



Managed Print Services vs. Printer Self-Management

What is the most cost-effective solution for your company?

The dream of a paperless office was never very realistic. As organizations around the world have discovered, every type of business still needs to print a wide variety of documents. Rather than eliminating the use of paper altogether, the goal today is to make an organization's printing infrastructure and printed output as cost efficient and ecologically friendly as possible. Paper is necessary, but waste is not.

The amount of money that a company spends on printing can be staggering. In fact, companies on average spend the equivalent of 3 percent of their total annual revenue on printed document output, according to research published in 2009 by Gartner, an independent information and technology research firm.

Even though CIOs have traditionally taken a hands-off approach to the print fleet, it's time to focus on getting print costs under control. "CIOs will over-manage IT areas, but they don't pay much attention to the print areas. But the economy has opened people's eyes to these unaudited and undocumented print areas that can be really costly," explains Joe Buedel, managed print services program manager of CDW, a leading provider of technology solutions and services, including printer and managed print services.

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Taming the printer network

Several factors combine to drive printing costs sky-high. Most printer networks are constructed ad hoc, with different departments purchasing and installing individual new devices as they need them. Likewise, single departments are often responsible for purchasing their own printing supplies, so printing costs aren't controlled in a single budget. These printing silos create vast amounts of waste; underutilized printers consume energy unnecessarily, supply closets are full of ink and toners for outdated machines, and no one knows how many pages are being printed (and thrown away). The printer network is just as critical to your business as any other area of the enterprise network, and it should be audited, managed and maintained like the rest of IT.

The print infrastructure doesn't have to be the Wild West of your enterprise network. By pulling the printer network into the realm of IT, you can tame printer chaos and drive down the costs associated with printed documents. Start with an audit to determine the extent of your organization's printer network as well as the company's ongoing print needs, overall costs and budget. You'll then be able to determine whether contracting with a Managed Print Services (MPS) provider or managing the print network in-house will offer the most cost-efficient and green solution.

Managed Print Services

MPS is an outsourcing model for printing. It has gained momentum in the last two years as organizations have turned to service providers to help trim costs in all areas of business. MPS was once strictly a specialty offering for the largest companies. However, according to Lyra Research, a research firm that focuses its efforts on digital imaging, MPS now appeals to smaller enterprises, too.

"MPS would appear to be more relevant to larger businesses because they have more printing resources spread out over broader geographical areas. However, about 26 percent of Small Businesses (SMBs) either have considered or have implemented managed print services. Nearly one-half of SMBs with more than 100 employees expressed interested in MPS," reported Lyra Research in October 2009.

Gartner defines MPS as a service that can "optimize a company's document output to certain objectives, such as driving down costs, improving efficiency and productivity, and reducing the IT support workload." An MPS provider takes over the management of your organization's print fleet, including the printers, printing supplies, and the service and support of the devices. To improve efficiency, the provider

also tracks how your employees use the print fleet and makes adjustments to the print infrastructure to make sure everyone has access to the print devices they need.

An MPS provider brings a range of expertise that you may not already have in your IT staff. They employ hardware specialists who understand printer best practices and the latest cutting-edge printing technologies, and they can find places to cut costs and optimize your print infrastructure according to your organization's needs. They have experience managing printers from different manufacturers as well as with network integration issues associated with printer networks.

Driving down costs with MPS

The number one reason CIOs are outsourcing the management of their print infrastructure is to cut costs — and the amount of money MPS can save is significant. Gartner has found that companies can save as much as 30 percent of their current print costs with MPS.

"The savings result from reduced IT support costs, reduced costs of consumables, reduced hardware repair costs, reduced costs to install and upgrade devices, reduced energy costs, improved use of office space, and reduced hard copy and device equipment costs," reports Gartner in the 2009 *Magic Quadrant for Managed Print Services Worldwide* paper. Gartner notes, too, the importance of a single contract for all printing hardware, supplies and maintenance for keeping track of spending.

