

hello MARKETING

THE DS GROUP MAGAZINE

ISSUE 8

— YOUR TRUSTED PRINT AND MARKETING PARTNER —

PLANNING AHEAD FOR 2026

Fail to plan, plan to fail

PAGES 6 & 7

THE SCIENCE OF TOUCH

Why print feels so powerful

PAGE 15

GREEN PRINT

A real-world guide to sustainable marketing

PAGES 22 & 23

BEHIND THE SCENES

How your campaign gets made

PAGES 12 & 13

AI-POWERED BUSINESS ENABLERS

How AI is reshaping marketing today

PAGES 8 & 9



10% OFF QUOTE
YOUR FIRST ORDER HM10
— T&Cs apply —

 www.thedsgroup.co.uk

CONTACT US TO START YOUR MAILING JOURNEY

1 BRIEF

We start with your goals, whether it's brand awareness, lead generation or customer loyalty. Our team works closely with you to shape a strategy that delivers results.

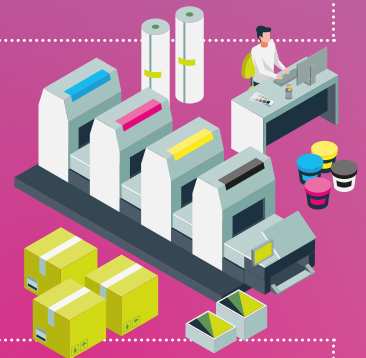


2 DESIGN

Eye-catching formats, engaging layouts and always on brand. Our in-house team designs mail that turns heads and turns interest into action.

3 PRINT

Produced in our Clacton-on-Sea facility using high-quality materials and vibrant finishes. From postcards to pop-ups, telescopic extenders to one-piece mailers, if it prints we perfect it.



4

FULFIL & DELIVER

We manage enclosing, collation, addressing and more, all GDPR compliant and handled with care. Whether it's Royal Mail, DSA or hand delivery, we'll get your message into the right hands on time.



Allistair Hunter
Chairman

allistair@thedsgroup.co.uk

hello

Hello, and welcome to Hello Marketing 2025

This year marks an exciting new chapter for The DS Group as I step into the role of Chairman and warmly welcome Tracy Norton Mead as our new Managing Director. Tracy has been a driving force within the business for over 17 years, and I couldn't be more confident in her leadership as we continue to grow and evolve.

As ever, our focus remains firmly on helping marketing professionals deliver stronger, more connected campaigns. That's why we continue to invest in sharing best practice, grounded insight and practical advice – and this edition is no exception.

Inside this issue, we explore the biggest challenges and opportunities that are transforming how marketers work – from AI-powered strategy and content repurposing to ethical data handling and advanced segmentation. You'll find real-world examples of how clients are turning data into action, plus practical tips on building integrated campaigns that make digital and print work harder together.

We also look ahead to 2026, asking what's next for marketing teams facing shifting consumer expectations, tighter budgets and a rapidly changing regulatory environment. With physical and digital journeys converging fast, our features on smart print, sensory marketing and multi-touch campaigns show how to build lasting engagement across every channel.

I'm particularly proud of the work we're doing to help clients make more sustainable marketing choices. From investment in plastic-free packaging to our ISO 14001-certified production, sustainability runs through everything we do, not as an afterthought, but as a business imperative.

Whether you're just getting started or looking to develop your strategy, I hope this issue offers inspiration, practical tools and reassurance.

As always, if there's anything we can help with, just get in touch.

Allistair Hunter
Chairman



hello MARKETING



THEDSGROUPHQ



THEDSGROUPHQ



THEDSGROUPHQ



THEDSGROUPHQ



THEDSGROUP.CO.UK

We are The DS Group, a full-service print, marketing, direct mail and media company based in Essex.

For over 24 years, we have helped companies, large and small, reach their customers and prospects. We deliver an in-house, integrated approach to get your sales, marketing and branding messages directly to your audience.

From initial concept and design to print and the delivery straight into your customers' hands, we offer a professional, friendly and go-getting service that provides you with the best value possible. And ensures you get the results your business truly deserves.

Hello Marketing is the magazine of The DS Group

All enquiries to:
The DS Group
7 Faraday Close
Oakwood Industrial Estate
Clacton-on-Sea
Essex
CO15 4TR

T: 01255 221322
E: hello@thedsgroup.co.uk
W: www.thedsgroup.co.uk

Hello Marketing magazine is our in-house magazine for our team and customers. All editorial, design, production, print and fulfilment has been carried out by our in-house team as a showcase of our services.

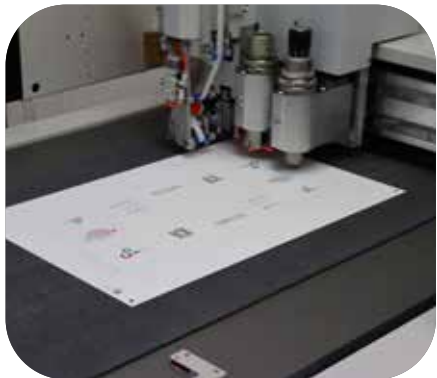
We really hope you enjoy receiving your copy of Hello Marketing. If, however, you would prefer not to hear from us in this way, please contact us on 01255 221322 or by email at hello@thedsgroup.co.uk and we would be delighted to help you manage how we communicate with you.



CONTENTS

CONTENTS

PLANNING AHEAD FOR 2026	Pages 6 - 7
AI-POWERED BUSINESS ENABLERS	Pages 8 - 9
AI: RISK, REPUTATION AND REGULATION	Page 10
REAL RESULTS: MS-UK	Page 11
BEHIND THE SCENES	Pages 12 - 13
INSIGHTS FROM OUR MD TRACY MEAD	Page 14
THE SCIENCE OF TOUCH	Page 15
CONTENT REPURPOSING: MAKE IT MATTER TWICE	Pages 16 - 17
THE FUTURE OF PRINT IS NOW	Pages 18 - 19
CREATE A MULTI-TOUCH CUSTOMER JOURNEY	Pages 20 - 21
GREEN PRINT: A REAL-WORLD GUIDE	Pages 22 - 23
THE DS GROUP NEWS BITES	Pages 24 - 25
FROM INBOX TO LETTERBOX	Pages 26 - 29
THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP: DURA COMPOSITES	Pages 30 - 33
BRAND STRATEGY	Pages 34 - 35
TEAM Q&A: THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE PRINT	Pages 36 - 37
MEET THE TEAM	Pages 38 - 39



FAIL TO PLAN, PLAN TO FAIL

GET AHEAD FOR 2026

When you're under pressure to deliver results, it's tempting to focus solely on the next campaign. But some of the best results we've seen happen when marketing teams look further ahead. Planning for 2026 doesn't mean locking everything down, it means asking better questions, earlier.

From campaign lead times to creative testing windows, building flexibility into your plans can help avoid budget squeezes, production delays or missed opportunities. And with audience expectations shifting fast, a little forward thinking now can make a big difference later.

63%

of marketers say timing has more impact on results than the message itself.



Timing is (still) everything

A 2025 study by the Data & Marketing Association (DMA UK) reported that 63% of marketers say timing has more impact on results than the message itself. From lead generation to lead nurturing, smart scheduling is crucial. It's not only about launch dates - it's about building in room for approvals, production, testing, and delivery.

We're also seeing more teams plan around audience behaviour, not just internal deadlines. Whether it's students choosing courses from a prospectus in spring, or customers receiving incentives ahead of peak retail moments, reaching your audience at the right time is the key to a successful campaign.

Where the budget goes next

According to the IPA Bellwether Report, Q2 2025, 34% of UK companies have increased their direct marketing spend; the highest rise since 2006. This reflects a broader shift toward physical and one-to-one channels that feel more personal and trustworthy.

Rather than treating print as a secondary add-on, brands are giving it a lead role: building campaigns that combine print, digital and in-person experiences for stronger results. With budgets under pressure, integrated campaigns that can flex and re-use creative are delivering better long-term value.

34%

of UK companies have increased their direct marketing spend; the highest rise since 2006



AI, data shifts and creative focus

AI is helping teams create more content in less time but it's also forcing important decisions about data and creative strategy. A HubSpot UK survey (April 2025) found that while 61% of marketers now use generative AI weekly, only 28% feel confident their use of personal data meets upcoming regulatory expectations. You can read more about the evolution of AI in marketing on pages 8-10.



