

How to Manage This Category - Print & Promo

Once a customer decides to proceed, the focus shifts to running the job smoothly. Dealers manage print and promo in different ways, and the steps in this section apply regardless of the route chosen.

Routes to market

Dealers can manage print and promo work through several valid approaches. Each route has different strengths, and the best choice depends on the job, the customer and the dealer's preferred workflow.

Using suppliers directly

This is the traditional route. The dealer briefs the supplier, shares artwork and manages the job through to delivery. It offers flexibility and works well for a wide range of items. It also gives the dealer full visibility of the process, which some customers value.

Using companies that offer instant pricing and workflow tools

Some companies provide platforms with live pricing for certain products and step by step workflows. These tools help with speed, structure and consistency, especially for standardised items. They can also give dealers confidence when handling unfamiliar products.

Using price comparison and broker style platforms

Some services compare prices across multiple UK print providers and return options based on the specification entered. These platforms can be useful for standard items, cost sensitive jobs or when the dealer wants a quick view of market pricing. They can also help identify efficient production routes for particular quantities or formats. Dealers should still check timelines, finishing requirements and any job specifics so the chosen option aligns with the customer's needs.

Outsourcing the job to a partner who manages production

Some dealers prefer to hand the job to a partner who manages everything end to end. This can be useful for complex jobs, tight deadlines or when the dealer wants a more hands off approach. It also helps when the customer needs extra support or when multiple items need coordinating.

Using in house production

Some dealers have their own print capability, either for specific product types or for a broad range of items. In these cases, the workflow becomes an internal process rather than an external one, but the same principles still apply. Clear briefs, accurate artwork, realistic timelines and good communication remain essential, as in house production is still part of an intricate chain with its own capacity, scheduling and quality checks.

All routes are valid. Dealers can choose the approach that best supports the customer and ensures the job runs smoothly.

Best practice for running jobs

Be clear on the purpose and timing

Purpose and timing shape almost every decision in print, including materials, finish, production method and delivery. When suppliers or production teams understand the context, they can recommend the most suitable option and avoid delays. For example, a banner for a one day indoor event may need a different material than one for long term outdoor use.

A simple phrase helps set the tone: “Just so I get this right, what is it for and when do you need it?”

Understand how production methods affect the job

Dealers do not need deep technical knowledge, but a basic understanding of how print is produced helps with planning and communication.

Litho printing Litho is ideal for larger quantities, colour critical work and items that need consistent quality across long runs. It usually has longer setup times, so it is less suitable for urgent jobs or very small quantities. Litho can be more cost effective when the volume is high.

Digital printing Digital is fast, flexible and ideal for short runs, personalised items or jobs that need a quick turnaround. It is often the best choice for small quantities or when the customer needs something urgently. Colour consistency has improved significantly, but for very large runs litho may still be preferred.

Ganging jobs Suppliers often gang multiple jobs together on the same sheet to reduce waste and improve efficiency. This can lower costs but may affect turnaround times, as the job may need to wait until similar items are ready to run. Understanding this helps dealers explain why some products have set production windows or why certain quantities are more cost effective.

Knowing these basics helps dealers set realistic expectations and understand why suppliers or production teams recommend particular approaches.

Provide artwork early where possible

Artwork is often the biggest factor in timelines. Even straightforward jobs can be delayed if artwork arrives late or needs amending. Sharing artwork early allows production teams or suppliers to check suitability, flag issues and prepare proofs.

If the customer is not ready, the dealer can still brief the job but should let the supplier or production team know so they can plan around it. A helpful question is: “Do you already have artwork, or do you need help with that?”

Keep communication simple and consistent

Customers value clarity more than technical detail. Regular updates reassure them that the job is progressing and reduce the need for them to chase. Even a short message such as “Your proof is being prepared” or “I will confirm delivery shortly” helps maintain confidence.

Clear communication also prevents misunderstandings between the dealer and whoever is producing the work. A quick confirmation of details such as quantities, sizes and finishes can save time later.

Use proofs to avoid misunderstandings

Proofs are essential for checking layout, spelling, colours and content before production. Encouraging customers to review proofs carefully reduces the risk of errors and reprints. It also protects the dealer, as approval confirms the customer is happy to proceed.

A simple prompt works well: “Please check the proof carefully and let me know when you are happy for us to go ahead.”

Manage expectations around production and delivery

Print and promo items vary widely in complexity. Some can be produced quickly, while others require specialist processes or multiple stages. Setting realistic expectations helps avoid disappointment and builds trust.

Dealers can say: “I will confirm the best production timeline once the proof is approved.” or “This item takes a little longer because of the finishing process, but I will keep you updated.”

Customers appreciate honesty and clarity more than speed alone.

Keep suppliers or production teams informed of any changes

Changes to artwork, quantities or deadlines can affect production schedules. Passing updates on quickly helps avoid delays or additional costs. Dealers do not need to explain the technical impact, as production teams or suppliers will handle that, but timely communication keeps everything on track.

A quick message such as “The customer has updated the quantity to 250, can you confirm the new timeline?” is often enough.

Check the final delivery

A quick check on delivery day helps ensure everything has arrived as expected. It shows professionalism and gives the dealer a chance to resolve any issues quickly. Even a simple confirmation that the customer has received the items and is happy with them strengthens the relationship.

Key takeaway

Managing print and promo work is about choosing the right route to market and keeping the process clear, organised and moving. Whether production is in house, outsourced or handled through a partner or platform, the principles remain the same. By understanding the basics of how print is produced, providing accurate information, sharing updates and working closely with whoever is producing the work, dealers can run jobs confidently and deliver a smooth experience for customers.