



6770 NW Century Blvd.
Hillsboro, OR 97124
T: 503.641.5367
F: 503.643.2209

Streamlining Print and Inventory Management with Web-Based Fulfillment Systems

The term “supply chain management” has been bouncing around offices throughout the business world for years. Until recently, those conversations generally centered on consolidating the materials providers a company would use to manufacture its products. Today, as business documents and marketing materials have become more complex and numerous to support segmented marketing and other business practices, the concept of supply chain management is increasingly being applied to printing. And thanks to technology and the power of the Internet, web-based fulfillment systems are making it more possible and powerful than ever.

What Are Streamlined Print and Inventory Management?

Streamlined print and inventory management is the ability to partner with only one vendor for all your needs—in a scalable manner. Why is this so important? Because the fewer the vendors you use, the easier it is for you to manage, the more cost-effective it is, and the less room there is for error.

Easier Management—Many hands touch each one of your printed pieces during their production lifecycles. When those hands are all under one roof, you only have one call to make—no matter what you need. And the more complex or numerous your printed materials or initiatives, the more those extra phone calls and logistics add up.

More Cost-Effective—When there are multiple vendors involved in one project, you can bet there are multiple layers of markup—each vendor needs to make money on the project. Pretty soon, those markups have snowballed and you’re paying much more than you need to.

Plus, when you’re one of many small clients to multiple vendors, you often get a lower level of service than when you’re an important, valuable client to one partner who appreciates your business.

Less Room for Error—Like we all learned from the childhood game of “Telephone,” the more times a message is passed along, the more room there is for error. If you have three vendors working on printing, kitting and shipping your project, you’ve got three exponential opportunities for errors to be made in information, instructions, and transportation—resulting in missed project needs.

What Does a Web-Based System Do?

Your web-based fulfillment and inventory management system is an extremely powerful business tool. It provides a single, easy-to-access and user-friendly interface for managing your inventory of printed materials, placing orders to replenish materials based on preset minimum or maximum inventory levels, submitting requests to kit and distribute custom packages, and even analyzing your usage and inventories.

Key features of a good fulfillment system include:



6770 NW Century Blvd.
Hillsboro, OR 97124
T: 503.641.5367
F: 503.643.2209

Multiple Authority Levels—Systems typically provide three primary levels of access: Administrators, Publishers and Users. Administrators have complete autonomy to assign access, edit, post, access or otherwise control information anywhere on the system; Publishers have the ability to edit, post or simply access information and are limited only to the areas of the system to which an administrator has granted them rights; and Users can only access information without making edits or posting. Users are also limited to areas of the system to which an administrator has granted them rights. Administrators may grant various access rights within the system to both publishers and users based upon the needs of their organization or department.

For example, a Marketing Director may be the Administrator for her department. She might only authorize her assistant, a User, to order letterhead to keep the office supply stocked, while authorizing her Associate Director, a Publisher, to place orders for brochure reprints when inventory is low and to make edits to all Marketing department documents. All three parties in this example may only have access rights to marketing areas of the system. Additionally, the VP of Finance is the administrator over the entire system and has chosen to set up administrators, such as the Marketing Director, for each department.

Reporting Capabilities—A great fulfillment system offers the system administrator a wide range of custom reports that analyze inventory, ordering practices, and more. One report may summarize total number of items ordered in a month, while another may show which branch office is using the most materials. Great reporting capabilities allow you to see clearly into your own business through analyzed data your own internal systems often can't provide. This level of information is critical to making intelligent and informed business decisions.

Where Does the ROI Come From?

Implementing a strong web-based fulfillment system offers immediate and significant return on investment by streamlining operations and eliminating unnecessary hard and soft costs.

Reduce Hard Costs—Anytime you need a warehouse space to house your inventory, you've got an unproductive fixed cost on your hands. By utilizing a vendor-provided fulfillment warehouse, you can reduce your expenses by turning a fixed cost into a smaller variable cost.

Reduce Soft Costs—Significant soft costs, particularly in human resources, can be avoided using a web-based fulfillment system. Instead of employing a team of folks to manage a warehouse, staff a receiving center, or manage shipping, you can rely on a team of experienced fulfillment professionals to carry out your instructions on-demand.

And most importantly, it lets you get back to doing what you and your people do best—running your business—instead of entering the warehousing and fulfillment business. For instance, the last thing any successful business needs is its talented marketing, training, HR or sales teams assembling and shipping packages.

Nearly every printing company today claims to offer “fulfillment services.” Take advantage of this capability, but choose wisely. Be sure the partner you select offers a comprehensive and robust web-based system that will be the business solution you need to make your life easier, streamline your operations and reduce costs.