



FOCUS PAPER

A closer look at Web-to-Print: What companies need to be aware of

Web-to-Print Part I

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Web-to-Print is becoming increasingly popular in the marketing departments of companies. They save on media production costs, speed up their processes and increase the quality of produced media. How exactly companies benefit from Web-to-Print and which criteria need to be considered when deciding in favor of a Web-to-Print system, are the topic of this focus paper.

Web-to-Print, "from the net to the printing machine", describes a process using modern information technology to achieve dramatic increases in efficiency when generating printed products: layouts no longer need to be created manually by experts, but can be designed professionally by marketing staff by mouse click. From a technological point of view, the Web-to-Print process always follows the same principle: based on a more or less optional layout which is usually designed conventionally by an agency in Adobe® InDesign® or QuarkXPress®, the system user, who is generally not skilled in layout programs, can generate professional printed matter via the web user surface, resulting in a print-ready file with professional layout. The data output usually includes a preview PDF file at lower resolution or a preview image, as well as data sets for Internet publishing.

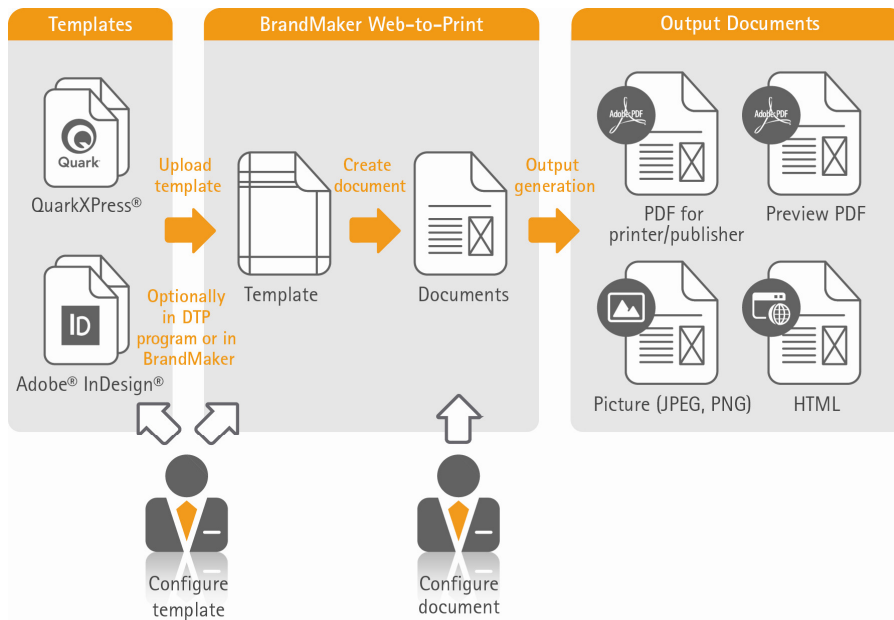


Figure: The Web-to-Print process using the BrandMaker System as example

Web-to-Print generally provides savings potentials when a larger volume of individual printed matter, based on a similar layout, is to be created. This is usually the case in decentralized communications structures, e.g. trade marketing, branch and franchise networks, or in companies with widely spread subsidiaries or branches. The brand and CI (corporate

identity) specifications form a communications umbrella for the external company image. Nonetheless, the decentralized business units must be given the opportunity of adapting their print materials to local requirements, e.g. for prices, product focus or just simply for address purposes.

Typical uses

Web-to-Print is employed in various ways in marketing. The following describes some of the more important uses:

- **Marketing materials**

Ads, inserts, flyers or brochures can be adapted via mouse click in Web-to-Print. The advantage: The central marketing organization specifies the CI-conform framework for communications and the usually decentralized media users such as dealers, subsidiaries, franchises etc. are free to proceed with individual adaptations. Thus they can generate special offers, product photos and copy according to their needs via a simple entry mask, and receive a print-ready file generated directly by the system. Manual layouts with unsuitable Office programs, typesetting via local agencies, printers or publishers and the tedious checking for CI-conformity, are thus eliminated completely.