Organizations can save money on printing with MPS also through consolidation. An MPS provider will determine if there are inefficient, power-hungry printing devices that should be removed from the print fleet. The provider will also redeploy underutilized machines so they can be used more efficiently by all the employees.

MPS offers several benefits in addition to driving down the costs associated with printing. It can streamline the print process and make the print infrastructure far more efficient. Many providers will recommend ways to improve paper flows across the organization and cut down on the amount of paper being consumed.

Additionally, MPS can help your IT operation be green by cutting down the amount of resources your print fleet consumes. With fewer printing devices running on the print network, your organization consumes less energy and uses less printer toner and ink. Also, more efficient paper flows can lead to printing fewer documents and wasting less printer paper.

An MPS provider also takes over the support and maintenance of the print fleet, which almost guarantees better availability of the print infrastructure. This can be particularly important to an organization that lacks imaging expertise in the IT staff. According to the Photizo Group, a marketing intelligence firm that specializes in MPS, the vast majority of MPS providers offer same-day service, help desk services, a 24x7 help line, and remote or onsite device monitoring. An MPS solution can make service and toner requests, along with other alerts, automatic.

As Buedel explains, cost savings are realized from optimizing the print environment as well as the print equipment. This ranges from automating replenishment requests through networking monitoring software to consolidating supply shipments to one vendor, such as your MPS provider.

Printer self-management

MPS isn't the only path to better management of your organization's print infrastructure. Most organizations can manage their print fleet effectively, especially smaller companies that have just a handful of multifunction printers or don't need printers with advanced features. The most important factor is in your IT department: To be successful with printer self-management, you must have at least one IT employee who has expertise with state-of-the-art-printer technologies, common printing problems, and hardware maintenance.

Printer self-management is a good solution for organizations that also have a centralized purchasing system that gives thorough visibility into printer spending; this usually means that one vendor handles all of the company's print hardware and supplies. Also, all the devices in the print fleet hail from the same manufacturer, such as HP, that provides universal print drivers for network-attached printers.

Organizations that have several printers in their fleet can further bolster their printer management with new technologies, such as print management software FMAudit. With a brand-agnostic tool like FMAudit, you can capture usage data about each printer, run TCO reports to determine costs, and manage print supply inventories. Some print manufacturers, including Xerox and HP, also offer software that helps you better manage your printer network and monitor print costs and network usage.

Xerox's CentreWare Web is a free browser-based tool that lets you centrally manage, monitor, and configure all the networked printers in your fleet, no matter the manufacturer. You can use it to track printer

usage and make sure that devices are being used according to your organization's policies. HP's Easy Printer Care Software is a similar management tool, aimed at organizations with as many as 20 HP LaserJet and Inkjet printers. The software monitors the devices, tracks employees' usage of printers on the network, and helps fix printing problems with integrated HP support tools.

Better management for lower costs

Companies will be able to drive down their printing costs if they begin centrally managing their print fleet and make the supply and replenishment processes flow through a single department. For some organizations, that means deploying an MPS solution. Other smaller companies can achieve similar results by self-managing their print infrastructure, especially with the aid of new monitoring software.

"With MPS, print management can be more efficient and more cost effective. IT can stay focused on servers, storage and security — the things that keep the business running," says Buedel.

Top-5 Benefits of Managed Print Services

A managed print services solution can help you:

1. Save 10 percent to 30 percent on the costs associated with printing documents.
2. Free up IT staff to focus on mission-critical IT while gaining print infrastructure expertise and specialized support.
3. Streamline the print process and make printing more efficient throughout your organization.
4. Improve the availability of printing devices for all employees, which increases user satisfaction.
5. Support your company's green initiative by reducing energy consumption and cutting down on paper, toner and ink.

CDW: A trusted Managed Print Services partner

CDW can help make informed decisions regarding how best to deploy printer technology and, with the assistance of CDW Managed Print Services, maximize the return on your investment.