LET'S MAKE 2026 YOUR MOST STRATEGIC YEAR YET

At The DS Group, we help teams think beyond the next deadline. Whether you're planning standalone mailouts, multi-print campaigns, or integrated communications, let's talk now about how to make next year's marketing strategy deliver more.

YOUR 2026 CAMPAIGN PLANNING CHECKLIST



Allow enough lead time Have you built in extra time for approvals, production and delivery?



Test early, tweak easily Do you have time to test creative and messaging before launch?



Align with audience behaviour Are you planning around when your audience makes decisions, not just internal deadlines?



Build in flexibility Can your budget and timeline adapt to surprises or new opportunities?



Integrate channels Are print, digital and in-person elements working together from the start?



Plan for AI and data shifts Are you clear how AI tools and data rules could affect your timelines?



Secure your supply chain Have you checked print capacity and delivery partners ahead of peak periods?

AI-POWERED BUSINESS ENABLERS

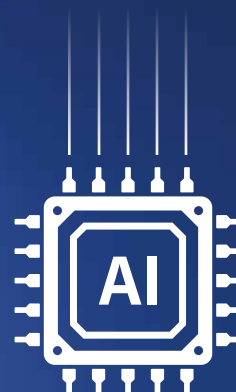
HOW AI IS RESHAPING MARKETING TODAY

The shift isn't coming - it's already here. In 2025, AI isn't just another tool on the shelf. It's part of the marketing infrastructure. The real question isn't whether to use AI, but where it's delivering the most value.

Marketing teams are under more pressure than ever to be both agile and cautious, driving innovation with AI while remaining accountable, ethical and in control. A recent UK survey by the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) found that 73% of marketing leaders are expected to deliver more campaigns, faster, while ensuring their use of AI remains responsible and transparent.

73% of marketing leaders say they are under pressure to deliver more campaigns, faster, while ensuring ethical use of AI.

Chartered Institute of Marketing (UK), Q1 2025 Survey



Add in tighter budgets and rising expectations, and it's clear why the smartest teams are using AI to work more efficiently; supporting creative thinking, speeding up research, and giving us back time to focus on what matters: building meaningful human connections.

The opportunity is real. According to 2025 data from HubSpot, 94% of marketers say AI-powered personalisation directly boosts sales. Salesforce reports that 97% have seen a clear increase in ROI. But here's the gap: only 36% of UK marketers are currently using AI effectively.

The biggest risk? Standing still. Early adopters aren't just gaining ground - they're setting the pace.

THE FIVE ENABLERS: WHERE AI DELIVERS THE MOST VALUE

IMAGE AND DESIGN

What it does:
Generates branded visuals on demand

Tools to Use:
Midjourney, Canva AI, ChatGPT-4o, Leonardo

Key Consideration
Ideal for creative briefs and high-volume campaigns but may lack originality

COMPETITOR INTELLIGENCE

What it does:
Tracks sentiment, trends, and threats

Tools to Use:
Brand24 AI, Brandwatch, Crayon, Semblly AI

Key Consideration
Real-time insight, but premium pricing may exclude smaller companies

SEO & CONTENT STRATEGY

What it does:
Builds ranking content and optimises pages

Tools to Use:
SurferSEO, Jasper AI, Semrush

Key Consideration
Requires human expertise and validation. Currently AI is only as good as its training

CONTENT REPURPOSING

What it does:
Transforms existing content into new formats

Tools to Use:
ChatGPT (projects), Jasper AI, Google Gemini

Key Consideration
Embedded strategically the efficiency gains can be huge

STRATEGIC RESEARCH

What it does:
Curates real-time market intelligence

Tools to Use:
ChatGPT (deep research), Perplexity Pro

Key Consideration
Perfect for brief-building, marketing analysis and stakeholder decks

PRECISION PROMPTING:

Where Good Inputs Drive Great Outputs

The quality of your AI results hinges on how you ask (your prompt)

Best practice tip:
Use the Projects feature in ChatGPT to store tone, audience profiles, and examples. It remembers previous instructions, improving accuracy over time.

Poor prompt: ✕

You
Write about retail trends

... Analysing

Good prompt: ✓

You
Create a 400-word briefing for UK marketing managers on the top three retail trends shaping Gen Z fashion buying behaviour in Q3 2025.

Reference current UK statistics and social media patterns

... Analysing

Risk, Reputation and Regulation: AI Isn't Without Consequence

AI presents clear risks: misinformation, data breaches, brand misalignment, and copyright ambiguity. The Cyber Security Breaches Survey 2025 revealed that 43% of businesses and 30% of charities reported a data breach or cyber-attack in the last 12 months. That's not a statistic - it's a board-level risk.

Governance Checklist:

- ☒ GDPR and ISO 27001 compliance
- ☒ Content verification process
- ☒ Incident response planning
- ☒ AI listed on the board risk register
- ☒ Staff trained in prompt safety and brand safeguards

The DS Group has operated for 20+ years with zero data breaches. Our mail, print and data systems are ISO and Cyber Essentials certified. And yes, that includes AI workflows too.

Let's Talk About How AI Can Work for You

AI isn't about replacing creativity. It's about making space for it.

We're here to help you integrate AI into your marketing safely, ethically and effectively. Whether you're experimenting with ChatGPT Projects or ready to map AI to your full customer journey, The DS Group has the tools and insight to guide your next campaign. Let's turn automation into acceleration and make 2025 your most creative year yet.

FREE VS PAID TOOLS: WHAT ARE YOU ACTUALLY PAYING FOR?

FREE AI TOOLS

Pros:

No cost, great for experimentation

Cons:

Data security unclear, limited memory, lacks training on your brand

PAID AI TOOLS

(e.g. ChatGPT Pro, Perplexity Pro)

Pros:

Enhanced security, custom training, advanced features, more memory

Cons:

Subscription fees required



What's Next for 2026?

Expect AI to become invisible - and indispensable.

We predict:

Embedded AI assistants as standard within email, CRM and CMS systems

Print campaigns driven by AI segmentation (including variable data mailings)

Live sentiment analysis feeding real-time campaign tweaks

AI-enhanced sustainability tools helping marketers reduce carbon footprints

Did you know? Integrated campaigns that combine AI, print, and digital deliver 400% more engagement than digital alone.

The DS Group is already building campaigns that use this model: QR-coded print materials with dynamic CTAs, AR-infused brochures, and mailings designed with AI-optimised targeting.

REAL RESULTS FROM A PRINT-FIRST FUNDRAISING STRATEGY



MS-UK, the national charity supporting people affected by multiple sclerosis, has worked with The DS Group for over a decade across everything from branded materials and service booklets to strategic campaign fulfilment. While digital marketing plays a central role in their day-to-day communications, it's their targeted use of print and direct mail that plays a key role in campaign delivery.

Getting results when it matters most:

In 2020, MS-UK launched an emergency appeal during the pandemic. With fundraising events paused, they turned to DS Group to create a personalised direct mail appeal to their supporter base.

"We raised a total of £19,000 in one direct mail campaign"

The campaign performance more than quadrupled the charity sector average ROI of £3.22: £1 and firmly established direct mail's value as part of MS-UK's integrated fundraising strategy.

Direct mail for key campaigns

MS-UK now reserves direct mail for key campaign moments: seasonal appeals, legacy giving, and targeted fundraising.

Looking ahead, MS-UK is planning a new legacy campaign focused on turning one-off donors into regular givers, with print at the heart of that strategy.

"For every pound we spent on producing the mailer, we made £15."

"We know the impact that direct mail can have, especially on a warm audience," added Sarah-Jane Elliott, MS-UK Marketing and Communications Manager.

"We could put money into social media, but we know direct mail works well when we need to specifically target people that already know about us."

To find out more about MS-UK and how you can support them, visit www.ms-uk.org.

Read more about our long-term partnership with MS-UK on page 25.



BEHIND THE SCENES: HOW YOUR CAMPAIGN GETS MADE

What does it really take to get your campaign from brief to doorstep?

At The DS Group, we turn smart, targeted print into measurable results with secure data handling, sustainable production, and that all important proof of impact.



1 START WITH CLEAR GOALS

Every successful campaign starts with specific goals. Whether it's boosting sign-ups, driving traffic to a landing page, or encouraging your audience to scan a QR code, a well-thought-out print campaign connects in ways digital alone can't. The more focused your brief, the stronger your return.



