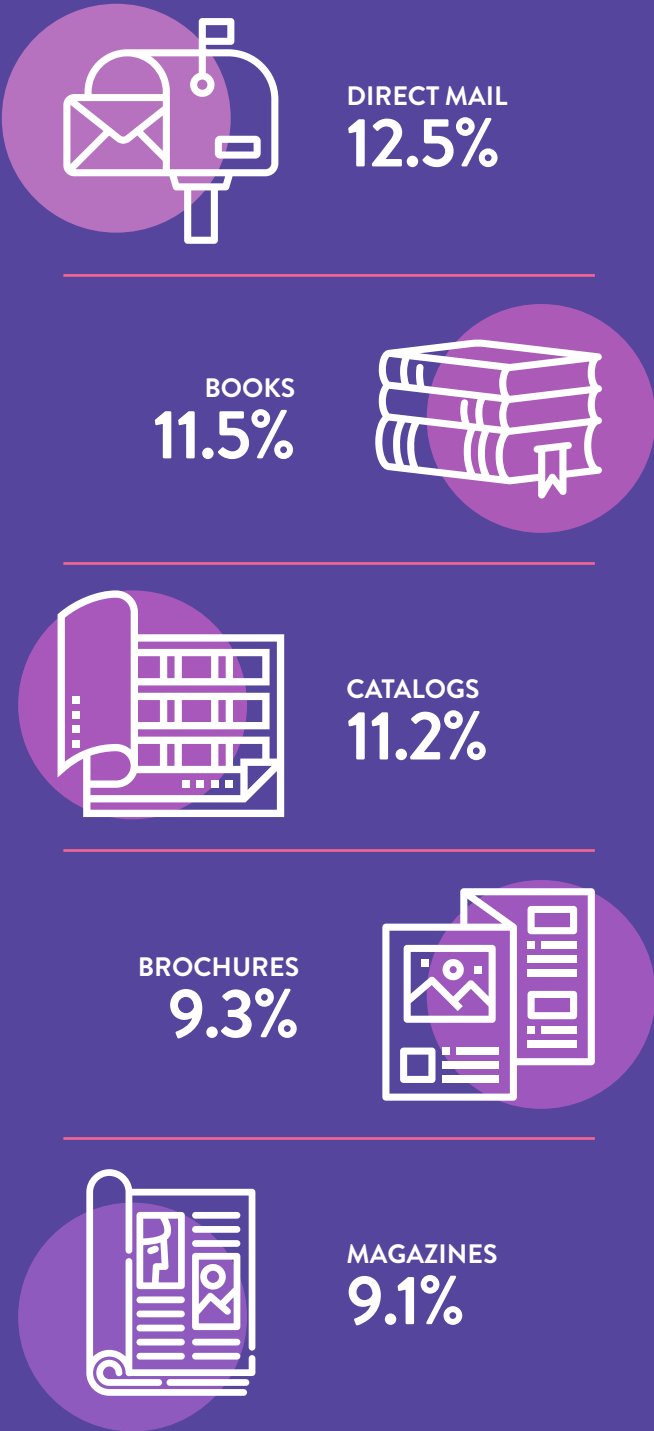
The shift from volume to value is on the minds of many printers, and it's also on the minds of brand marketers and print buyers. The confluence of factors driving this trend includes:

- Today's CRM platforms enable marketers to segment their audiences, strategically hone their lists, and target with precision.
- Sustainability initiatives are leading many consumer brands to minimize waste by printing only what they need, when they need it.
- Marketers are under immense pressure to prove the effectiveness of their campaigns and the necessity of their spend, leading many to care more about conversions than impressions.

Most importantly, advances in sheet-fed and continuous-feed inkjet have finally made it possible to do the kind of short-run printing for high-coverage color jobs that was simply not a cost-effective option in the past.

# HIGH-GROWTH APPLICATIONS TO WATCH

Color Digital Print Application  
Projected CAGR 2019–2029



2025 Color Digital Print Applications  
Forecast, Keypoint Intelligence



The opportunity for printers is to position themselves as strategic partners who can offer advanced personalization, flexible print programs, and data-driven experimentation. Today's marketers are more likely to invest in several short runs where they can constantly iterate, testing creatives, messaging, and incentives to see what drives response rates. Print service providers who have invested in digital inkjet can provide the "test lab" — and be the strategic partner — these marketers are looking for.

### The Focus Is on Finishing

Shorter runs mean print buyers are looking to maximize the impact of every single piece, and finishing is how you can help them do it.

This is good news for printers, because high-impact, emotionally resonant print pieces command higher prices. The demand for experience-driven print means premium finishing has become a differentiator, especially for printers who have invested in automated, in-line finishing equipment.