- **Company stationery**

Company stationery includes print materials such as business cards, letterheads, stamps and door plates. These must conform to the global CI requirements and yet allow room for individual information. Using Web-to-Print, each employee can generate and order company stationery via the Intranet. Company users can configure their own stationery and the suppliers are provided with the print-ready file and ordering data by the system. In addition, Web-to-Print can also be used to generate company stationery for decentralized units: employees in branches can configure their individual POS materials, such as displays, window stickers, signs and other materials by mouse click. By using this type of self-service system one not only saves typesetting costs for the print materials, but also a large proportion of administrative effort within the company.

- **Sales materials**

Based on the layouts, the sales staff can create their own professional sales materials by using Web-to-Print. This can for example help to ensure that all quotations have the same structure and layout – only the contents are adapted for each case.

- **Mailings**

If the Web-to-Print software used offers facilities for uploading CRM data or for linking to CRM systems, the marketing staff and those responsible for marketing in the decentralized units can create personalized print mailings via the Web-Interface without requiring external help. The print-ready data can be sent directly to the letter shop.

- **Catalogs**

Extensive publications, such as catalogs, can also be realized using Web-to-Print and based on existing layouts. Rules are also stored which determine how the contents (e.g. provided via the ERP system) are to be generated automatically. Manual editing is performed via a web user interface without requiring additional layout work.

Savings with Web-to-Print?

The savings potentials soon become obvious when one compares a conventional process for creating an ad with the Web-to-Print process. In this example head office provides their dealers with a key visual for adaptation and local booking.

The ad generation process without Web-to-Print: considerable effort, poor CI control

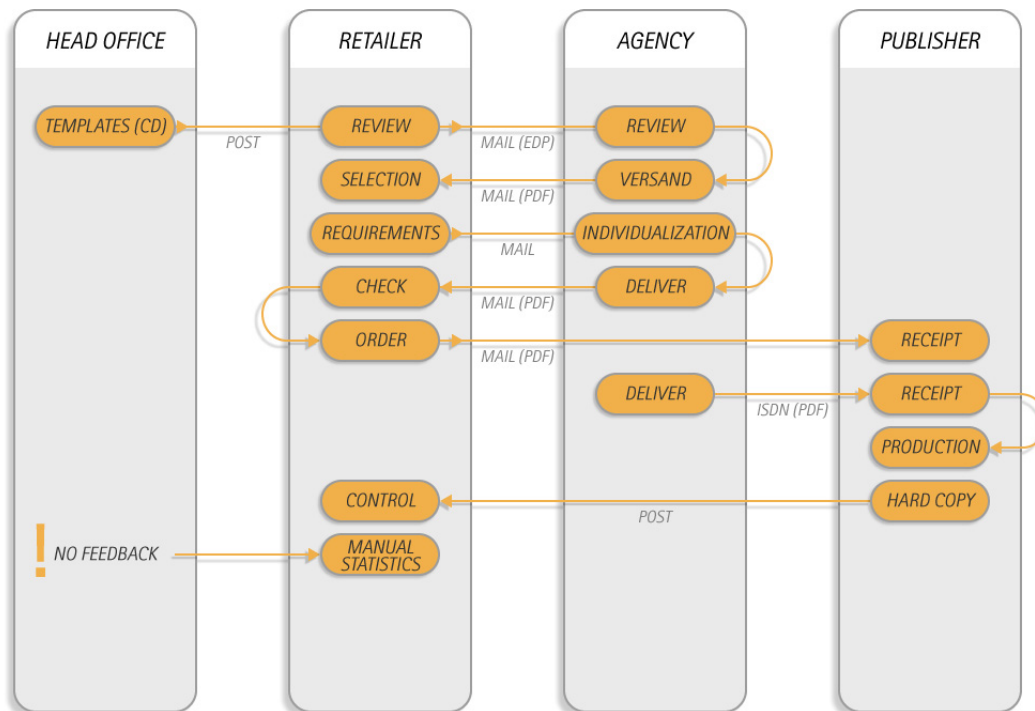


Figure: Local adaptation of company key visuals without Web-to-Print

The ads created by head office are sent to the local dealers for viewing and selection, without using a brand management or Web-to-print system. Viewing alone often requires involving a local ad agency as the visuals are stored in EDP formats (QuarkXPress®, Adobe® InDesign®) and cannot be viewed on the dealer’s computer. The agency converts the visuals into files for viewing, usually a PDF file, and only then can the ads be selected.