2 DESIGN FOR IMPACT

Next, our designers bring your message to life on the page. High-resolution images, accurate colours and smart finishes make your print feel credible and worth keeping. It's also important to build your measurement tools into your design. Adding unique URLs, QR codes or discount codes to your print materials maximises your digital footprint, giving you direct tracking and tying your print and online channels together right from the start.



"Adding unique URLs, QR codes or discount codes to your print materials maximises your digital footprint."

3 CHOOSE THE RIGHT PRINT

Many companies gloss over this step (pun intended), but it's crucial! Gloss, matte or laminates can help your piece stand out on a doormat, and choosing the right print method matters too. For example, litho printing is ideal for large, colour-critical runs, while digital printing suits personalised, quick-turnaround mailers. We can help you make the right choice to suit your timeframe and budget.



4 FULFIL WITH CARE

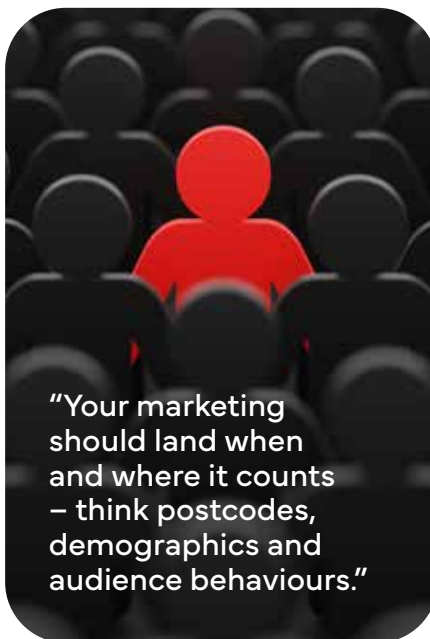
At The DS Group, we handle production and fulfilment under one roof, making the process faster, cost-effective and eco-friendly. Our ISO 9001 (quality) and ISO 14001 (environmental) certifications prove we work to high standards every time.



5 REACH THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Now it's time to make sure your message lands when and where it counts. We help you target specific postcodes, demographics and audience behaviours, then plan delivery schedules to match daily routines and preferences, so your message hits home at the best possible moment. (See more on planning ahead on pages 6-7)

Furthermore, our data cleansing services keep your lists accurate, while our ISO 27001-certified security keeps your data safe and managed to the highest standard.



"Your marketing should land when and where it counts – think postcodes, demographics and audience behaviours."



Want to connect your print and digital, and deliver results you can measure?

Let's talk delivery!

DS INSIGHT

MD TRACY MEAD

"After 17 years at The DS Group, I've seen marketing trends come and go, but one thing has stayed the course: direct mail and print consistently deliver. As Managing Director, my perspective is shaped by years of adapting to change, working alongside brilliant teams, and helping clients achieve real results in an ever-evolving landscape.



Why direct mail still works - and why it's thriving

The world of marketing has and continues to change at pace. Digital platforms have multiplied, data-driven strategies are now the norm, and personalisation is expected. Yet, the tactile power of direct mail has never faded; in fact, it's more relevant than ever. While digital campaigns can be fleeting, direct mail lands directly in your customers' hands, cutting through the noise and creating a memorable, physical brand experience.

The numbers speak for themselves. Studies consistently show that more than 80% of consumers trust print advertising most when making a purchase decision.

And while 80% of traditional mail is opened, only 20% of emails get the same attention. That trust and engagement are why direct mail remains a cornerstone of the most effective campaigns.



Our approach: Integration, innovation, and data-driven results

At The DS Group, we help you harness the full potential of both print and digital. Our specialism is in integrated campaigns that combine the reach and precision of digital with the impact and credibility of print. By using advanced data analytics, we make sure your message is targeted and relevant, boosting engagement and return on investment. For example, combining direct mail with digital advertising can increase response rates by 63% and leads by 53%.

Personalisation is at the heart of what we do. Whether it's a bespoke mailer, a QR code linking to a personalised landing page, or a creative print piece that stands out on a crowded desk, our in-house team manages everything from design to delivery, ensuring quality, compliance, and measurable results every step of the way.

Direct mail in the most innovative campaigns

This issue of Hello Marketing is all about change and innovation, but it's also about recognising what works. Direct mail and print aren't relics; they're vital, high-performing elements in the most innovative marketing strategies. They offer a tangible, trustworthy touchpoint that digital alone can't replicate. With sustainability top of mind, we're investing in eco-friendly print solutions and helping clients meet their environmental goals without compromising campaign impact.

The human touch endures

Seventeen years at The DS Group have shown me that in a world of endless digital options, real-world marketing, delivered with expertise, creativity, and data-driven precision still wins hearts and drives results. If you want to make your next campaign work harder, we're here to help you integrate the best of both worlds."

THE SCIENCE OF TOUCH:

WHY PRINT FEELS SO POWERFUL

When was the last time you really felt a piece of marketing? That long, hey? It's not surprising - we are surrounded by endless screens. However, neuroscience tells us our brains still crave something tangible. At The DS Group, we believe print's power lies in its ability to engage our senses, boost memory, and create moments that linger far beyond a digital scroll.

Print switches on the brain in ways digital can't

A peer-reviewed study published in PLOS ONE, the open-access scientific journal from the Public Library of Science, suggests that printed material activates our brains in ways digital screens do not. The 2023 research focused on young people, who remembered up to 70% of printed content, compared to just 45% in digital format.

It also found that print sparked stronger activation in the visual cortex (helping us process vivid details), the hippocampus and medial temporal lobe (key regions for storing memories and making sense of information), and parts of the brain linked to emotional engagement and motivation, such as the amygdala.

So, it's not just that print 'feels nice', it physically lights up the brain's pathways for seeing, remembering and feeling.

"Printed mail holds our attention 35% longer than digital messaging."

The feel-good chemicals behind print

Did you know that print marketing also taps into the brain's natural reward system? This helps messages stick. Physical interaction - opening an envelope, or turning a page can spark dopamine, linked to anticipation and motivation. It may also boost oxytocin, associated with trust and empathy, strengthening emotional bonds. These effects mean we pay more attention when we interact with tangible materials.

The magic of touch and dwell time

Touch is our first sense to develop, and it still shapes how we process the world. The physical feedback of turning pages or feeling quality stock creates a multi-sensory moment that digital can't replicate. According to the Royal Mail MarketReach, printed mail holds our attention 35% longer than digital messaging.

A great example is personalised university prospectuses. Many institutions now send beautifully designed printed packs to prospective students, knowing they'll dwell on them longer than an email. It's more than ink on paper; it's a keepsake that encourages repeat visits and discussion with family and friends.

Print and digital: better together

Of course, this isn't a print versus digital debate, it's about how both can work smarter together. Campaigns that mix physical mail with targeted digital follow-ups often see better response rates. A UK study by JICMAIL shows direct mail drives 70% of recipients to online activity. The key is to remember what makes each channel strong and design with the human brain in mind.

If you'd like to strengthen your next campaign with marketing people can really feel, and digest, we're ready to help.

"Print marketing taps into the brain's natural reward system, helping messages stick."



MAKE IT MATTER TWICE

HOW TO TRANSFORM YOUR DIGITAL CONTENT INTO LASTING, HIGH-IMPACT PRINT ASSETS

"So much of what defines your brand never leaves the screen. What if it did?"

Marketing teams are under increasing pressure to do more with less, and digital content is often seen as the efficient answer. But your most powerful content may be the one you repurpose – not reinvent.

2025 research from the Content Marketing Institute (CIM) revealed that only one in three B2B content marketers have a scalable model for content creation. 48% of those surveyed said their biggest scaling challenge is "not enough content repurposing."

Social posts, email updates, online reports and executive briefings are full of value. But they scroll by in seconds. The opportunity? Turning that content into printed assets that live longer, go deeper and speak louder.



Reframe the Report

Your Social Impact content deserves so much more than a social post. Create a collection of those posts to transform CSR updates or ESG outcomes into print-ready reports. Designed with infographics, images and staff stories, these are ideal for stakeholder meetings, board packs, and procurement teams demanding more than spreadsheets.



Build the Brand Wall

Mission, vision and values statements are often confined to decks or policy docs. Use them to create office wall graphics, vinyl quotes or environmental signage. Print brings internal culture to life visibly and consistently.

Celebrate In Style

A LinkedIn announcement, an employee spotlight, a performance milestone – these are moments worth printing. Think flags, lapel pins, event bunting or personalised postcards for staff. Recognition is more powerful when it's tangible.





