As our organization evaluates the future of the internal print shop, I wanted to share important research conducted by Colorado State University: CSU Print Shop Findings

Their study compared institutions that outsourced printing with those that maintained in-house operations. Key findings include:

- **Cost Control & Revenue Return** – With an internal shop, most revenue stays **in-house** (except for staff, equipment, and inventory costs). Outsourcing sends **100% of print spend outside the organization.** Dollars kept internal can be reinvested into mission-critical projects.
- **Operational Benefits** – In-house printing provides faster turnaround, cost savings, quality control, brand consistency, and confidentiality of sensitive documents.
- **Lessons from Peers** – Institutions that outsourced often faced higher costs, slower service, and loss of brand oversight.

The Risks of Outsourcing
While outsourcing firms often promise cost savings, new equipment, and improved technology, real-world experience tells a different story:

- **Inferior Service** – Organizations that outsourced printing report slower turnaround, missed deadlines and reduced customer care.
- **High Staff Turnover** – Outsourcing vendors typically rotate staff frequently, resulting in no continuity, no institutional knowledge and diminished print quality.
- **Brand Erosion** – Outsourced employees rarely review files for quality, leading to off-color prints, poor logo reproduction, increased costs and damage to brand reputation.

Case Study: Wichita State University
Wichita State outsourced its in-plant with the expectation of staff retention, equipment upgrades and lower costs. Instead, the vendor:

- Hired only one staff member and cycled through **nine replacements** in five years.
- Failed to implement the promised Web-to-Print system.
- Ignored brand standards, producing off-color materials and low-resolution logos.
- Delivered poor service, slow equipment support, and missed deadlines.

After five years, the university terminated the outsourcing contract and **reopened its in-plant**. The rebuilt shop has thrived—growing volumes, lowering costs year-over-year,

upgrading to state-of-the-art equipment, and restoring confidence across campus.

Closing an in-plant may look like a cost-saving measure in the short term, but in practice it can result in **higher long-term expenses and diminished control.** Outsourcing may look appealing in the short term, but often results in hidden costs, service failures, and brand damage. Increasingly, organizations that have outsourced are bringing their in-plants back—because internal print shops deliver better quality, greater accountability, and true long-term savings.

For more detail, I encourage you to review CSU's full report:
https://cr.colostate.edu/print-shop/

CSU Print Shop Findings

Wichita State University Outsourcing Failure "It Was a Nightmare"