Brands that invest in promotional print in 2026 will be looking to cut through digital noise and establish a tactile

connection with their audience, so think about heavier paper weights, textured coatings, standout binding techniques, unique folds, and eye-catching foils.

The interest in premium finishings extends well beyond promotional print applications. Take book publishing, where publishers are looking to book manufacturers to help them create products that justify retail prices, when the alternatives are cheaper e-books, cheaper audiobooks, and "free" digital entertainment. Print books with visual and tactile quality signals — soft-touch laminate covers, embossed titles, or layflat binding, for example — have a higher perceived value than those without.

Many publishers are also experimenting with limited-run special editions of high-performing books; these limited editions then become collectibles that garner even higher prices.

Photo applications are also benefitting from this trend, where focusing on the fine details can transform a product into a treasured keepsake for the customer — and a higher-margin job for the printer.

### Print + Generative AI = The Most Interactive Print Yet

We stand on the forefront of a vast frontier of experimentation when it comes to print and generative AI integration. For printers who are willing to dive into this emerging technology, the payoff can be worth it.

In the last year, we've seen campaigns that use generative AI in not just creative ways but in ways that truly add value. Some examples:

- Generative AI features built into web-to-print portals that assist print buyers in creating and ordering new campaigns.
- Postcards that encourage recipients to chat with an AI assistant to get more product or service information.
- Catalogs that drive users to speak with an AI service rep that can guide them through their purchase decisions.

While many printers have focused on using AI to find sales, service, and operational efficiencies, its potential for campaign integration is huge — and largely untapped. Forward-thinking print leaders can experiment with AI-enabled web-to-print and QR-to-chat campaigns now, while competition is minimal.

### Large Format Is Getting Even Larger

Another category experiencing major growth and innovation is large format. In the large format sector, we're seeing:

- Even bigger surfaces, made possible by hybrid roll-to-flatbed devices
- A widening range of textile and soft-signage applications for retail and interior design
- Experiential print that includes custom/ bespoke signage and integrates AR, QR codes, and lighting for event applications

As new equipment like the Canon Colorado XL-series expands the possibilities for print widths, large format has evolved from banners to truly immersive brand experiences.

**70% of consumers ages 18–26 and 62% of consumers ages 27–68 said that receiving direct mail or a catalog from a brand makes them more likely to open a marketing email from that same brand.**

CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS  
EXPERIENCE CONSUMER SURVEY,  
KEYPOINT INTELLIGENCE, 2024

### The Takeaway: Follow the Value While Embracing Experimentation

The opportunity horizon in 2026 paints a clear picture: value over volume, and experimentation over certainty. Whether it's a 400-page special-edition catalog or an AI voice chat-enabled direct mail campaign, the printers who drive the most value in the coming years will be those who work with their customers to co-create experiences. Profitable print in 2026 isn't about doing more — it's about helping your customers make meaningful change.

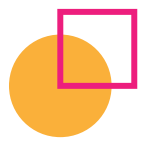


**WANT MORE ON 2026  
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As an online gathering space for graphic designers and print industry professionals, Dots + Pixels offers practical guidance and best practices for digital inkjet design and printing.

With a wide array of how-to articles and in-depth explorations of the latest inkjet topics, Dots + Pixels is the go-to destination for designers looking to discover, learn, and hone their craft. Designers can even submit their digital inkjet projects to be showcased on the site.

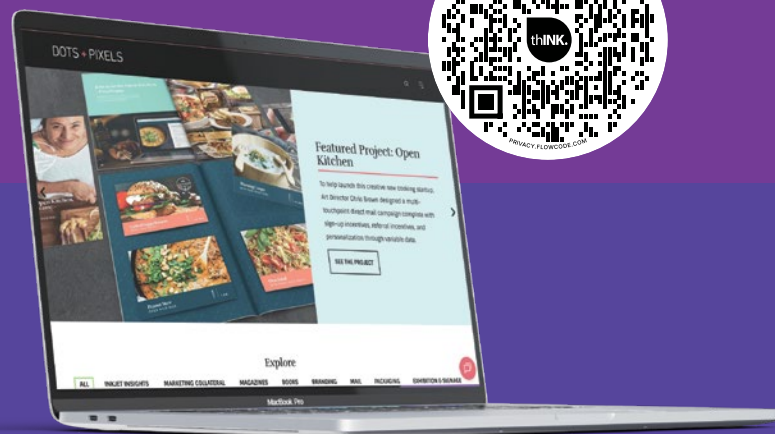
**Dots + Pixels is the only community dedicated specifically to inkjet print design, proudly brought to you by [think](https://think.com).**



**A Multi-Piece Print Campaign**



**A Personal Journal and Planner**



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

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**think.**

We hope you have a joyful holiday season surrounded by family and friends, and we wish you the best for a healthy and prosperous 2026!

Your think Board