The world's biggest global brands are turning to print repurposing. This year, Microsoft turned its internal newsletter into Signal, a printed magazine distributed at global events, proving that when digital stories resonate, they deserve a second life in print.

Educate Through Print

Turn your best digital guides into quick-reference leaflets. Whether it's onboarding checklists, inclusion guides or process overviews, printed handouts build shared knowledge across teams.

Publish with Purpose

A company magazine like Hello Marketing can bring together company news and views, thought leadership and case studies into a professional, shareable format. It adds value and positions your business as one with a voice worth following.

Brochures That Go Beyond

Instead of static PDFs, create tailored capability brochures, 'About Us' intros or sector-focused overviews. Use testimonials, leader quotes and digital metrics to build print assets that deliver trust at every touchpoint.

"Print isn't retro. It's strategic. It makes the intangible real."

From Digital to Desk

Every announcement, quote or slide could be more. A bookmark. A coaster. A poster. A calendar. Ask yourself: what are we already saying online, and what would happen if people could hold it?

Need some help?

AI is a powerful tool for repurposing your existing content into different formats. Read more about the evolution of AI in marketing on pages 8-9.

MS-UK: WHY INTEGRATED CAMPAIGNS WORK HARDER

"MS-UK uses a multichannel approach, but it's not about doing more, it's about combining channels intentionally. Today, most of our campaigns are multi-channelled including social media, Google ads, print and e-mail marketing. In the first half of 2025 we were able to reach as many people as in the whole of 2024 through our integrated strategy."

Sarah-Jane Elliott, MS-UK.



THE FUTURE OF PRINT IS NOW

HOW INNOVATION IS POWERING PRINT'S ROLE IN MODERN MARKETING

Print marketing in 2025 is not what it used to be. Today's campaigns combine tactile impact with digital precision, data-driven targeting and technological enhancements that create meaningful, measurable experiences. Innovations such as programmatic print, AR, NFC, hyperpersonalisation and even voice activation are redefining what print can do.

Let's explore the techniques transforming print into one of the most versatile channels in your marketing mix.

Programmatic Print: Timed, Triggered, Tactile

Programmatic print may not be as visual as AR, but its impact on performance is profound. This approach uses real-time customer behaviour such as cart abandonment or product views to trigger a tailored print response, like a postcard or brochure, without delay.

By blending digital agility, precise targeting and the sensory power of print, programmatic print enables marketers to deliver more relevant and timely messages that cut through clutter and prompt action.



(Source: Top Media Advertising)

Blended campaigns that combine print and digital are 400% more effective than digital alone.



Print That Connects: QR Codes, NFC and Voice

Print doesn't end on the page. With embedded NFC chips and QR codes, printed materials become portals to digital content, from landing pages and videos to app downloads and discount codes.

Now, voice-activated print is emerging as the next frontier. Using voice search triggers embedded in QR journeys, brands can invite audiences to interact verbally with digital assistants, enabling voice-controlled offers, responses or content playback. It's a seamless way to merge convenience and engagement.

A DS Group campaign using trackable QR codes saw 42% of recipients visit a landing page within 48 hours.





Augmented Reality: Print with Perspective

Augmented Reality (AR) brings dimensional storytelling to traditional print. Rather than static pages, users experience 3D environments, video overlays or interactive demos via their smartphones.

For example, UK universities have used AR in prospectuses to give students immersive campus tours from home. The University of Manchester reported a 30% rise in engagement and a 12% increase in enrolment linked to its AR campaign.

DS Group brought this capability to Alideck's product marketing, using AR to allow prospects to visualise decking installations in full scale, directly from their mobile devices.

**Interactive print
ads increase
average dwell
time from 25 to
75 seconds.**

(Source: Interactive Advertising Bureau)



Design You Can Feel: Tactile and Sensory Formats

Print's sensory appeal is central to its staying power. Textures, pop-ups, scents and materials add depth to a message that screens can't replicate.

One standout example came from Lladró Lighting, which created a pop-up lampshade advertisement using foldable paper mechanics. This interactive format invited users to physically engage with the brand and inspired organic social sharing.

The DS Group used a similar approach for Alideck, incorporating a wood-textured pop-up and a seeded insert linking to the brand's sustainability messaging. The result: memorable content, high-quality leads, and materials that stayed on desks long after emails were deleted.



Personalisation That Performs

Hyperpersonalisation is now a standard expectation in both print and digital. It relies on clean, segmented and compliant data to deliver content tailored to the recipient's preferences, behaviours or buying stage.

**94% of marketers
say personalisation
boosts sales; 72%
of consumers are
more likely to
respond.**

(Sources: HubSpot, Salesforce)

At The DS Group, every campaign is built on secure ISO 27001-certified data management, allowing clients to align real-world print with defined audience profiles. From dynamic text to customised offers, personalisation makes each piece highly relevant and more effective.



HOW TO CREATE A MULTI-TOUCH CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Planning a multi-touch journey is a bit like planning a road trip. You know where you're starting and where you want to end up, but it's also the stops along the way that keep everyone fuelled and moving forward. Whilst many marketers are familiar with the seven-touchpoint-rule, new research has challenged this, suggesting cold prospects can require up to 50 touchpoints. So, it's important to keep guiding your customers until they are ready to take action.

PLANNING THE JOURNEY

Brand awareness:

Whether you're the type of person who follows the sat nav or you just rely on road signs, having a 'rough idea' in your mind is reassuring – and this is exactly the role of brand awareness. It's important to consistently put your brand in front of consumers to achieve that all important prior knowledge that instils confidence. You might start with social posts or targeted online ads, which offer frequent brand visibility.

Engagement:

Next come the pit stops that keep people engaged – perhaps a striking piece of direct mail, like the one MS-UK used to reach supporters (see page 11). Their printed letter included a QR code to their website, creating a bridge to digital and making it easy to keep travelling along the route. The end result of a case study or a free resource is always a good teaser. Remember, some may require more pit stops than others.

Conversion:

You have reached your destination. A clear call-to-action, tracked with unique codes, confirms what's driving results and shows you exactly how your audience got there.

Retention:

This is the route home. From our experience, print is perfect for a lasting impact. A thank-you postcard or donor pack keeps the connection alive and prepares your customers for the next journey.



MULTI-TOUCH PLANNING CHECKLIST:

☒ Define clear goals and audience segments

☒ Map the journey: awareness, engagement, conversion, retention

☒ Pick the right mix of print and digital channels

☒ Plan unique codes, URLs, or QR triggers for tracking

☒ Keep brand look and tone consistent everywhere

☒ Measure each channel's impact with multi-touch attribution

☒ Refine your route based on what the data shows

KEEPING IT CONSISTENT AND CONNECTED

A good multichannel strategy feels joined up. People should recognise you wherever they find you – on social, in print, or in their inbox. True cross-channel engagement happens when each channel supports the others.

And to prove it works, we need to measure it. Multi-touch attribution (MTA) is the process of tracking how every interaction contributes to the final result. Over half (52%) of marketers now use MTA models, with 57% saying it's essential to their measurement toolkit (MMA

Global, 2024). A direct mail piece might demonstrate interest in a particular service through a trackable URL, prompting a service-specific e-shot that nudges someone to act. One without the other simply wouldn't have the same power.

HOW MANY TOUCHPOINTS BEFORE A SALE IN 2025?

Inactive customers only need...

1-3
touches on average

52%

of marketers used multi-touch attribution in 2024

(MMA Global)

A warm inbound lead will need...

5-12
touches on average

A cold prospect can require...

30-50
touches on average

"Whilst many marketers are familiar with the seven-touchpoint-rule, new research has challenged this, suggesting cold prospects can require up to 50 touchpoints."



THE PHYGITAL TREND

More brands are embracing the phygital trend, using physical marketing to guide people straight into their digital journeys. It could be a postcard on the doormat with a QR code for an exclusive offer. Or a beautifully designed catalogue that inspires someone to browse and buy on your website.

There's strong evidence for this too. Research shows people are 152% more likely to pay attention to print

ads than digital ones (LocaliQ). And if you've just read our piece on The Science of Touch (see page 15), you'll know that print activates deeper brain pathways than digital can alone. It's no surprise, then, that 30.7% of UK businesses are scaling up multi-channel marketing this year to link offline and online channels more effectively (LocaliQ). Ultimately, integrated campaigns build stronger engagement, trust and ROI.

