Managed print services

How to analyze your print spend to cut costs and waste

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WEBSITE: For more information on how to maximize print efficiencies for your business, visit www.btohio.com/products-services/managed-print-services.

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Business print spend might not seem like something that needs to be managed. It's just paper and toner cartridges, right?

Wrong. Most companies could reduce their print-related costs by 20 to 30 percent by eliminating inefficiencies, according to Gartner research.

"Organizations want to cut costs, increase their productivity and improve their customer-employee relationships," says Bill Nelson, vice president of Cleveland Sales at Blue Technologies Smart Solutions. "But you cannot create efficiencies by being reactive."

Most organizations don't even know what they annually spend for their output fleet — whether it's printers, copiers or multifunction printers (MFPs) that do both.

They may not know how many vendors they are involved with, how many cartridges are sitting in the closet for devices that they don't even own any more or how many hours their $80,000-a-year IT staff spends changing toner and fixing print drives.

"The costs are very fragmented, meaning that there is no visibility into the sum of the expense," Nelson says. "There isn't a separate line item or a budget process that spans multiple departments."

Smart Business spoke with Nelson about going from a reactive to proactive approach through managed print services that allow your company to be as efficient and cost effective as possible.

What's the best way to start cutting down on print-related costs and waste?

First, you need to understand exactly where you stand. An audit will tell you how much you are printing and on what devices. Software installed on your server can track these metrics over a certain period of time to give insight into your print operations.

In addition, you need to assess what internal resources are currently involved with sourcing and supporting the output fleet. If your IT department is spending 10 hours a week working on MFPs, is that the most productive use of its time?

You may determine that it's better to outsource this management, like you would with snow plowing in the winter. Yes, you can shovel every day; it's just not the most productive way to run your company.

Why does managed print services make sense for many organizations?

Managed print services is a more proactive, cost-effective approach to managing your print fleet. It's an end-to-end software solution that monitors your operations, and proactively communicates to your outsourced service partner when devices need repairs and supplies.

Not only does this solution take the headache of fleet management away so employees can focus on high-level tasks that will grow your business, it allows you to get the right devices in the right places based on your unique needs.

Often when a printer breaks, IT goes out and quickly buys a low-end product with a high-end supply cost. Or staff uses inkjet desk printers for jobs that would be more cost effective to send to a MFP. With an outsourced manager, your fleet will be more united with consistency in types of machines and an optimized layout for your space.

In addition, there are rules-based printing options to help identify what jobs you are printing and to where, and then associate costs with them. For example, this function might give people a reminder that if they send a print job to the MFP upfront, they can save the company X amount of dollars.

It's important to remember that typically, you're not locked into a set agreement. Choose a service provider that conducts quarterly business reviews, and allows for flexibility as your business needs change.

Does the organization need to be a certain size to make this service cost effective?

If you have 50 or more printers, you definitely want to look into managed print services. If you have fewer printers but high output — such as 10 printers that do 100,000 prints a month — you can also create efficiencies by outsourcing their management. You rely on those 10 printers; if one goes down, you want to be able to get it back up quickly or bring in a replacement.

It all comes back to using your resources in the most efficient manner. Outsourcing to an expert managed print services provider can ensure you are doing just that, minimizing fleet downtime and print waste as well as maintenance stress on your staff. ●