Optimizing print to truly print less

Pitney Bowes

Abstract

Large organizations find themselves with extensive fleets of office printers, copiers, scanners and fax machines. Costs are escalating, needs are changing, and environmental concerns intensify each year. One solution has been to hire an outside supplier who offers managed print services (MPS). Most of these companies are also original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) of the equipment and supplies they manage. They therefore approach optimizing print primarily by attempting to optimize an organization's device network and supplies. This approach can improve efficiencies somewhat, but customers often find their device fleets still growing and costs creeping back up.

Pitney Bowes Management Services (PBMS) believes in and has developed an alternative approach to optimizing print. Since we are not an OEM, we are not driven primarily by the need to place new devices. We view output hardware as a critical part of the solution, but we are driven to deliver what the client wants, not what our manufacturing line tells us. This frees us up to focus first on the organization's documents, carefully examining document flows and the processes that drive them. This approach results in a solution that doesn't just change an output device network infrastructure; it changes user behavior. In addition, the document-centric approach to print management optimizes print resources today while putting in place a solution that will continue to optimize those resources far into the future.

Finally, this kind of managed print services solution can be extended to a comprehensive platform of managed output solutions (MOS) that includes office output, managed mail, document workflow, and production printing. MOS results in even greater cost savings, flexibility, and environmental benefits, as well as much improved customer communications management (CCM).

The major challenges

Businesses of all kinds—government entities, educational institutions, law firms and finance and healthcare organizations—have assembled vast infrastructures of output technology whose sole purpose is to enable users to produce printed, "hard-copy" documents. This extensive infrastructure typically comprises a fleet of printers, copiers and scanners networked to the desktops of hundreds of users. The challenges this infrastructure presents to a large organization include:

• Escalating costs

• Declining efficiency and productivity

• Increasing IT support workloads

• Growing environmental impacts

Changing needs

In addition to the above challenges, printing needs are changing. Overall, office print page volumes have been declining—a 50% reduction over the last six to seven years in printed, copied and faxed pages, according to one industry analyst. Most observers see the rate of reduction as gradual rather than steep, and volumes also vary across industry sectors and functions. Some parts of government and certain industries, such as financial services, continue to report volumes of 1,000 pages per user per month. Other organizations—software development companies, for example—are churning out very low volumes.

Interestingly, much of this print volume decline is attributable to changes in business behaviors, not print management initiatives in the organization. These changes include:

• People working on larger displays

• An increase in digitized processes that were once paper-based

• More users brought up with PCs and the Web, who are comfortable working on screens

• Growing environmental initiatives

Lastly, we need to look at the impact of tablet computers. It's logical to assume the increasing use of tablets will decrease print volumes, but no one is sure how large the reduction will be or how quickly the impact will be felt. Some hopeful print providers put forth the contrary view that the use of tablet computers across a wider range of organizational environments will actually increase the need for hard copy printouts.

Most people managing these operations aren't sure which factors are contributing the most to the drop-off in printing and copying in their organization. And the rate at which print volumes will decline is difficult to predict. No one can easily tell whether the drop-off will be steep or very gradual.

The conclusion one must draw is that all these issues are making it increasingly difficult for organizations to manage their investments in output devices and supplies in order to make sure needed services are available to users and to keep costs under control.

Industry solutions

To meet such challenges, for the last dozen or so years, organizations have turned to outside suppliers to provide managed print services (MPS). In the MPS business model, an outside service assumes primary responsibility for all of a customer's office printing needs. The supplier provides the printing, copying and scanning equipment, supplies, service and overall management of the output device fleet. The principal goals are to cut costs and reduce fleet size while reducing environmental impacts.

All the big name companies in this business are also OEMs of the devices and supplies they provide as part of their MPS solutions. It is therefore logical and perfectly understandable that the industry's traditional approach to optimizing print is to look at optimizing the print network. Therefore, MPS solutions are typically built on replacing conventional printers, copiers and scanners with multifunction printers (MFPs) that offer a range of capabilities plus flexible networking options.