Ready to get phygital?

Talk to us about cross-channel campaigns that will take your customers from A to B to sale.

GREEN PRINT:

A REAL-WORLD GUIDE TO SUSTAINABLE MARKETING

Sustainability without compromise...

According to Two Sides UK (2024), 46% of UK consumers wrongly believe digital communication is better for the environment than paper-based media. It's a revealing statistic and one that shows why clearer, evidence-led conversations around print sustainability are so important.

As proud members of the global **Two Sides** community, we're part of a collaborative network of organisations working to deliver lasting change across the print, paper, and packaging sector. This not-for-profit initiative drives fresh thinking and practical action advocating for positive steps that reduce our collective environmental impact. For us, that commitment isn't just theoretical. We hold ourselves accountable to Two Sides' guiding principles and apply them in how we work every day from operations to marketing.

"46% of UK consumers wrongly believe digital is always greener but recyclable print, paper wrap and eco inks tell a different story."

Two Sides UK



Small changes, big results

We help marketing teams make practical, planet-friendly decisions that add up. That starts with simple swaps, such as choosing responsibly sourced paper from well-managed forests (certified by schemes like the Forest Stewardship Council), switching from plastic poly-wrap to paper wrap, and using vegetable-based inks. Many of our clients now use fully recyclable formats for direct mail, helping campaigns stay impactful and responsible.

But it's not just about materials. Choosing the right production partner can make a real difference too. Our ISO 14001 accreditation confirms that our entire operation meets internationally recognised standards for environmental management from how we source paper to how we handle waste.



Printing with purpose

Sustainability is part of how we work, not just what we print. In the past 12 months, we've made a £2,500 donation to the **Essex Wildlife Trust** and supported local green initiatives through our Sharing the Love programme. These are small steps, but they're rooted in something bigger, using marketing to do good.

Our clients often tell us they feel overwhelmed by sustainability expectations. That's why we keep it practical. Greener print isn't about perfection, it's about progress.

WHAT TO ASK YOUR PRINTER BEFORE STARTING A GREENER CAMPAIGN

☒ Are you ISO 14001 certified for environmental management?

☒ Can you supply FSC® or PEFC® certified papers?

☒ Do you offer paper wrap as a plastic-free alternative?

☒ What options do you have for recyclable formats and eco inks?

THREE PRACTICAL WAYS TO MAKE YOUR PRINT GREENER

1

Switch from poly-wrap to paper wrap or a naked mailer

2

Use recyclable formats and avoid spot lamination or foils

3

Consolidate print and mailing to reduce transport emissions

At The DS Group, we invested £400,000 in one of the UK's fastest paper-wrap systems. As the only in-house provider in Essex, we can deliver high-quality, plastic-free mailings without outsourcing, saving time, carbon and cost.

"Many of our clients have moved away from plastic mailing completely, with paper wrap now the new standard for responsible campaigns."

Not ready to commit? Try a hybrid approach. We can advise on formats that reduce plastic but preserve design quality. Let your audience unwrap your brand the sustainable way.

The Paper Wrap Revolution

It's one of the simplest, most visible swaps you can make - ditching poly-wrap for paper wrap. And today's paper wrapping technology is not just eco-friendly, it's efficient and impactful.

- 100% recyclable and widely kerbside collected
- Fully brandable - you can add marketing messages, calls to action or artwork directly on the wrap
- Faster, high-volume compatible - modern machines match poly-wrap speeds, without compromising finish
- More trusted by consumers - paper feels natural and aligns with expectations for sustainability

NEWS BITES

BREAKING

FROM THE DS GROUP

As a values-first organisation, we're committed to supporting both our clients and the wider community. From podcasts to penalties, we've got it covered.



THE DS GROUP PODCAST BITES:

This year we launched our DS Group podcast, hosted by Louie Fennell, and **EPISODE ONE** naturally featured our Chairman, Allistair. Here's what he had to say:

"Good Communication is Good Business"

"From the first phone call to the final delivery, we believe in being open, honest, and responsive. Whether it's print, packaging or a full campaign, we take time to listen, guide, and get it right. That's why our clients keep coming back - not just for the product, but for the partnership."



JOHN SHULTZ, COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR OF BRENTWOOD TOWN FC

In **EPISODE TWO** of our podcast, we caught up with John Schultz, Commercial Director at Brentwood Town FC, to talk about what quality really means in marketing and why accuracy isn't optional. From business cards to full-scale campaigns, John's worked with us across multiple businesses. His verdict?



"The products are always right the first time and delivered when needed. If I had to sum up The DS Group in one word, it's simple: quality."

Whether it's a tight match-day turnaround or a branded promo push, we're proud to be the team behind the scenes, getting the job done and getting it right every time.



At the DS Group, we believe in supporting local talent, fostering teamwork, and empowering the next generation of athletes, which is why we're supporting local grassroots teams with big ambition.

We're proud sponsors of **Oyster FC Ladies Under 18s**; a fantastic team who finished fourth in the Essex and Suffolk Border League and reached the semi-finals of the League Cup in 2024/25.

Ipswich YM RUFC is the home of community rugby for around 300 men, women, and children, ranging from under sevens to seniors, and we're proud to see our logo on their kit.

We have a long-standing relationship as a sponsor and partner with **Brentwood Town FC**, and much of the print you'll see there comes straight from our Clacton HQ. Promoted to the Premier Division of the Isthmian League after a record-breaking season in 2024/25, Brentwood FC has a strong focus on developing young players through its Centre of Excellence Academy, youth, and women's teams.

Brooklands Youth FC is one of the oldest local grassroots clubs in Colchester, providing football coaching and teams for boys and girls of all abilities from reception age right through to under 16s.

Playing out of West Mersea, **Oyster Girls Football Club** is known for its commitment to youth development and inspiring girls to take up the beautiful game. We look forward to seeing two teams at Oyster FC sporting the DS logo on their kits next season.

We care deeply about the environment, and **Essex Wildlife Trust** achieves some incredible outcomes in nature conservation in our home county. As a long-term corporate partner, we were delighted to donate £2,500 to support their vital conservation work across Essex in 2025.



A PARTNERSHIP THAT GOES BEYOND PRINT

The DS Group's relationship with **MS-UK** spans more than a decade, beginning with Chairman Allistair Hunter's first London Marathon in support of the charity. Since then, he and his sons have raised funds through multiple events, including seven marathons, skydives and year-on-year corporate sponsorship.

Today, The DS Group supports MS-UK with core print services, from

branded merchandise and service booklets to fundraising materials and their printed magazine. The partnership is built on shared values and long-term commitment, extending well beyond print delivery into meaningful, mission-led support. We've delivered outstanding results through direct mail too. Read the case study on page 11.



FROM INBOX TO LETTERBOX: NAVIGATING THE POST-COOKIE WORLD

...without ignoring your most valuable asset - data

How we're using smart data and trusted delivery to help brands reconnect with real audiences.

By DS Group Chairman Allistair Hunter, with data insights from Louie Fennell - Data and Projects Manager



Why are third-party cookies crumbling?

In January 2025, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO - the UK Government body to protect data privacy) found that 134 of the UK's top websites were failing to meet cookie compliance standards, with some even in breach of data protection law.

These breaches were discovered as part of the ICO's plans to bring the UK's top 1,000 websites into compliance with data protection law and, in doing so, send a clear message about the future of data collection. Stephen Almond, the ICO's Executive Director of Regulatory Risk, stated:

"Uncontrolled tracking intrudes on the most private parts of our lives and can lead to harm. Our ambition is to ensure everybody has meaningful choice over how they are tracked online."



Who should you invite to your data party?

Let's run through some definitions to de-mystify data types.

Third-party data comes from companies that don't have a direct relationship with your audience, like cookies that track people across websites. It's often bought and sold and is now being phased out due to privacy concerns.

In contrast, first-party data is directly collected by your business, such as website visits, purchase history, or app usage.

Zero-party data, like quiz answers, preferences, or newsletter sign-ups, is willingly shared by users.

Without the third-party data they've relied on for over two decades, marketers now need to utilise more accurate and ethical data to build personalised consumer experiences in the privacy-first era.



Smart data drives real results

Direct mail is tangible. It doesn't rely on pixels or third-party tracking. It's trusted by consumers, especially in sectors where credibility, privacy, and personalisation matter.

When combined with strong data segmentation and ethical delivery practices, direct mail becomes a high-performance channel capable of producing results that digital formats increasingly struggle to match.

