

Optimal and efficient

How to cut waste by standardizing your printer fleet and supplies

INTERVIEWED BY JAYNE GEST

Office printing consumes about 1 to 3 percent a company's annual revenue. The average employee spends anywhere from \$1,000 a year to up to \$10,000 on document output. For every dollar you spend printing, it involves another \$9 to manage it. And 23 percent of help desk calls are printer related.

These are just a few eye-opening statistics from Gartner, a technology research firm, about business printing and its related costs.

Something that has this much impact needs to be actively managed — but is it?

“Many times, printing is handled by a company's internal IT team, who are very busy. The executives assume IT is actively managing the cost of printing, when most of the time that's not the case,” says Matt White, a subject matter expert on managed print services at Blue Technologies.

At the same time, you may have more than one department procuring various supplies from different vendors.

One way to better manage printing more efficiently is standardizing — standardizing your fleet to best optimize space and number of machines, and standardizing your supplies to cut costs and waste, White says.

Smart Business spoke with White about the benefits of standardizing your fleet and supplies with managed print services.

When you're managing your printer fleet and supply efficiency, is it just a matter of costs or is there more at stake?

You want to look at managing your printer fleet, whether that's just printers or also multifunction printers, two ways:

- **Hard costs**, which are quantifying the number of supplies you're buying, the number of parts you're using for replacement, the amount of service calls you're calling for outside service, etc.

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- **Soft costs**, which include your internal IT staff's time and the end user's interaction. Are the printers up or down? Is that hurting your productivity? How much time is your administration or procurement department spending shopping around, looking for the best price or the best quality of supplies?

You also need to understand why people are printing and what they are doing with it. What does the ink on paper mean to your business? For example, is it part of a shipping label or pack slip that is vital to your operations? How does downtime impact your overall productivity?

Everyone has talked for years about going paperless, but at this point paper is just far too useful to eliminate from the workplace. So, with that in mind, everybody can benefit from managed print services — you just may get more or less benefit depending on the volume of printing.

How can standardizing your printer or copier fleet help?

Usually the typical ratio is 3-to-1 — three employees for every printer. So, if you have 100 employees, you might have 30 printers. With 30 different printers, you could have anywhere from five to 10 different types of printers, which means five to 10 different types of cartridges — or more if some of those devices have color, too.

By standardizing, you minimize the number of cartridges that you're stocking. You also can put the right-sized printer near the people who need it, or even consolidate down in certain areas.

At the same time, the end users only have to deal with a few types of devices, so they can feel more comfortable with the displays, controls and overall feel of the units. This in turn cuts down on the number of printer related calls that go to your help desk.

Why does managed print services make sense to achieve this?

You might be surprised how many times the CEO gets tired of hearing from his or her employees that they hate the machines, so the company just buys them all new machines. You don't want to waste resources in this manner.

It's better to take the time to create a strategic plan by thoroughly understanding your workflow with input from your employees. Then, you can put in a process to slowly improve your printer management. It's often best to outsource that management to technology experts, because they have the insight and experience to help you create a plan tailored to your organization's unique needs, follow through on that plan and then make adjustments to hit goals along the way with regular reviews. ●