An example of a solution is using MFPs to bring an organization's device count from 500 down to 300, which will clearly cut costs and reduce the environmental footprint. The idea is to attack the problem of optimizing print by right-sizing the fleet of output devices.

This approach does deliver cost reductions, which in fact are fairly easy to achieve. But there are still too many pieces of hardware to substantially impact an organization's technology footprint, so the reduction in output fleet costs usually stays in the range of 20% to 40%.

This MPS approach of optimizing print by optimizing the device fleet was the answer to the print optimization goals originally voiced by customers years ago. They simply wanted to manage an unmanaged fleet of devices and pay less for what they were printing. Unfortunately, as needs are changing and we see a serious migration away from printing for the reasons outlined above, organizations are finding themselves with more devices

than they need. In addition, customers can also end up with hardware fleets that are larger than necessary if they do not have in place a print policy that puts parameters around their investments with suppliers.

The document first approach

At PBMS, we believe in an alternative approach to optimizing print, and we've developed special capabilities around it. Instead of focusing on a customer's print network, we first look at the documents that pass through it. This "document first" approach uncovers the actual document flow in the organization, which in turn reveals the organization's day-to-day workflows. We then work with customers to build solutions that optimize these workflows. The goal is to reduce the number of printed pages necessary within each business process.

This can be accomplished in a number of ways. You can keep documents in their original electronic formats, convert paper documents into digital files or reduce the amount of paper needed to print documents. For this last goal, Adobe® LeanPrint provides the most advanced technology and will be integrated into PBMS solutions in 2013. Adobe LeanPrint is an enterprise-class, software-only printing solution that dramatically reduces print costs by using an innovative method to reformat document layouts and by reducing ink on a page when printing from popular applications and Web browsers.
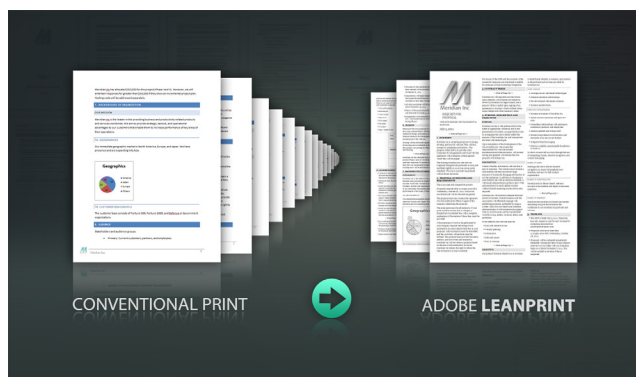
PBMS believes in taking a document-centric approach to right-size the process first, then right-size the fleet of output devices. Looking at documents first allows us to reduce printed pages by discovering the process behaviors that can be readily changed to achieve that result. It is these changes that will then drive the new configuration of the output device network.

We know that by looking at what is being printed before attempting to right-size a fleet of devices, it is possible to eliminate major parts of an installed infrastructure—and to reduce the infrastructure that's left by up to 60%. Reducing the need for printed paper not only dramatically reduces paper costs but also affects supplies, device count, maintenance, and management costs as well.

Optimizing print beyond MPS

The PBMS document-centric MPS approach to office printing can be extended to all the document output in an organization. This includes office output, managed mail, document workflows and production print output. PBMS calls this comprehensive platform Managed Output Solutions (MOS).

MOS drives savings through efficiency, cost and environmental benefits that can be realized throughout the entire document lifecycle. MOS focuses on all document workflows to reduce output. This allows the organization to optimize processes, resources, providers and device ratios. MOS systems can extend from mail centers to print centers and can ultimately bring greater efficiency and effectiveness to all customer communications. This adds the benefit of more effective customer communications management o the cost savings, flexibility and environmental benefits of this broad-based approach.

Pitney Bowes Management Services designs, implements and operates innovative communication, document and mail management solutions that help companies around the world drive business process efficiencies, increase productivity, reduce costs and improve customer satisfaction. Pitney Bowes was recently ranked as one of the world's top outsourcing providers by the International Association of Outsourcing Professionals® (IAOP®).

Our leading-edge solutions can help you grow revenue, cut costs and strengthen customer loyalty, to drive your long-term profitability.

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