At The DS Group, we help our clients turn quality market data into high-quality campaign outcomes. From financial services to local retail and membership organisations, we've seen direct mail become the go-to choice for teams that need precision, reliability, and measurable ROI.



LOUIE FENNELL



Invest in quality data

Targeting should be planned with purpose, not aimed at huge audiences, and hoping something lands. That's why we work with premium UK data suppliers to build highly segmented, GDPR-compliant, ethical mailing lists. This allows our clients to send fewer, highly targeted campaigns directly to the people who are most likely to respond.

CAMPAIGN SEGMENTATION CAN BE BASED ON...



Age, income,
and life stage



Home ownership
and property value



Geography and
postcode sector



Affinity,
behaviour, or
previous response

CASE STUDY:

A recent campaign targeting homeowners aged 55+, with £35k+ household income and homes within a 20-mile catchment of a retirement living village, outperformed the client's prior digital-only campaigns, reducing acquisition cost per lead by 31%.

This approach minimises waste and maximises return, delivering the right message to the right people, with care and compliance built in.

80% of consumers say they're open to personalised marketing, showing that granular, consented targeting drives stronger engagement and better ROI.

The Data & Marketing Association's Customer Engagement: Future Trends 2024





Why trust matters more than tracking

Good data begins with trust. We always recommend ethical list sourcing, built on clear opt-ins and transparent privacy notices in line with ICO guidance. Whether you're using your own data or purchasing lists, it's essential to start with consent.

Next comes your data audit. Review your CRM and email databases for accuracy, relevance, and recency. Are contacts still active? Do you have the right permissions? Is the data fresh and usable?

Once your data is clean, it's time to segment. Start with first-party behaviour, such as previous purchases or campaign clicks, and layer in zero-party data, like stated preferences or survey responses, to build a richer, more accurate picture of your audience.

The good news? We can help with your data from planning and auditing to campaign planning and delivery.

How to action your privacy-compliant data

Re-engage contacts on your email list who haven't opened, clicked, or responded to recent campaigns. This allows your customers to update their preferences or unsubscribe, while simultaneously allowing you to win them back with relevant content.

Use CRM data for targeted campaigns, including digital adverts and personalised print. These ads use first-party data, so make sure you are clear when collecting customer information that the data may be used for advertising and encourage them to opt in.

Set up remarketing campaigns for non-converting website users. Use server-side tracking to keep the data first-party by securely controlling what data is sent from your server and where it's sent.

Reward and retain. Take a human approach when contacting your database. Be transparent about your data ethics and offer incentives or rewards as a thank you for engaging with you.





INTRODUCING THE DS GROUP CLIENT PORTAL

As the use of data, risk and governance evolves, as a data processor we always aim to stay a step ahead. Our clients have access to a secure online portal to support efficient, encrypted file sharing between clients and project teams.

Designed to eliminate the limitations of email-based submissions, the portal allows for the seamless transfer of large or sensitive files, supporting all standard formats with no file type restrictions.

Key Features:

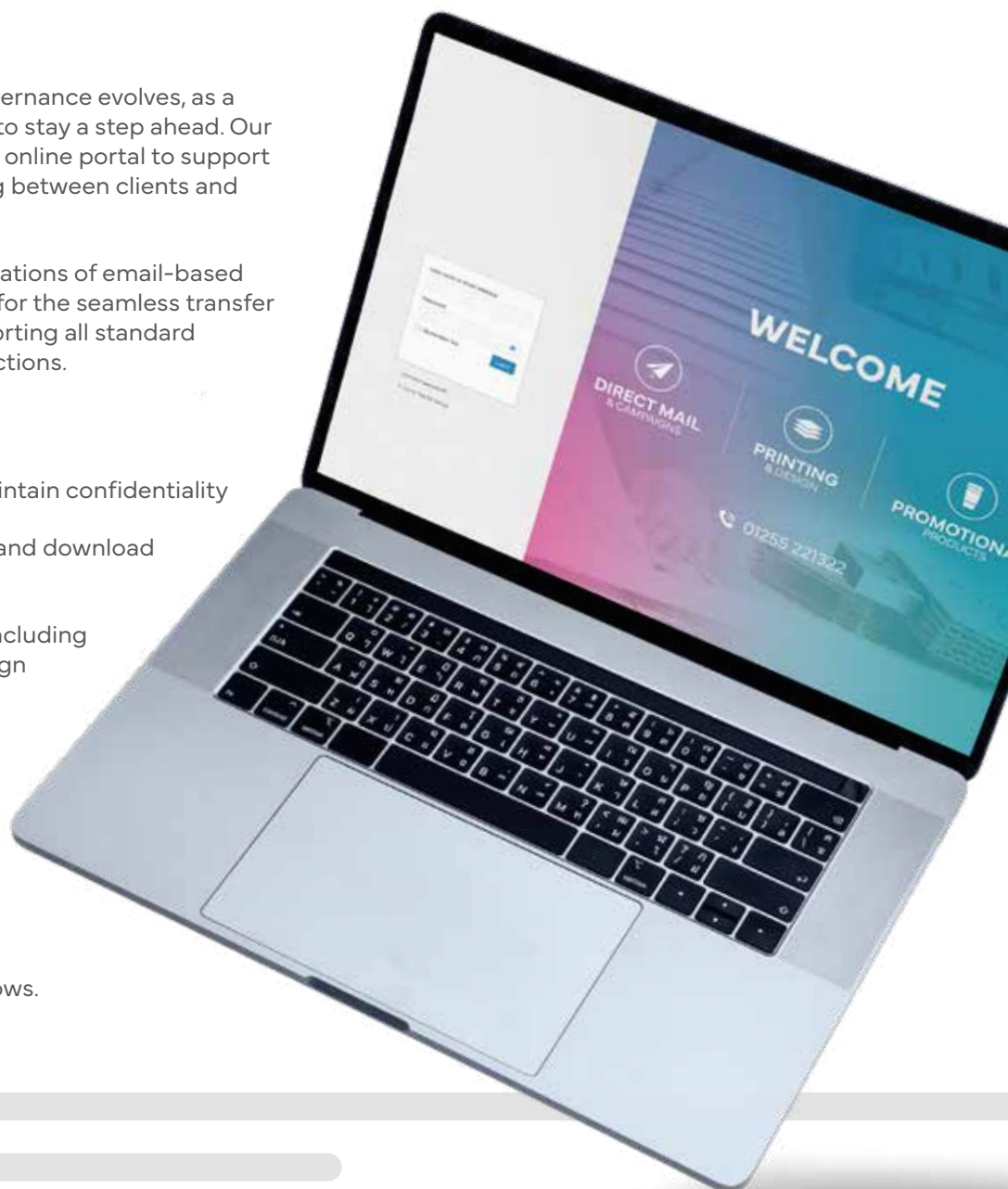
Encrypted data transfer to maintain confidentiality

Streamlined access to upload and download files at any time

Supports multiple file types, including artwork, data sets, and campaign materials

Reduces reliance on email, improving project efficiency and security

The DS Group client portal reflects our ongoing investment in secure, user-friendly technology to support professional marketing workflows.



Data integrity built in, not bolted on

With inbox scams, phishing, and rising cyber threats, how you manage data has never been more important.

- We are ISO 27001 certified for information security
- We are Cyber Essentials accredited
- We've operated for over 20 years with zero data breaches
- All campaigns run through a secure, encrypted client portal with full audit trail
- Your customer data never leaves our environment. And you never need to wonder who's handling it behind the scenes.

DURA COMPOSITES

CASE STUDY

A TRUSTED PARTNERSHIP BASED ON VALUES, QUALITY AND RELIABILITY



How Dura Composites and The DS Group deliver joined-up, purpose-led marketing

Dura Composites is a designer, manufacturer and supplier with global impact. Known for its award-winning innovation in advanced composites, the company has secured three royal honours – including a Queen's Award for Enterprise and the 2024 King's Award for Innovation. At the heart of its commercial success is the d² product range: a patented suite of high-performance composite walkway systems that has set a new benchmark for sustainability in infrastructure and engineering.

By redesigning a product that hadn't changed in the industry in 35 years, Dura has achieved an industry-first: reducing embodied

carbon by up to 50% without compromising on strength, safety or compliance. Today, the d² range accounts for 80% of the company's turnover and has saved over 2.3 million kilograms of CO₂. That's more than just innovation; it's a shift in what customers now expect from construction materials.

