

Managing print output

How to consider whether a managed print service program will work for you **Interviewed by Jayne Gest**

The average company spends a lot of money on printing, and often it doesn't realize where those resources are going. By some estimates, approximately 17 percent of all documents printed out are left sitting on printers. The average employee spends about \$1,000 per year on document output. And many organizations spend 1 to 3 percent of their annual revenue on imaging technology but don't even know how many printers they actually own.

By failing to manage print output, companies are unable to identify what they are spending and where they could be saving on costs. Additionally, if IT departments are spending too much time on tasks such as replacing cartridges or fixing printers, it is not an efficient use of their time.

A managed print service (MPS) program can help businesses save money they don't even know they are spending, while increasing flexibility and reducing stress, says Bill Nelson, vice president of Cleveland Sales at Blue Technologies.

"Everyone talks about the cost of an MPS program," Nelson says, "however, the biggest concern for a company that manages its own printers internally should be the time it takes and the resources required to have all printers running at 100 percent efficiency. That's time that could be used to run the daily business and focus on company initiatives."

Smart Business spoke with Nelson about managed print service programs and how they could benefit your company.

What is a managed print service program?

A managed print services program is an end-to-end solution that provides everything a company needs to control output costs. That includes an initial volume and usage assessment, hardware redeployment and/or acquisition, paper use output that includes supplies and service through an ongoing assessment of contract, and, as needed, optimization. Basically, it manages all of the printing done by your company. With numerous printers, employers may have no idea how many printouts they are printing each month and who has which printer.

What advantages does such a program bring?

If purchasing or the IT department is



Bill Nelson
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responsible for monitoring printers, that is time spent away from focusing on core competencies. A managed print service program can reduce IT support requirements by taking over the management of supplying toner and servicing printers.

A managed print service program identifies all costs so expense management is possible and allows for ongoing proactive management to ensure proper utilization of printing devices. For example, if one employee has a top-notch printer but only makes 100 prints per month, it may be worth swapping printers with someone who prints 100 pages per day. A managed print service program also alerts the program provider when supplies are low. When the toner cartridge gets to 10 percent, the print management company is automatically notified and can ship a new one.

What can companies do to prevent employees from printing so much?

With certain software, you can control how employees print. When employees press 'print,' the computer will let them know that a document sent to that printer will cost the company X amount, or it could automatically send the document to a lower-cost printer. Just think-

ing twice might keep an employee from wasteful printing, which helps your company be greener. Some companies automatically default to two-sided copies when possible.

How can businesses evaluate whether a managed print service program is right for them?

A managed print provider will conduct an initial meeting to determine if such a program would be beneficial. It will look at, for example, quantity of the printer fleet, whether your IT staff is getting calls to service printers all the time and if your inventory has toner cartridges for printers the company no longer owns.

A managed print provider will conduct an assessment where data is collected for a trial period. This assessment provides vital information about how your business is currently managing printer output and what is not being managed efficiently, similar to a managed service program for computers. The program provider manages how the ink gets on the paper in terms of cost, service and flexibility.

It's important to remember that although the program reduces costs over time, for many business owners, it's more about the convenience of someone else managing the printers. Companies pay their IT staff to improve their ability to meet their core business objectives. A managed print services program frees them up to do just that.

Once you've decided to go with a managed print service program, how does the relationship work?

After the contract is implemented, the provider conducts a walk through. All devices are labeled, inventory of current supplies is completed, main users are identified and the account is closely monitored. Then quarterly business reviews are conducted to continually monitor and adjust the contract as needed. Companies must be flexible to change just as their clients' business needs change.

By considering a managed print service program, you might find a better way to allocate resources that will help increase efficiency and decrease cost. <<

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