

Brand power, better technology and the need to be an individual – [Jon Packman](#) looks at the DIY stationery phenomenon.

# DIY stationery


If you want a job done properly, do it yourself. That's what they say, isn't it? Ok, so a frontal lobotomy might be an exception before you get the cordless Black and Decker out, but we're talking stationery here, not brain surgery.

There are thousands of companies who'll design and print company logos, letterheads and business cards. With image at stake, having the right looking stationery is a key element to successful branding and marketing. Not so long ago it was a job for specialists that had the creativity, equipment and technical know-how to get professional results. Now, with very little effort, your clients can put that computer in front of them to good use and do the job themselves.

It'll cost a fraction of what a print shop will charge, they won't get bogged down in minimum quantities, and they'll have the control and flexibility to change what

they want, when they want. For instance, a new member of staff joining can have business cards printed and ready to use the same day, and if the client's currently running a promotion or just launched a new strapline, they can add it to all of their literature and outgoing mail immediately. Also, on a selfish level, they have the artistic satisfaction of being able to say, "I did that", when really they can't tell a paintbrush from a chopstick.

"Many businesses are already making the shift and moving to colour printing in-house to promote their products and services without paying a fortune," says Rhiannon Williams, UK and Ireland commercial supplies market manager at HP. "For small or medium-sized business which have only a limited or even no in-house graphic arts resources or experience, producing their own stationery and marketing materials in house offers significant benefits. Information can also be individually and



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easily tailored for different audiences, offering the opportunity to add a personal touch that can make the difference in winning new customers.”

All it takes for your clients to realise these benefits is the right paper, printer and software. While there’s nothing to stop people designing everything from scratch, images, artwork and ready-made templates are easy to find these days. It’s really just a question of how your client wants their stationery to look – which elements go where - rather than how they make each element in the first place.

Innovations in ink and toner technologies, along with new papers optimised for colour performance with both laser and inkjet printers, are enabling businesses to create their own professional-looking, high quality colour documents. These factors, plus the printer itself, will ultimately determine the quality and reliability of a DIY stationery printing system.

Depending on whether your clients have a laser or an inkjet printer, it’s important to remind them that they need to use the right type of paper. “Colour laser printers have very sensitive components and operate at much higher temperatures than inkjet printers,” explains Amy Collins, marketing manager at Avery Dennison Office Products. “So you have to make sure your client is using specifically designed materials that won’t cause damage. And similarly, if they’re working with an inkjet printer, go for inkjet suitable stationery which has been developed and rigorously tested. Choosing the right media will help them prolong the lifespan of their printer whilst ensuring

that they get outstanding colour brilliance and guaranteed smudge-free, jam-free results.”

While compliment slips and letterheads have been relatively easy to print in-house for a while, DIY business cards used to be a bit of a problem; not because of any deficiency on the part of computers but due to the paper handling characteristics of printers. Nowadays most inkjets and lasers can print on heavyweight paper, which is well suited to this type of job, and you can now offer a choice of media that provides micro-perforated or clean-edged, and even double-sided business cards.

Creating professional looking business stationery is a key element to your client’s overall marketing plan – people don’t usually think of letterheads and business cards as marketing materials, but they most certainly are. Also remember that a logo sets the company image, so this should be incorporated into all their stationery and promotional materials wherever possible. Many of your customers just don’t realise how easy and beneficial it is to take control over their own stationery using modern technology. Making them aware of the tools available to help them design and print their own is a key factor in winning their interest.

“People are often put off developing their own stationery for fear it may be fiddly or time consuming,” says Collins. “But the reality is that you can now be guided effortlessly through designing, compiling and printing your stationery. Combined with all the pre-designed templates, graphics and clipart you can find on the internet, the whole process couldn’t be simpler.” ●