As a next step, the dealer adds his comments for adaptation to the PDF, generally handwritten, and passes them on to the agency. After a further checking cycle the ad can then be booked. The agency has to send the print data to the publisher in parallel.

Once the ad has appeared the dealer receives a voucher copy as proof, but head office has no idea which visuals were actually used, nor if these ads complied to CI guidelines

The ad generation process with Web-to-Print: faster, less expensive and quality-assured

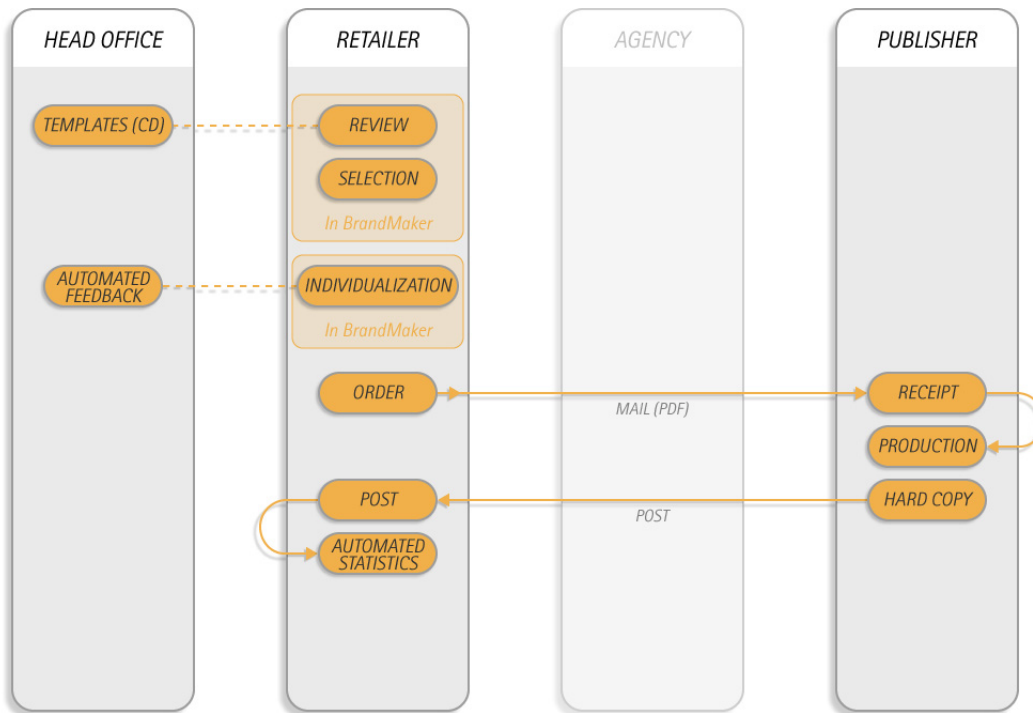


Figure: The Web-to-Print system optimizes the process, increases efficiency and assures quality

If a company uses a central marketing platform with Web-to-Print, it shortens the process times for ad generation to booking of adapted advertisements quite considerably. At the same time, costs for type-setting are eliminated completely and the quality of the results is assured in terms of CI-conformity.

Head office enters the ad layouts into the system, accompanied by rules as to which elements of the ad may be adapted by the dealers, and which elements may not be changed. Entry into the system is usually handled by the agencies or media service providers on behalf of head office, so that the relevant layouts need only be approved there. Following approval, the ads can be viewed by the local dealer via the marketing platform and used. Adaptation of the ad is then simply handled by the system: The result is a print-ready file which is for-warded directly to the publisher for printing. At the same time, head office can call up statistics which give information on which visuals were used by the dealers and do not need to engage in checking for CI-conformity, as the system only generates CI-conform media

Assuming that head office works with 200 dealers and the costs for adapting an ad without Web-to-Print amount to 100 Euros, and that 12 visuals are used over the period of a year, then the costs for typesetting alone amount to 240,000 Euros. These costs are eliminated entirely when using Web-to-Print, and costs for couriers and other communication necessary without system support are not even taken into account here. Instead of 200 manually processed individual adaptations of an ad, Web-to-Print requires only uploading and configuring of the ad files once in terms of possible modifications.

