

Print Management

Reduce your printing costs by an average of 30%

Expert knowledge means success

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Note: This publication has not been updated since it was last published. Some of the hyperlinks may have changed and may need updating. In addition, some of the information in this publication may be out of date.

Introduction

A few years ago, it was envisaged that by now, we would all be working within “paperless offices”, and indeed some people are. However, for most businesses, the rapid growth of E-mail usage, document creation and transmission and access to other printable sources such as web pages, presentations and brochures has actually brought an increase in the number of pages printed.

It is increasingly common for businesses to receive marketing materials or business newsletters through E-mail which they may then print locally; a significant cost saving for the marketer, but another potential printing cost for the receiving business. This “distribute-electronically-and-print-locally” approach is also used internally by larger businesses driving up local office printer volumes. Electronic data storage is also increased by this approach, through system generated e-mail storage, downloaded files and employee initiated saves.

Although many documents that would previously have been posted are now sent electronically, many individuals still have an innate mistrust of electronic data storage and prefer to print out a hard copy of the said document for filing, thus resulting in a further increase in electronic data storage requirements without the benefit of paper reduction.

Why consider Print Management?

The bottom line

Put simply, being in control of your print environment and its use could save your business an average of 30% of your printing costs.

Escalating printing costs are often overlooked because their cost is not centrally managed. Decreasing prices for printer hardware can result in many printers being located in different areas throughout a business with each department having responsibility for its own printing costs. The IT department may provide the hardware and

maintenance whilst consumables (ink and paper) may be purchased along with other office supplies by a central department and accounted for as part of the company’s overheads. Calls to the “help desk” regarding printer issues may be accounted for under a general service account rather than cost allocated according to type of call.

The high price of consumables

The cost of ink has been estimated as making up 75% of the total cost of in-house printing. It is easy therefore to only consider the cost of ink, when in fact the total cost of printing needs to be considered.

Cost-per-page

Printer manufacturers now provide an estimate of cost-per-page printed which takes into account wear and tear of the printing device and use of ink and paper supplies. Obviously, these estimates can only be considered as a guide, as the ink coverage will vary significantly from one page to the next, depending on the density of the document printed. The amount of ink per page will be considerably greater if you are printing images rather than documents, and this needs to be borne in mind when considering manufacturers’ cost-per-page figures.

Improvements in technology have done much to optimise the cost-per-page. Hardware has consistently decreased in price over the years, and modern printers are designed to be able to accurately determine how much ink needs to be used to achieve the right effect for both documents and images.

Employee printer behaviour

Employee printer behaviour has a significant impact on printing costs, particularly if no documented policy is in place for printer usage. According to the market research company International Data Corporation, only 28% of businesses are able to calculate the volume of pages printed each month by their employees. A simple step forward to reducing your print costs is to educate your employees in their printer usage. Some level of printer monitoring or audit will be required to accurately determine printer usage behaviour and take control of the costs associated with printer resources.

But knowing what, where and why your employees print has wider benefits than just cost. It can also assist in identifying inappropriate or illegal behaviour.



Significant cost savings can be made

Actively managing your printer fleet can result in significant savings.

Research by The International Data Corporation indicates that some businesses have achieved savings of up to 40% by actively managing their printer fleets.

Source: www.idc.com/

How your employees can help reduce your printing costs

Educate your employees to consider the following when printing:

- If you don't need a hard copy, don't print one.
- If you do need a hard copy, only print the actual part of the e-mail or document required. Most print services have a "selection" option that allows you to select the text to be printed.
- If you only need the printout on a temporary basis, print in draft quality.
- If it doesn't have to be in colour, don't print it in colour. Use grayscale or "black cartridge only" instead.
- If the printer supports it, print double-sided.

Ensure your employees know:

- Which is the most cost effective printer for their output, particularly for colour printing.
- How to access electronic fax software, if available.

Information management

Printing is inextricably linked with paper storage, electronic data storage, and other forms of data manipulation such as imaging and copying.

Assessing your printing environment will also lead your business to consider and identify how all your business information is stored and managed across the business and whether it is secure, compliant with regulations, and used effectively.

Establishing a Print Management strategy

It is often the case that as a business grows, it simply purchases more printers and other devices as required, leading to a complex architecture with no clear strategy and unbalanced usage. By restructuring your printing environment, you can significantly reduce your overhead costs and customise your print environment to match your current and future business needs.

Analysing your current environment

To make effective cost cutting and productivity improvements in your printing and imaging requirements you first need to understand your current environment and how it is used. You need to:

- identify your current printing hardware and software;
- determine the current usage of each printing resource;
- determine the current direct and indirect cost of your printing requirements;
- identify any printing needs that are not being satisfied.

Once these factors are known, you will be able to more accurately balance your business' printing needs and productivity against the associated costs and progress any resulting upgrades or consolidation. You will also be able to more accurately forecast the additional cost of discrete marketing projects and quantify the benefits of installing multifunction printers – that may also scan, fax and copy – if appropriate.

The aim of the assessment is to provide a realistic cost for each printer in the fleet, based on the printing statistics and the actual expenditure on printing during the period assessed.

N.B. Copying and imaging hardware and software should be considered as part of the print environment.

Identifying your current printing hardware and software

You should identify and categorise the existing printers by type, functionalities, age and use. You also need to include any additional driver software required. In particular you are looking to identify any hardware or software that is outdated in its features or productivity or heavy on maintenance. You may also identify any rogue devices that are not on the company asset list.

Determining the current usage of each printing resource

Any assessment needs to be conducted over a significant period – ideally a minimum of three months to get a realistic picture of usage.

