



5 Key Considerations before Creating a Catalog Digital Edition

A White Paper Published by Ripon Printers

Understand How the System Works

The catalog marketing world becomes more multichannel by the minute. Print still anchors most catalog business models, but the growing challenge is to engage target audiences that now expect 24/7/365 access through their media of choice. For example, a buyer who purchases a dress from a catalog might want to view it on her smartphone while accessory shopping in a retail store. Or a business executive might want to reference a product while waiting in an airport en route to a meeting.

Digital editions provide part of the multichannel solution. Though not new, they've come a long way in recent years. Gone are clumsy PDF distribution approaches as well as irritating systems that required software downloads for viewing.

The digital edition conversion process is now very simple. Essentially all you need for converting your print version to a digital edition is a print-ready PDF file. Sophisticated software does all the heavy lifting.

The result is a browser-based, network-friendly digital edition of your print catalog that is instantly available and provides high-quality graphics as well as "page flipping" just like the printed version. Depending upon the level of sophistication you choose, digital editions can also go well beyond basic functionality to include a wide range of interactive capabilities.

5 Key Considerations before Creating a Catalog Digital Edition

Digital editions can provide a terrific market advantage when integrated with other print and digital media. Here are five items to consider that will help your digital edition be more successful:

How Connected is Your Audience?

Knowing your target audience and how connected and tech savvy it is should play an important role in the sophistication level of your digital edition—or whether you should create one at all. If you determine that your audience would mainly use the catalog as a reference tool, then a version that provides page flipping and other basic features might serve your purpose. But if your customers do a lot of online ordering and are comfortable with technology, then you might want to add more sophisticated functionality. If you're unsure, then ask. The key is to approach digital editions from your customers' perspectives.

What's Happening in the Marketplace?

Part of any due diligence requires knowing what's going on in the marketplace and how your competitors are positioning their businesses to best serve customers. You might find that a digital edition would be an opportunity to break new ground in your niche or it might be a necessary action to stay competitive. Either way, the realities of the marketplace should influence your approach to a digital edition initiative.

What is Your Objective?

Being clear about where you're trying to go makes the journey far more pleasant and ultimately more successful. Here are some of the primary objectives to consider when integrating digital editions into your catalog marketing program:

- **International distribution.** Mailing catalogs internationally can be expensive—even cost prohibitive—and digital editions provide an excellent solution for instant, low-cost delivery. They could help you penetrate markets that were previously impractical.
- **Immediate fulfillment.** Digital editions allow you to instantly fulfill a catalog request while putting the person into the print cycle.
- **Environmental perception.** We all know that digital has its own significant carbon footprint, but some customers view digital editions as more environmentally friendly. If you have a particularly eco-sensitive customer base, you might want to emphasize this aspect of digital editions.
- **Customer choice.** Customers want to be in control of how, when and in what format they receive information. Digital editions provide another choice and one that could be of primary importance to your customers.



How Mobile Friendly Should You Be?

- **Market intelligence.** The addition of interactive options enables you to quickly understand which products are the most popular and to adjust future content in all of your print and online offerings.
- **Revenue enhancement.** Greater customer engagement provides some obvious opportunities to increase revenues. But if you accept inserts from third parties—or want to experiment with the concept outside your print catalog—digital editions can generate additional revenue from interactive ads.
- **Expanded content.** Links enable viewers to get more information, whether it's a product demo or access to additional content like testimonials and product reviews.

Certainly you can have more than one objective, but it's best to set your priorities and your investments accordingly.

How Mobile Friendly Should You Be?

The short answer is “pretty friendly,” which would mean at least optimizing your digital edition for mobile phones. But again, it really helps to know your audience and their media habits. For example, younger (ages 18-24) audiences tend to use their phones for more sophisticated functions such as mobile browsing at a much higher rate than people in all other adult age categories.

In some instances, you might even want to consider creating an app. These can be made available online at the Apple store and other locations. You can offer them for free or charge a price. An app might be used to provide supplementary, value-added information to your offering. For example, an outdoor equipment cataloger might create an app that provides information about great trails, campgrounds and recreational areas.

Keep in mind that apps can be expensive to create, often in the \$20,000 to \$30,000 range with big players now spending upwards of \$100,000. There are, however, template versions available that are much more affordable, though not likely to offer high levels of customization options or brand cohesion. And an app will require conversion and reformatting of your content beyond the simple PDF-file conversion required for a digital edition.



A few examples of catalog apps are:

- Bonnie Plants teamed up with P. Allen Smith to create the free “Grow and Go Together” iPhone app that offers growing information on their most popular herbs and vegetables as well as recipes and garden products.
- IKEA launched a full version of its catalog as an iPhone app, including a unique augmented reality where viewers can select a piece of furniture from the catalog and place it anywhere inside the room around them, changing its size to fit the perspective by using the smartphone's camera.
- Musician's Friend launched a free app called “Stupid Deal of the Day” that always features brand-new gear that comes complete with the company's 45-day Dual Guarantees.
- Botanical Interests offers a \$5.99 iPhone app that features a wide range of information to help vegetable gardeners.

How Integrated is Your Strategy?

The better you integrate your digital edition into an overall multichannel strategy, the more success you will enjoy. Purely standalone components might well provide some benefits, but they simply won't be as effective as when you develop a strategy where they work in concert with one another.



About Ripon Printers

Ripon Printers serves small to mid-size catalog marketers and publishers, producing catalogs, publications and a wide range of direct mail products. Linking our capabilities together is an obsessive devotion to customer service that places your satisfaction above any other business goals.

We offer a complete range of print solutions that includes coldset and heatset web printing as well as sheetfed and digital printing. Whatever your needs, Ripon Printers has the right fit. A variety of integrated multichannel capabilities, from digital editions, email marketing, personalized URLs, QR Codes and digital storefronts, complement our print production, fulfillment and distribution services.

Ripon Printers offers a robust, mobile-enabled and SEO-capable digital edition in both basic and advanced levels. The basic version is free to customers who print their catalog or publication at Ripon Printers. It features page flipping only and contains no links. The advanced version includes page flipping and a search function as well as unlimited text links within the catalog or to the Internet.

You can customize either version from an extensive suite of options that includes search, text links, picture links, video, table of contents, bookmarking, social media, custom-color scheme, printing, save-to-PDF, updates, setting up and/or enabling Google Analytics™ and hosting.

Demonstrations of the three options are available at our website.

Extending your multichannel presence with Ripon Printers is easy and hassle-free. To learn more about our broad range of services for catalog marketers, including digital editions, please contact your representative or send an email request to sales@riponprinters.com.

Ripon's Catalog Services

- Digital editions
- Digital storefronts
- Premedia
- Offset & digital print platforms
- Full bindery capabilities
- Inkjet & mailing
- Comailing
- Fulfillment & distribution
- Sustainable print

We offer print and digital products, services and tools that can be used in concert to reach shoppers at different touch points in the buying process and increase the chances of a sale.



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