



Printer Consolidation = Dollars

Implementing and Managing a Printer Asset Management Program (While Preserving Your Sanity)

One business area frequently outsourced by companies is the printer asset management program. Perhaps it's because the prospect of managing printers seems too overwhelming. Or maybe it's because the thought of wresting printers from the clutches of employees who've grown attached to them and don't want to give them up is about as appealing as a root canal. Whatever the reason, many companies hand over the management of their printers to document management vendors. This trend extends beyond printers to document output devices in general: copiers, scanners, fax machines as well as the new "all bells and whistles" multi-function printers (MFPs). As the person responsible for this function at Consumers Energy, I'd like to share the experiences we've had in planning, implementing and managing output devices. Bottom line, implementing a printer asset management program is not difficult for IT asset management departments to undertake.

The Planning

When we began our planning, the obvious question came up: "What do we want to achieve by implementing a printer asset management program?" The existing environment was departmentalized. Each department "owned" its output devices, including maintenance and budgeting for replacements. There was little or no sharing between departments, even when the departments were on the same floor or cubicle area.

We decided to break down these barriers between departments and move toward a corporate printing environment. The printers would become corporate devices, with a life cycle and replacement schedule much like the company's workstations and the responsibility of the IT Asset Management (ITAM) group. This change in printing environment would provide the potential to decrease the number of total devices and their subsequent support costs.

Our Key Performance Indicators:

- Reduce the Total cost of Office Output Devices by using MFPs
- Reduce the total number of office devices
- Right-size the equipment to an enterprise organization

To maximize our consolidation, multifunction print devices were chosen based on the expected number of prints from users within 75 feet so the consolidation would not inhibit the effectiveness and efficiencies of our employees throughout their workday. To reach these goals, we developed three key performance indicators that could be used to measure the success of the program.

The company put together an extensive Request for Proposal (RFP) that identified the needs of our corporate culture and our business. Even though the RFP was lengthy and broad, this document became the foundation for identifying our vendor of choice. The RFP made clear to prospective vendors that the ITAM department would be responsible for implementing the printer asset management program. Control over the types of devices and their sizes, functions and locations was to be the sole responsibility of ITAM.

After selecting the vendor, the next job was to identify the processes for procurement, support, delivery and retirement that would be mutually agreeable to both groups. With asset management, the devil is in the details, and these were the details we needed to pin down to enable a successful implementation. We were able to create or modify our existing processes to work with the new vendor. This effort included identifying a set of standard devices that would cover all the foreseeable needs and applications. We identified different work groups and their specific needs, and then selected models and features that would meet these needs. These areas were broad enough so we could reach as many as possible, but that left us with enough standard devices so we could have some flexibility.

For our program, we selected eight standard models that could be used to fill the needs of clients throughout our company. For instance, a small, lower-cost black-and-white desktop model with a lower monthly duty cycle was chosen for the direct payment offices (DPOs). These offices are located within the medium-to-large service centers, but are separated from the rest of the office space because they deal directly with customers coming in to pay bills and conduct other business with the company. The DPOs needed a compact printer that could handle the low volume of output required by the one to four employees using the device. Conversely, a large, robust, floor-standing device was provided for large engineering areas in a cubicle layout that

had many users printing black-and-white and color documents.

Simultaneously, we developed a budget for the initial pilot project, which included two of the company's service centers: a smaller headquarters and a medium-sized headquarters. While the IT networking infrastructures were vastly different, these sites were in the same region of the state and we saw a good opportunity for cost savings.

The Implementing

After selecting the vendor and pilot sites, we began the implementation phase by completing a preliminary page count analysis on the current devices. An accurate reading of each device's usage is fundamental to selecting devices of an appropriate size. We also inventoried existing devices and their locations. Several months later, we completed a follow-up page count analysis and again identified locations. A comparison of both of these analyses gave an accurate picture of the monthly outputs of each device and showed any changes in device locations, additional devices or removed devices. The second analysis was completed within two months of the start of the pilot rollout to minimize the effect of printer changes near the commencement of the pilot. While this was being completed, all output device orders for these locations were put on hold.

One of the most valuable documents our vendor provided the company was a matrix that showed the standard models, their monthly duty cycles, pages per minute (PPM) and

additional features. This matrix was used to take a set of current devices that could be consolidated and identify the corresponding new device. The ITAM group partnered with local management-designated contacts and local desktop support in this effort. This partnership ensured that needs that may be unique to the certain location are identified. Partnering with local groups also helps build enthusiasm and buy-in to this big change. For example, locally attached or single-function devices normally were discouraged. However, the human resource department, which deals with confidential employee information, had a need for a secure fax machine and printer. The project was able to supply a small MFD, which could be secured when the office was not occupied, making it inaccessible to other potential users.