If you quantify the printing volumes per printer you can determine whether particular resources are over-utilised (in which case they may wear out quickly) or under-utilised. A printer may be under-utilised if it is the furthest printer from many employees albeit the most cost-effective. A printer may be over-utilised if it is an appealing modern colour printer sited next to an under-utilised black and white printer that is perfectly adequate and cheaper for most print output.

A study of employee usage behaviour will indicate whether employees are using print resources productively and appropriately for your type of business. It will also reveal the specific needs of particular individuals or departments – for example, Marketing may produce a lot of presentations which require on average four times the amount of ink needed to print a text based document.

If the task of a business wide printing environment assessment sounds daunting, there are various tools available to assist you. The activity reports (log files) produced by the PCs and/or servers connected to your printers provide much of the usage information you require. Microsoft users can also take advantage of Active Directory which provides information on the desktop printer fleet and can produce and collect activity reports remotely. Other third party utilities such as Netview provide similar information.

Many of the well known printer suppliers – e.g. Ricoh, IBM, Hewlett Packard – provide both sophisticated tools and consultancy to conduct comprehensive assessments that provide device-usage statistics, create customized trending reports and graphs, track and forecast supplies usage, track device assets, track error logs and determine employee productivity and usage.

Once these tools are in place, you can assess your environment regularly to ensure that your printing environment continues to balance cost against productivity effectively.

Determining the current direct and indirect cost of your printing requirements

Careful auditing is required to identify the true cost of printing. You may need to scrutinise the accounts systems and service systems to get an accurate picture of the full cost of your business' printing and its spread across departments. Total costs should

include the purchase/lease cost, cost of consumables, maintenance costs, repairs and help desk/IT support time cost where appropriate. The costs should be allocated on an individual basis to the appropriate printers to allow you to evaluate the cost effectiveness of each printer or type of printer.

When should I analyse my printer environment?

You can of course analyse your print environment at any time, but there are certain triggers that may prompt you that the time is due:

- You don't know how many printers you have.
- Your business' printer usage has grown significantly.
- Employees complain about print quality.
- Employee productivity is affected by printer downtime.
- Your IT department or help-desk is spending a disproportionate time on printer issues.
- The business needs to cut operating costs.
- You want to take more control of the stock and purchase of consumables.
- Current copier/printer leases are due for renewal.
- You are paying for service contracts on underutilised printer resources.
- Your business is planning to upgrade its printing facilities.
- Your business is reviewing its document workflow or document storage.
- Your business has merged or taken over another business.
- You want to manage your printing resources and usage.

Identifying any printing needs that are not being satisfied

Any consideration of the assessment must take into account any printing needs that employees are currently unable to satisfy with the existing fleet. For example, accounts may currently print out invoices or remittance advices and fax them to customers/suppliers resulting in a printout per transaction. These printouts could be obviated by the installation of fax software or if the accounts software could produce suitable e-mail attachments. Marketing may wish to produce some of their marketing materials in house but may not have a printer of sufficient quality for the task.

Optimising your printer fleet

Armed with a wealth of asset, usage, cost and business requirements data from the assessment you can now determine an educated business-wide print strategy that optimises utilisation and productivity.

You may wish to consider:

- expanding or consolidating your printer fleet;
- replacing older printer devices by more cost-effective and productive modern ones with a lower "cost-per-page";
- repositioning devices according to business needs;
- introducing digital archiving as a replacement for some of the printer output;
- introducing document management to optimise printing costs, storage costs and data retrieval;
- introducing more multi function devices that combine the functionality of printers, scanners and copiers with reduced overall support and maintenance costs (some also include job accounting and document management features);
- leasing printers rather than purchasing them or vice versa depending on your usage profile;
- using a third party printing service (available from the large printer manufacturers) that provides fully managed, serviced and maintained printers on a pay per use basis;
- using external print suppliers for high quality or high volume marketing projects;
- producing smaller marketing projects in-house on a high quality printer;
- reducing complexity and consumable stock handling by standardising your printer fleet on fewer device types;
- reducing driver management complexity and maintenance by using a universal print driver;
- managing all your print equipment from a single remote location;
- creating and publicising an employee printer use policy;
- creating and publicising policies relating to other information management issues identified by the assessment, e.g. how long e-mails are stored for.

Print Monitoring

Print Monitoring is the logical next step from an initial assessment. Just the fact that printing is being logged and reviewed on an ongoing basis can reduce unnecessary printing by employees!

Again, you can use your operating system and network management reports to provide basic usage statistics, but you may wish to consider one of the third party Print Management solutions on offer from companies such as Ricoh or Hewlett Packard.

Most popular third party solutions offer:

- tools to remotely manage your business-wide printer fleet and other PC or network connected devices;
- reporting facilities that track printers, types of printers, usage by device/user/media/colour access/application, and security;
- supply forecasts that anticipate consumable needs and automatically reorder;
- redirection of printing requests to the most cost-efficient device for the job;
- restriction of access to colour or high quality printers;
- proactive notifications and alerts – e.g. ink low, paper jammed - to anticipate and resolve issues quickly.

Further information can be found at:

www.infoprintsolutionscompany.com/interne_t/ipww.nsf/vwwebpublished/home_en#h4/

www.hp.com

www.documentlogic.co.uk/managed-print/introduction?gclid=CMnYwPiama4CFWI ntAodizYEJA

www.tricerat.com/screwdrivers_dl?gclid=CP CR_KWbma4CFaQmtAod3g2TIg

www.printjob.com/index.html

Further Information

This guide is for general interest - it is always essential to take advice on specific issues.

We believe that the facts are correct as at the date of publication, but there may be certain errors and omissions for which we cannot be responsible.

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