

# Printful Outlines The Evolution of Print on Demand: From Niche Experiment to Global Industry

*How Printful is driving the U.S. shift from mass production to mass personalization.*

CHARLOTTE, NC, UNITED STATES, December 5, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Print on Demand (POD) has become so embedded in eCommerce that many shoppers don't notice it happening. A customer orders a hoodie, a poster, or a mug, and the item is created specifically for that order - often within hours - then shipped directly to their door. What feels normal now would have seemed counterintuitive not long ago.



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For most of the 20th century, printing and manufacturing only made financial sense at scale. Businesses had to order in bulk, store inventory, and hope it sold. POD flipped that model on its head by making it possible to sell first and produce later, removing the risk of unsold stock and opening commerce to anyone with a design and an audience.

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*Davis Sarmins, Director of Growth Marketing at Printful*

That transformation didn't happen overnight. It's the result of the [evolution of POD](#) from a niche publishing workaround into a tech-powered, globally scaled manufacturing model that now underpins modern online retail.

## From Publishing Experiment to Merchandise Revolution

The roots of POD trace back to publishing, where digital printing started solving a costly problem: warehouses piled high with books that were never sold. Printing only after a purchase

was placed allowed authors and publishers to operate without minimum orders or expensive storage.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, that logic spread beyond books. Early merchandise platforms proved that if a single book could be printed on demand, so could a t-shirt, a sticker, or a mug. Once digital textile printing matured - especially [direct-to-garment printing](#) for cotton apparel and sublimation for polyester goods - POD moved from novelty into a repeatable manufacturing system that could scale alongside online retail.

## The Technology That Made POD Scalable

POD's rise has always been inseparable from technical breakthroughs. Screen printing dominated the past, but its setup costs made one-off production inefficient. The arrival of commercial DTG printers in the 2000s made full-color, single-unit apparel realistic, while improvements in white ink expanded printing onto dark garments. Sublimation opened the door to all-over prints and polymer-coated products, and direct-to-film in the 2020s added versatility across fabrics and materials. Each step reduced cost, increased speed, and widened what could be produced after purchase, turning POD into an industrial model rather than a small-shop workaround.

## Printful's Role at the Center of POD's Growth

Printful has been a defining force in taking [print-on-demand](#) from a promising idea to a global industry. Founded in 2013, Printful built a platform that merged technology with dependable fulfillment, letting merchants connect their stores to production with just a few clicks. By combining strong integrations with major eCommerce platforms, consistent quality standards, and a fast-expanding catalog, Printful helped make POD a mainstream and trusted way to build a business in the United States and beyond.

In 2024, Printful and Printify announced a merger that joined two of the largest POD ecosystems in the world. The combined company brings together Printful's in-house fulfillment scale and Printify's broad partner network, expanding product access, routing flexibility, and delivery reach while keeping POD simple for sellers.

"Print on Demand succeeded because it removed the biggest tax on creativity: inventory risk," said Davis Sarmins, Director of Growth Marketing at Printful. "Printful was built to make that freedom industrial-grade. We've helped creators and brands move from ideas to real products without gambling on stock."

## The U.S. POD Boom by the Numbers

The United States has been one of the most important engines of POD's rise, and the numbers reflect a market moving from rapid adoption to long-term infrastructure. U.S. POD revenue is

projected to climb sharply through the next decade, with forecasts showing the market growing from roughly \$3.5 billion in 2025 to well over \$20 billion by the early 2030s, representing annual growth above 20%.

Apparel remains the largest share of POD sales in the U.S., but home goods, accessories, and lifestyle categories are climbing quickly as personalization expands into daily life. North America continues to lead global POD revenue share, highlighting the U.S. role in scaling both the technology and the business model worldwide.

### U.S. Case Studies: POD in Action

In the U.S., POD has enabled a new generation of creator-driven and niche businesses to scale without warehouses or capital-heavy inventory. The automotive YouTube brand Itsjusta6 began by producing and shipping merchandise themselves, but the operational load quickly capped growth. After shifting to Printful, the brand scaled to around 6,500 orders per month, while staying focused on content and community rather than storage and shipping.

Another example comes from UMAI Clothing, a U.S. anime-inspired streetwear label that used Printful to expand beyond core apparel into hoodies, wall art, and accessories without tying up cash in unsold stock.

These businesses underscore what POD has become in the U.S.: a low-risk way to test creative ideas, scale what resonates, and serve communities whose tastes change fast.

### Sustainability: POD's Advantage and Its Ongoing Work

POD's environmental promise rests on a simple improvement over bulk manufacturing: it produces only what gets purchased. That slashes overproduction, excess warehousing, and landfill waste, especially in categories like apparel and gifting.

At the same time, POD still has real sustainability challenges - transfer films, pretreat processes, and synthetic substrates remain part of the footprint. The industry is responding with better water-based inks, more eco-certified materials, and smarter routing that produces closer to the end buyer, reducing shipping distance and emissions.

Printful is investing in these improvements as part of making on-demand manufacturing not just efficient, but increasingly responsible at scale.

### The Next Chapter of POD

The future of POD is already taking shape. Distributed micro-factories, automation, and smarter order routing are shortening delivery times across the U.S. AI-assisted design tools are helping new sellers enter the market faster, while established brands are using POD to test collections before committing to large runs. As standards around quality, sustainability, and intellectual

property tighten, POD is maturing into a durable, trusted manufacturing pillar for eCommerce.

#### About Printful

Printful is a leading print-on-demand technology and fulfillment platform that empowers businesses to design, sell, and ship custom products without inventory.

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