How are the ads entered into the system?

One area where Web-to-Print systems can differ considerably is the way in which the ad files are entered and "configured" in the platform. "Configuring" means to determine the characteristics or properties of a file with regard to later editing by the user. This includes determining whether pictures and copy can be changed, whether there are precisely defined alternatives and so on. Some systems require services by the system provider who at the same time acts as provider for the file configuration: Files generated in Adobe® InDesign® or QuarkXPress® are "converted" by the system provider into own formats and then entered into the system. Depending on the volume of files, this can add up to considerable extra costs for the company.

Other systems offer facilities whereby the files can be entered into the system by the customers or their service providers without additional programming. Files generated in QuarkXPress® and/or InDesign® are loaded into the system where they are supplemented with the required rules. To make this process as simple as possible for users is the task of the software and its user interface. In the case of the BrandMaker Web-to-Print module Media Management, which allows uploading of files without additional programming, a training course of two days maximum is sufficient to train the relevant company employees or their service providers on how to configure ad files.

Check list – determining requirements and finding the optimum solution

For a marketing organization to reap optimum results from Web-to-Print, it is important to analyze the underlying requirements for the platform in great detail. The following check list covers the most important criteria which need to be considered when selecting a Web-to-Print system and gives an initial guide as to what is important:

- **Software**
Should standardized software be used or should a tailor-made solution be implemented? Can a modular system solution cover requirements?
- **Customizing and adaptation**
Which adaptations are required and how flexible needs the service provider to be? Is less customizing required or are major adaptations going to be necessary?
- **Scalability**
How scalable should the Web-to-Print solution be, with regard to the user, memory required and inclusion of additional print media?
- **Rights and roles concept**
Which rights and roles will the system require? Which user groups are to be integrated and does the system accommodate the requirements for the necessary rights and role concept?
- **Multiple languages**
In which languages should the system be available, now and later?
- **Template process**

How are the print files going to be uploaded? Which types of files (QuarkXPress®, Adobe® InDesign®, both) are to be processed by the system? Will there be extra costs for the programming of files?

- **Usability**

What are the requirements in terms of usability and previewing? Should the tool offer a WYSIWYG editor ("What you see is what you get"), i.e. an editor where changes are immediately visible in the preview, or is it sufficient to upload the contents followed by a preview?

- **Type of print media**

Which print media are to be generated by the system, as a first step and later?

- **Interfaces**

Which interfaces to other systems should the brand management or Web-to-Print system offer? Is it going to be linked to a CRM or ERP system?

- **Hosting and security**

What are the requirements in terms of hosting and the security concept?

- **Workflows**

Which workflows are to be displayed by the system? In addition to approvals and project management, Web-to-Print systems can also offer complete reviews.

- **Expandability to a brand management portal**

Should the Web-to-Print platform possibly be expanded to a marketing platform, e.g. with a media database or for marketing planning?

Companies should not view the Web-to-Print process as an isolated item, but as part of the value chain in marketing. Web-to-Print is therefore often used as part of an entire brand management portal, which optimizes workflows from planning via creation and media production to controlling and acts as center for employees' marketing tasks.

About BrandMaker

BrandMaker is a Marketing Resource Management (MRM) system, which provides a broad spectrum of solutions: Offered are solutions for marketing strategy (scorecards as "guide rails" for marketing) and management modules (for example, software for integrated market planning and budgeting); as well as modules for marketing implementation and for optimization of the creative supply chain (job management, review management, media asset management, a web-to-print module, event planning, and a module for creation of online media). The system has a modular design and is applied according to the individual client requirements. The software is developed and marketed by the company BrandMaker GmbH. BrandMaker solutions are in use successfully in marketing departments of companies of varying size and in various corporate sectors – for example at EnBW in the energy sector, Commerzbank AG and DekaBank in the financial sector, at international service providers like Ernst & Young and companies from the producing industry such as ZF Services GmbH. The software company for optimized marketing processes has about 150 employees across Europe.

<http://www.brandmaker.com>