

The 4 Wide-Format Application Trends You Need to Know

The world has changed, and you need to keep up. Here's how wide-format printers can stay ahead with new practical applications.



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Print in the modern world

Print businesses have a chance to push the boundaries of what's possible with wide-format printing. It's time to deliver more innovative, useful, and digitally enhanced products that help your clients meet their customers' demands.

We've put together a selection of the latest print application trends to help inspire your product and service offering. From personalized interior décor to durable vehicle wraps, here are four ways wide-format print is set to make an impact on the world around us—and how you can get involved with practical applications.

Digitally-printed wallpaper

Many businesses have seen the recent changes as an opportunity to pivot their offerings. And with that comes the need for a new look.

Many hospitality and retail venues are opting for a more modern aesthetic as they return to in-person service, and that means taking inspiration from 2021's interior design trends,¹ which include natural textures such as straw and wicker.

With wide-format printed wallpapers, businesses can adopt these textured looks by applying inks onto a versatile range of substrates. In situations where functionality matters, print providers can offer detailed, faux-textured prints on wallpaper—delivering similar aesthetics in a more practical material. In addition, printers can infuse their digitally-printed wallpapers with specific properties by using

antibacterial and antiviral substrates, and even include performance coatings to enable more frequent washing. This is not only ideal for sensitive applications like hospitals and care facilities, but also helps busy sectors like services and events stay compliant in the more hygiene-conscious post-COVID world.

Thanks to these unrivalled customization options and end user benefits, market research consultancy Technavio expects the digitally printed wallpaper market to grow by \$4.81 billion between 2021 and 2025.²





TREND 2

Car and vehicle wraps

Research from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors shows that the largest US cities have lost up to 15% of their urban population.³ The majority of these movers have decided to relocate to suburban or semi-rural areas, in part due to increased remote working opportunities and lower costs of living.

At the same time, the pandemic has resulted in an explosion of deliveries—both for online shopping and takeout food. The total number of e-commerce deliveries rose by 25% in 2020,⁴ according to a study from the World Economic Forum. The report suggests that the pandemic has reshaped last-minute logistics to adapt to this increased demand, and forecasts that our reliance on deliveries is here to stay.

To adapt to this new population distribution, businesses are already taking advantage of high-quality vehicle wraps. The global automotive wrap market was valued at \$4 billion in 2020, and is set to grow by an average of 22.4% each year until 2028.⁵ Your potential customers are taking advantage of these moving billboards to grab attention in suburban areas, helping to make up for the lost footfall in busy urban centers.

HOW WHITE INKS HELP YOU DELIVER BETTER VEHICLE WRAPS

The practical applications of vehicle wrapping can vary significantly. While some clients may want the entire exterior covered in graphics, others may prefer a more minimalist approach on their cars and vans. For these, applications, you'll need more flexibility—especially as up to a quarter⁶ of vehicles in the US are painted black, which will require printing onto darker substrates.

White inks deliver a solid foundation that allows you to print color-accurate graphics and text onto any color or tone. Applying a base layer of white ink⁷ before your main printing run acts as a blank canvas and means that print providers can now deliver products across a wide range of material colors—helping you deliver better, more versatile vehicle wraps for your customers.

Wayfinding signage

With the rise of hybrid working, the expectations of what a physical space should do have completely changed. Online solutions have established themselves as more convenient alternatives for users and consumers. Spaces such as offices, retail, and events need to offer a better user experience to encourage people to return. And that's where printers can help.

Studies from the Sign Research Foundation⁸ show that 60% of businesses improved their sales by an average of 10% after updating their navigation signage. When we hear the term 'wayfinding', many of us think of maps and directional arrows. But with wide-format printing, you can be more creative. Murals and artwork can provide memorable reference points that draw the end user's attention towards specific locations.

OTHER EXAMPLES OF PRINTED WAYFINDING INCLUDE:

- 'Zoning' signage and wall prints, which can separate areas into distinct spaces based on color and design.
- Durable floor signage that guides foot traffic into lanes and helps direct people through complex spaces.

- Bold, icon-based prints that help convey information visually.
- Step-by-step guides split across multiple prints—particularly helpful for large locations with separate buildings such as airports and hospitals.
- High-resolution photos with graphics and markers.
- Consistent signs to designate room, building, or space names—all using the same shapes, colors, and fonts.

Wayfinding signage can be implemented into almost any location. From office buildings and shopping centers to events and conference venues—wide-format printers can give businesses the tools they need to deliver a better, more convenient experience for the people who use their spaces.





TREND 4

QR codes and augmented reality

As of 2021, 85% of US adults own a smartphone, according to Statista.⁹ We're more connected to the digital world than ever before. Wide-format printers have an opportunity to bridge the gap and offer their customers smart prints that can seamlessly interact with the technology they carry around with them every day.

QR CODES

Integrating QR codes into your printed products can offer an intuitive way for users to unlock new digital experiences. As practical applications of QR codes increase across the world, users are becoming more familiar with how they work. Eighty-six percent of smartphone users have scanned a QR code at least once in their lifetime,¹⁰ and 36.4% scan at least one code a week.

This provides an opportunity for wide-format businesses to integrate digital connectivity into their printed displays. Large, scannable QR codes are already being used on billboards and advertising displays across the world,¹¹ and print businesses now have the chance to bring this same level of digital connectivity to their clients' signage.

AUGMENTED REALITY (AR)

The term 'augmented reality' refers to technology that combines virtual displays with the users' view of the real world. For printing businesses, AR can be used to superimpose digital information onto physical printed

products, helping your customers link their printed media to their digital assets. The global AR and VR market is predicted to grow by 42.9% by 2030,¹² providing an opportunity for wide-format print businesses to expand their services and deliver AR-enabled products.

AR billboards and other large format prints give users the ability to interact with advertisements using their phone. In New York City and Los Angeles, social media app Snapchat has partnered with digital marketing agencies to create interactive printed displays that play videos on your smartphone when scanned with the camera app.¹³

AR advertising may only just be getting started, but the market is expected to reach a total value of \$6.7 billion by 2025.¹⁴ As this form of connected marketing becomes more widespread, print suppliers can help create signage that blends the physical and digital worlds. This means creating clear large-format advertisements that can be easily recognized by a smartphone's camera to unlock interactive features.



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