HP to Acquire Online Photo Company

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Hewlett-Packard's definitive agreement with Tabblo will soon allow users to print text, graphics, photos and other content from the Web.

In an effort to keep pace with the growing online photo-sharing and photo printing markets, Hewlett-Packard has announced its plans to acquire Tabblo, a Web-based imaging software that allows users to customize images with text, graphics and photos.

Tabblo, based out of Cambridge, Mass., utilizes a template engine that applies an AJAX (Asynchronous JavaScript and XML) interface, which makes updates to the user interface without having to reload the entire browser page.

"We're moving from a world where desktop applications have printing functionality well-integrated into their design - to an online world that in most cases, isn't set up for easy printing," said Pradeep Jotwani, senior vice president of supplies, imaging and printing group at Palo Alto, Calif.-based HP.

HP is pursuing companies that could possibly use HP's Web-to-print technology, making it easier for the company's customers to print the content that they need from the Web site.

"HP's plan is to bring this promising technology in-house, and combine it with HP technology and resources to optimize and increase the availability of superior Web-based printing for consumers and businesses alike," Jotwani said.

Jotwani used Tabblo's PhotoCube as an example of a product that is currently using this Web-to-print technology.

"In this example, you upload photos quickly and arrange them in a template provided by Tabblo," Jotwani said. "Once you've arranged your photos, you simply print a PDF."

Jotwani added that you could take that same method but switch out photos and replace them with text or graphics and change the template from a photo cube to something like a brochure or a book.

"One can see how this technology could be applied to a business setting - or expanded to other consumer applications like building travel guides, recipe books and blog books," Jotwani said.

HP said that it expects to close the acquisition within the next weeks and does not intend to disclose financial information regarding the acquisition.

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