We developed a plan with devices and their placements. A meeting with the local management team explained this plan and answered questions. In one area we were able to place one MFP that eliminated the need for 10 of our current output devices. Overall, the project identified 56 devices that could be consolidated to 11 MFPs and two specialty printers. That represented a 76.8 percent reduction in the fleet.

As part of our rollout plan, we replaced all of the devices at a location in one day. This ensured that most resources only had to be available for one day. The vendor provided a general onsite training session the day before each of the rollouts.

Where do your IT assets go when you dispose of them?

- Landfills in third world nations
- Evidence rooms awaiting litigation
- The grateful hands of identity thieves
- The water supply you drink from



Where should they go?

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Problems Encountered and Solved

- **Identifying a Vendor**

In the search for a printer vendor, the project group was slowed down by the diversity of each vendor’s product offerings. Of the largest printing vendors in the market that the company chose to research, two of them have been the company’s vendors for many years. When our final selection excluded both of these vendors, we had to prove to management that changing vendors would be beneficial to the company’s bottom line. The team also had to show preliminary processes for procurement, support, delivery and retirement to confirm the new vendor could meet our needs.

Change in vendor or change in managing printing assets sometimes meets resistance from asset managers. It can loom as a headache they’d rather avoid. But as Charles Kettering, a past vice president of General Motors Research Corporation, said: “If you have always done it that way, it is probably wrong.” The same thought can be applied to vendors with whom you have had a long relationship. At the end of the review process, the established vendor still may prove to be the best choice. But if you don’t test the process, you’ll never know whether better options are available.

- **Identifying Sites for the Pilot**

Site selection for a pilot was challenging because we needed to be sure that this first test of the process had a fair chance of delivering the cost reductions while maintaining an acceptable level of service for our clients. The ITAM group identified two sites for the pilot that offered a wide selection of departments, applications used for printing, varying network infrastructures and close proximity to one another.

Diversity of needs and usage within the department was a big factor in making certain the pilot was able to incorporate many applications and identify any potential issues the project might see as it is rolled out across the company.

The printing environment at our company comes in two different forms: Windows File and Print in bigger headquarters and IP printing in the small, nonserver



locations. For the pilot, we selected a site with each type of printing environment to identify any potential issues that may arise from attaching the MFD printers to the network and installing the drivers.

This also allowed the project to utilize the same resources between both locations, minimizing the amount of travel and training required.

- **User Pushback and Loss of Devices**

Consolidating printing devices into multi-function devices represented a huge change for the clients because many of them lost their locally attached printers or network printers that were next door. They now were forced to go farther to retrieve documents and/or share their device with many more users. Some of the clients went as far as hiding their locally attached scanners and printers in the hope the project team might not find them!

Much of the client pushback involved longer waits for print jobs, lost work time due to longer walks for documents, and the concern that confidential documents would not be secure. In response, the project team did its best to ensure devices with appropriate functionality were located in areas that minimized the distance most users had to walk to use them. In addition, the selected devices had “Hold Print” and “Secure Print” to allow the client to print multiple documents before retrieving them from the machine, thereby protecting security of information.

During the page count analysis, each existing device location was documented to identify them for removal. By ensuring the removal of all of the devices, the pilot would provide a more accurate portrayal of the benefits and drawbacks of implementing the printer asset management program.

The Next Step

After completing a successful pilot, management approved moving forward with the printer asset management program. The program will be implemented over the next five years across the company. Each year, the IT department will schedule and replace one-fifth of the office document output device fleet with MFDs.

The framework created during the pilot will be used for the program implementation at each of the other sites. However, each location’s operation will be taken into account when finalizing the specific installations.

Periodic meetings will be held with the vendor to obtain product updates and briefings on new technology and ensure a continuing high standard of service.

Summary

The results from the pilot show that reducing the total number of devices is highly achievable by implementing a printer asset management program. Costs are reduced with the implementation of MFDs into a printer asset management program because of the reduced support and maintenance of



fewer devices. Moreover, the company needs to procure only a fraction of the number of devices it would with the previous system of stand alone printers, faxes, copiers and scanners. The pilot project reduced the number of document output devices by 76.8 percent by identifying 56 devices that were reduced to 11 MFPs and two specialty printers at the two sites. The resulted in an immediate \$1,068 per month reduction in operating and maintenance charges for the company, money that can be put to other productive uses.

The best way to achieve a successful outcome with a printer asset management program is to identify and create a good working relationship with a printer vendor. Whether your company is looking to complete the program completely in-house or to outsource the entire program, the relationship between the two companies needs to be mutually beneficial. A good customer-vendor relationship starts with the customer because they are the initiator of the relationship. The customer identifies a need that can make the company more effective and/or efficient in their day-to-day business.

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The Practitioner's Guide to an ITAM Program