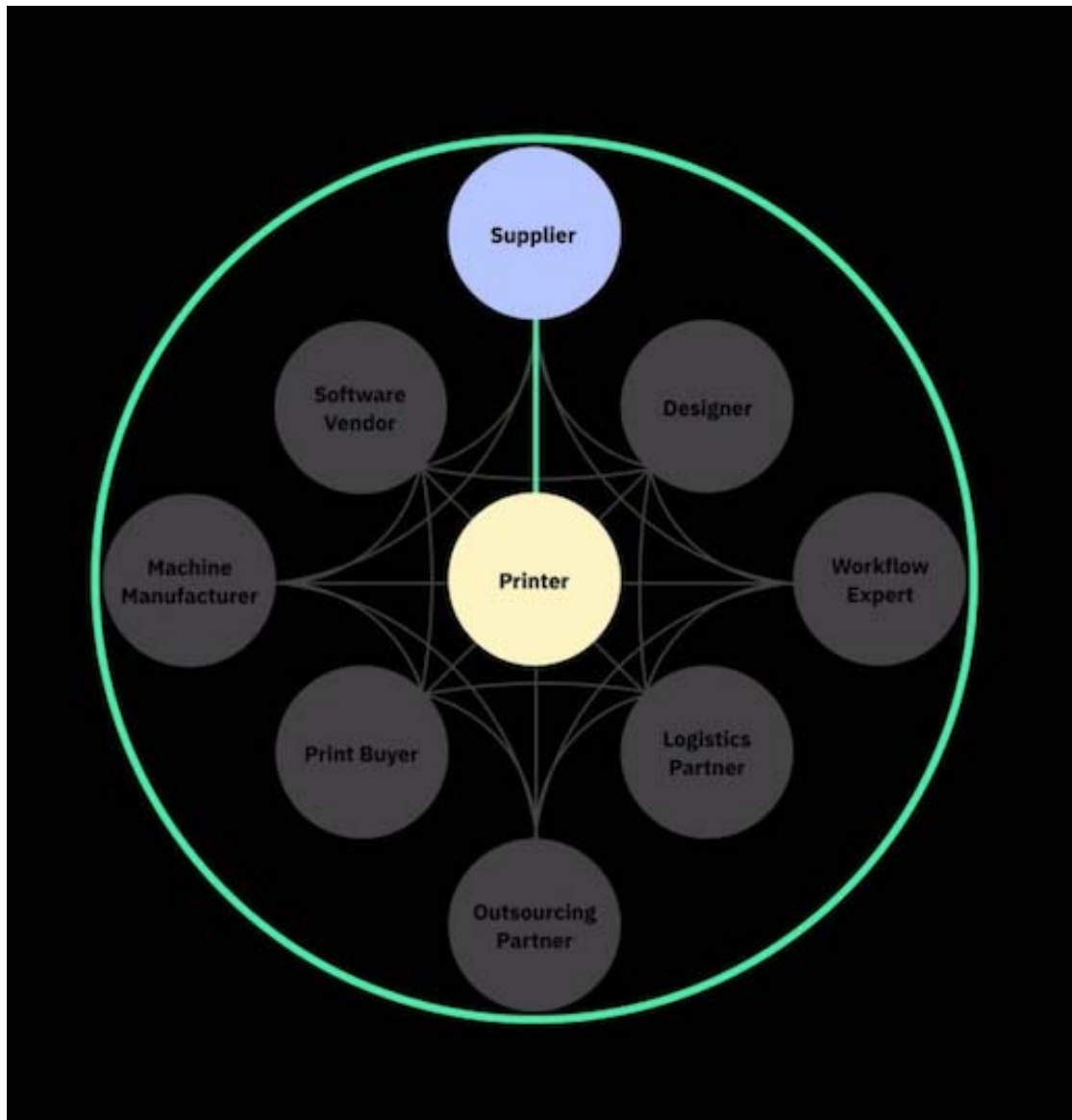# Heidelberg Announces Pilot Phase Of Digital Platform For Printing Industry

By **Africa Print** · 17th Nov 2020

Zaikio allows printers to connect with suppliers automatically, by providing a bridge between the IT systems of the printer and its suppliers. M&E and Sappi will be using the platform to optimise their digital procurement process for paper. The two companies welcome the establishment of a digital industry platform for the print industry.

This comes following the announcement that Heidelberger Druckmaschinen AG (Heidelberg) is starting the pilot phase of Zaikio, which it launched in collaboration with printing company Meinders & Elstermann GmbH & Co. KG (M&E) and paper manufacturer Sappi.

M&E's orders will be collected in the management information system (MIS) – in this case Prinect Business Manager – and logged as orders at the live, customised price. Following approval by procurement staff, these orders will be transferred directly into Sappi's ERP system, which will reciprocate by providing the ordering system with information about availability and delivery options. This process lays the foundation for fully automated orders based on various factors, such as the current paper consumption or stock levels. As a pilot customer, M&E is providing vital feedback for the further development of the Zaikio platform.

Remaining competitive by optimising processes is a constant focus for M&E. At its Belm site, near Osnabrück in northern Germany, the long-established company with some 150 staff primarily prints commercial products for discerning industry customers. Production is already highly efficient thanks to the latest Heidelberg technology, but M&E's recent merger with Ortmeier Medien GmbH – an expansion that added another two sites and 200 staff – calls for further automation and process improvements. A large number of the paper orders are placed through IGEPA with the most important supplier, Sappi.

Sappi is a global provider of sustainable woodfibre products and solutions. It also produces dissolving pulp, packaging and speciality papers, casting and release papers, biomaterials and bio-energy. Sappi employs 12,500 people worldwide and produces, among other things, approximately five million tons of paper per year, which are sold in more than 150 countries across the world. For M&E and Sappi alike, the complete automation and digitisation of numerous procurement processes is a key tool for boosting productivity and cutting costs.

'It is at the heart of Sappi's strategy to make print media faster, more efficient and even more competitive in order to highlight its relevance and future viability in the media mix. We therefore very much welcome the establishment of a digital industry platform for the print industry. This gives us the opportunity to get closer to our end customers and at the same time to digitise business relationships, especially in the standard segment, enabling us to improve service levels, reduce error rates and at the same time significantly increase efficiency,' said Flavio Froehli, Sales Director Commercial Print at Sappi.

Jens Rauschen, Managing Director of M&E, added, 'We are pleased to significantly increase the automation of our procurement processes with the Zaikio and Sappi team. The Zaikio concept has convinced us. By integrating the platform into our process landscape, we expect to reduce the many interfaces in the ordering process and to significantly increase overall productivity in this area.'

Processing paper procurement via Zaikio in the future is just an initial step. The company is looking to use digitisation to improve all procurement processes at print shops, especially for consumables such as inks and plates. Zaikio links suppliers to their customers or printing companies without having any active commercial involvement. 'We are intermediaries and we want it to stay that way,' underlined Prinz. 'A procurement platform is most effective when it operates in the background and integrates seamlessly into existing processes and software

landscapes, so we will be incorporating Zaikio into all widely used Management Information Systems (MIS) solutions that share our vision,' he said.

Digitising procurement processes offers many benefits for users. It eliminates cumbersome ordering processes and the need to inquire about prices by phone, fax or email. Live prices are called up automatically along with details such as the delivery status or warehouse notification. This saves customer advisors a great deal of time, which means they can pay more attention to the actual needs of their customers.

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