As Dura scales internationally, its approach to marketing reflects the same values as its product design: efficient, integrated, and committed to doing things better. For almost 15 years, Dura has partnered with The DS Group to deliver trusted, sustainable marketing, from printed assets and direct mail to event support and brand collateral. We spoke to Dura Composites' Head of Marketing, Nadia Harvey, and Senior Graphic Designer, Bryony Horne, to explore how that partnership works.



A local partner with global impact

For Dura, working with local partners is about more than proximity - it's about accountability and shared purpose.

"We're Clacton-based. The DS Group is just up the road. We value that. They're not just a supplier. They're a partner who understands our world and delivers for us every time".

– Nadia Harvey, Head of Marketing, Dura Composites

DS supports Dura across all areas of marketing, from urgent short-run print to direct mail and exhibition packs for international events, all designed, printed and fulfilled with speed and precision. Team members regularly visit the DS site as part of onboarding or to see production in action.

"It helps our team understand the print process and how to make smarter decisions. DS are always happy to share their knowledge."

– Nadia Harvey, Head of Marketing, Dura Composites



Bringing values to life in print

Dura's mission and values aren't just printed on the wall - they're embedded into every communication. When the company created Wayfinder, a beautifully designed internal handbook to reflect its mission, vision and people-first culture, it needed a partner who would take the project seriously.

"This project meant a lot to our people and culture team, and DS treated it with the reverence it deserved."

– Nadia Harvey, Head of Marketing, Dura Composites

The DS Group team advised on sustainable paper stocks, finishes and layouts, helping Dura create a tactile, high-quality piece that reinforces what the business stands for.

"Our materials need to feel premium, but they also need to reflect our sustainability goals. DS get that balance spot on, and they protect our brand standards at every stage."

– Bryony Horne, Senior Graphic Designer, Dura Composites

Sustainability at every step

As the creators of the world's lowest carbon composite walkway, Dura is committed to reducing environmental impact across its operations, and its marketing is no exception.

"We've changed how we print, what we use, and how much we order. The DS Group helps us minimise waste, choose recyclable formats and make informed decisions on every job."

– Nadia Harvey, Head of Marketing, Dura Composites

Together, the two teams have eliminated unnecessary lamination, moved to FSC®-certified paper, and adopted lean print runs that reduce excess stock. For Dura, it's about building integrity across the full customer experience - not just the product.



Integrated, international and on-brand

Print still plays a key role in Dura's integrated marketing strategy, particularly in sectors like construction, marine and rail, where physical materials build trust. The DS Group enables this with on-demand production, regional versioning and international fulfilment.

"For us, print is still an important strategic channel, especially in technical sectors where tangible materials reinforce trust, brand values, and compliance messaging".

– Nadia Harvey, Head of Marketing, Dura Composites

"We use QR codes to link print to digital, so campaigns are trackable and connected. DS Group make it easy to manage that across different formats and markets."

– Bryony Horne, Senior Graphic Designer, Dura Composites



Best practice in action

This partnership is a model of sustainable, joined-up marketing, and proof that local, long-term collaboration delivers lasting results.

“It’s not just about getting things printed. It’s about working with people who understand our business purpose and genuinely care about helping us get it right.”

– Nadia Harvey, Head of Marketing, Dura Composites



15 years of trusted, values-led partnership



Print that supports a global, multi-touch marketing strategy



Tangible communications that reflect brand and ESG goals



Sustainable production: FSC®, plastic-free, lean and local



ISO-certified environmental management on both sides – helping evidence sustainability in the supply chain



Agile turnaround without compromising brand standards

THE WAYFINDER CASE STUDY:

Culture That Lives in Print

Dura Composites, a three-time King’s Award-winning British manufacturer with international reach has built its culture around PRIDE: Purpose, Respect, Innovation, Decisiveness and Encouragement. These values shape how the business leads, communicates and grows. To bring this culture to life internally, Dura created Wayfinder, a colourful, immersive company magazine designed to tell its story to present and future team members and embed its unique values into every aspect of the business.

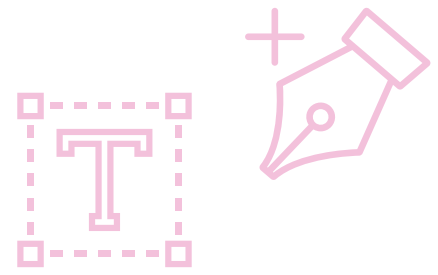
“This project meant a lot to our people and culture team, and DS treated it with the reverence it deserved.”

– Nadia Harvey, Head of Marketing, Dura Composites



BRAND STRATEGY:

IS YOUR BRAND STILL EARNING ATTENTION?



When did you last give your brand identity a health check?

It's a question we ask our clients often, because subtle changes – refreshed imagery, sustainable packaging, or a personalised print piece can achieve higher engagement and rebuild trust. And it's an exercise you should keep revisiting. According to a study last year by Cardlytics on the UK State of Loyalty Spend, 71% of UK consumers trust a brand more when it feels current and authentic.



Values that connect

Strong branding reflects your values in ways your audience can see and believe in. In 2024, research shows that sustainability, inclusion and diversity are more than just good intentions – they directly influence buying decisions.

Take Gen Z, for example. A 2024 State of Consumer Spending Report by experience management platform, First Insight, revealed that 62% of Gen Z shoppers prefer to buy from brands that value sustainability, and 73% will even pay more for sustainable products.

This generation is not alone. According to Kantar's Brand Inclusion Index 2024, three quarters of UK consumers say inclusion and diversity play a part in what they choose to buy. Put simply, people want to see their own principles reflected in the brands they trust.

Print can play a big part here too. We help clients show their commitment to sustainability through responsibly sourced materials, carbon-balanced paper, and recyclable packaging design. We also work with brands to make their communications more inclusive, whether that's clear, easy-to-read layouts, or accessible print formats for different audiences.

62%

Gen Z shoppers prefer to buy from brands that value sustainability

73%

will even pay more for sustainable products



Big on brand personality

When personality matches your values and visuals, it creates a voice that people trust. Marks & Spencer is a fantastic example of this. In 2024, M&S saw a 38% increase in its brand valuation, reaching \$2.5 billion. This success was built on a clear shift in the brand's personality, modernising its tone, refreshing store environments, and improving product quality. M&S reconnected with shoppers and stood out in a market where other retailers saw little to no growth.

What's interesting here is that M&S didn't rebrand, it restyled and refreshed to rebuild loyalty and attract a whole new generation of customers.

Whether you're sending out direct mail, designing packaging, or creating campus materials, your brand should evolve with the people you serve. When it does, you'll keep earning attention – and loyalty.



FIVE REASONS TO REFRESH YOUR BRAND IDENTITY

1 BUILD TRUST

Consumers crave authenticity: 88% say it's important when choosing who to buy from (Huddle Creative).

2 REFLECT YOUR VALUES

From sustainability to inclusion, your brand values shape loyalty: 73% will pay more for sustainable brands (First Insight).

3 SHOW YOUR PERSONALITY

A clear, relatable personality helps your brand stand out, as M&S's 38% brand value rise in 2024 demonstrates (Retail Times).

4 INCREASE LOYALTY

69% of UK adults say trust influences their purchase decisions (Marketing Week).

5 BOOST PERFORMANCE

77% of UK business leaders believe design trends boost company performance (MadeByShape).



Can we help with a brand audit?

We'll help you take a fresh look at your brand, assets and strategic direction.

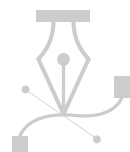


TEAM Q&A:

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE PRINT



BEN EMMERSON
GRAPHIC DESIGNER



How do you use design to make printed campaigns stand out in a digital world?

Print gives people something they can hold, keep, and connect with in a way that digital often can't. I use bold visuals, interesting formats, and quality materials to make sure a piece grabs attention. It's about creating something that feels special and worth holding onto.

What's a design trend you're excited about, and how does it help brands connect with real people?

I love seeing more handmade and expressive design styles coming back like bold type, textures, and imperfect elements. It makes brands feel more human and down-to-earth, which helps people relate to them.

How do you approach sustainability in your design choices?

I design with purpose by using materials that are recycled or responsibly sourced, keeping ink usage to a minimum, and making sure the final piece is useful or impactful enough that people want to keep it. I also work closely with our print partners to find eco-friendly options wherever possible.

Can you share an example where design made a measurable difference to a campaign's results?

