

When we switched our prepress workflow software, we lost our built-in ability to measure ink usage for web jobs after the job is printed. This data is useful for quoting larger jobs while trying to be as competitive/accurate as possible.

What tools are other web printers using to measure ink usage? In addition, if you are simply treating ink tote usage as an overhead expense, how are you handling it?

We've been treating it as an overhead expense, but are now thinking of using a simple system based on page count, quantity printed, and a rough gauge of ink coverage (light, medium, heavy). While not precise, it may get us in the ballpark.

We billed ink to the job based on usage by weight. We ran from totes that were on scales. This did not help in estimating other than to look at stocks, coverage and do a rough calculation to jobs already completed. We did not have a better alternative at the time.

We do not have web printing – our ink usage is done in the estimating package until the art work comes in – then I'll redo the calculation.

Headset and in some cases sheetfed printing presses may be equipped with an ink pumping system that pumps ink from totes or drums to the printing presses. High-pressure gear meters are commonly used with ink pumping systems to monitor press ink usage. The gear meters are inserted in the ink delivery pipelines near the press. The meters have local displays and optional remote displays installed near the press control console. Gear meters measure the volume of ink that flows through the meter. The local and remote displays convert the volume measured by the meter into pounds using the specific gravity of the ink. Each ink type has a unique specific gravity that varies by color.