Honestly, design has been a game-changer in every project I've worked on. Whether it's increasing brand recognition, boosting engagement, or driving sales, good design always makes a difference.

From crafting clear, compelling visuals that grab attention to making sure the overall experience resonates with people, it all adds up. I've seen time and again how thoughtful design can take a campaign from good to great, creating real, measurable results.

What's your favourite part of working with the production team to bring ideas to life?

I love seeing an idea come to life off the screen. Working with production is always exciting especially when we get to test new finishes or solve a tricky detail together. It's a team effort, and that part of the process is really rewarding.

What's your go-to way to unwind after a busy day in the office?

I spend some time with my boy Gus (he's a Cocker Spaniel x Lab), have a nice dinner with my partner, and maybe squeeze in a bit of Xbox.

What's one thing your team might be surprised to learn about you?

I love everything to do with the sea and ocean. When I'm on holiday, you can't keep me out of the water whether it's snorkelling or freediving.





MARK EDWARDS PRODUCTION AND WAREHOUSE MANAGER



What's the most rewarding part of managing both production and warehouse operations at The DS Group?

Knowing I have a dedicated team behind me who share the same exacting and professional standards as myself. Every job, no matter how large or small, is completed and processed as though it were their own.

I also know I have office and management staff who are always there to help when something needs discussion or advice.

There's real satisfaction in completing all of our jobs on time with efficiency, dedication, and professionalism.

What's a recent operational challenge you and your team overcame, and how did it benefit our clients?

We tend to find most jobs are not a challenge, thanks to the amazing team we have here at The DS Group.

One example, though, was more of a time challenge: we had to process and pack thousands of marathon bags in a very short space of time. To overcome this, staff who were on holiday came in to help, and both office staff and management joined in as well to meet our client's needs. The job was completed on time, and the client was extremely happy with the result.

What's one thing you wish more people understood about the logistics behind delivering integrated marketing campaigns?

I wish more people understood the human element of a marketing campaign. Something might look great on a computer or in a digital file, but there's often little consideration of the weight of the product or the complexity of the design which all has to be printed, manually handled, and processed by staff you'll never see or speak to.

How do you keep your team motivated and engaged, especially during busy campaign periods?

I'm thankful that my team is already motivated and engaged most days. I think this is partly due to us being an employee-owned company as it benefits everyone.

There's usually laughing, joking, and general banter, which helps keep the mood light. We also regularly hold staff events, like going to the races, bowling, or trying out any idea a team member suggests for relaxing and bonding outside of work.

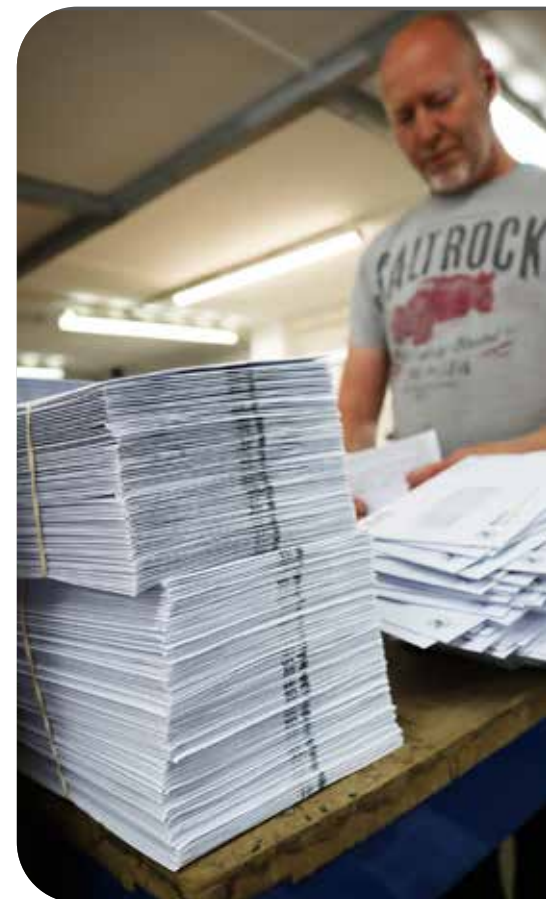
That closeness keeps the team happy and motivated to work hard and deliver their best. Whatever the job, it will be fulfilled to the best of our ability and with a smile on our faces.

What's your go-to way to unwind after a busy day in the office?

I wind down by walking my dog and playing on my PlayStation.

What's one thing your team might be surprised to learn about you?

There are a couple of things! I was once a professional actor and even appeared in Blackadder and a few commercials. I also play guitar and had a band called 'Doris Pops the Question' our claim to fame is supporting Doctor and the Medics. (Yes, really!)



HELLO TEAM!

THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Allistair Hunter
Chairman

Having run The DS Group for the last 24 years Allistair has handed the reins over to Tracy Norton-Mead. As Chairman his role is now more client focused and is seen as the face of the company.



Christopher Corke
Financial Director

Chris controls the company's annual operating budget to ensure that all financial targets are met, as well as providing financial guidance.



Tracy Norton-Mead
Managing Director

Working at The DS Group for nearly 18 years, Tracy now operates as Managing Director and oversees the smooth running of the company on a day to day basis.



THE TEAM



Ben Emmerson
Graphic Designer

Having joined us back in 2016 as an apprentice, Ben is now responsible for keeping our customers happy with his talented graphic design skills!



Donna Fennell
Production & Data Technician

Donna is the data guru for the company and is adept in her field. With a sharp eye for detail and a passion for streamlining processes, Donna plays a vital role in keeping our operations running smoothly.



Damien Grothier
Warehouse & Production Assistant

Damien is keen to take on any task and runs our direct mail machinery.



Gary Richards
Sales Executive

Gary thrives on connecting with clients and turning ideas into action. With energy and drive, he makes sure every campaign gets off to a flying start and keeps momentum right through to delivery.



Jonathan Gees
Warehouse Assistant

Ensuring that all of the warehouses are in order and every box is in its set place is Jonathan's role. He also assists on the production machines and is a whizz on the forklift.



Lewis Smith
Warehouse Assistant

Assisting with direct mail campaigns, Lewis runs a variety of machines and ensures that clients mailings go out the door and hit door steps when required.



Louie Fennell

Data and Projects Management

Louie is the engine behind our projects, keeping data sharp and deadlines tight. With a knack for problem-solving and a focus on results.



Mark Edwards

Production and Warehouse Manager

Making sure that all direct mail campaigns are fulfilled and on time is Mark's pivotal role within the production team. He also brings cheekiness and fun to the team.



Matt Brice

Warehouse and Production Assistant

Matt plays a key role in direct mail campaigns by operating multiple machines and making sure client mailings are processed and delivered on schedule.



Rob Scott

Assistant Print Finisher

Rob is quick to get stuck in with the finishing team, bringing energy and precision to every job. From the small details to the big runs, he makes sure print leaves our doors looking its best.



Russell Mead

Customer Relationship Manager

Russell prides himself on handling your job with care, from taking the initial order right through to delivery - ensuring you receive the quality and hands-on care we are known for!



Sam Cooper

Multi-channel Marketer Apprentice

Samuel Cooper is a fantastic addition to our team. With his fresh enthusiasm and passion for marketing, We can't wait to see his innovative ideas in action!



Sean Killen

Senior Print Finisher

Sean continuously develops the Print Operations at The DS Group. He is an expert in his field and brings years of valuable knowledge and experience to his role.



Steve Brogan

Print Finisher

Steve works within the Digital Print team and his finishing skills are second to none. He also maintains and runs various printers and finishing machines, including large format.



Will Cook

Warehouse Manager

Will's heads up the warehouse team and the day-to-day running of production. He is responsible for running various machinery including the paper-wrapping machine, poly-wrap machine and envelope inserters.

Proud to be an **EMPLOYEE OWNED BUSINESS**



DIRECT MAIL
& CAMPAIGNS



PRINTING
& DESIGN



PROMOTIONAL
PRODUCTS

**R ENVELOPE INSERTION POSTERS BRANDED CLOTHING DOOR TO
NS FULFILMENT BROCHURES EXHIBITION STATIONERY TROPHIES
POLYWRAPPING LEAFLETS ONE-PIECE MAILERS AND MORE...**



CONTACT US TODAY

No matter the size of your requirements, we are equipped to assist you.



01255 221322



hello@thedsgroup.co.uk



thedsgroup.co.uk

