



THE PAPER ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM



Print volume and cost reduction has been one of the main themes in the printer and MFD market for the last ten years. Almost without exception manufacturers and dealers all promote Managed Print Services (MPS) as a way for customers to control volume and reduce costs. Quite a simple message really, we will manage your fleet, optimise and rationalise the number and location of devices, introduce enhanced automation and optimised service delivery etc. etc. And this will reduce costs.

This all sounds great and a good MPS can deliver significant benefits to a customer. But, and it is a big but, in almost every customer the focus is on controlling cost by reducing output capability i.e. less machines, controlled access, reduced access to colour; restricting the service, creating a bottleneck. It's like trying to reduce the number of cars by closing some roads; all that would lead to is frustration, longer traffic jams, delays etc. people still need to get to work, or go to the shops.....

Reducing and rationalising the number and location of printers can lead to some reduction in costs but it can also lead to a decrease in staff productivity. The problem is that in most cases both suppliers and the customers don't ask a very simple question 'why do staff need to print?' It isn't printers that decide whether to print it's the users, so why focus on the outputs and not the inputs?

Key to any long term and sustainable reduction in print volume and cost has to start by understanding why do users click the print button. Typically there are three main reasons for this. Firstly, print may be required to support a business process e.g. printing a form. Secondly, users may need to print because there is no suitable alternative e.g. taking papers to a meeting. Thirdly, users may want to print for convenience e.g. printing a report to edit by hand rather than on-screen.

Focusing on output i.e. reducing the number of devices will impact on all three but is only likely to have a positive impact on reducing convenience printing. Worse still it is likely to have a negative impact on productivity for the first two reasons to print.

It isn't the printers that decide whether to print, it's the users



It appears that paper based processes that are the root cause of high print volumes is the 'Elephant in the Room'. Organisations want to focus on restricting output and not dealing with the root cause of printing, but why? Quite simply because it's easier to focus on restricting printing rather than deal with the harder issues around why people print. If an organisation is based on manual paper processes the move to streamlined automated electronic processes is a difficult journey. It can be difficult technically (the IT requirement is significant) but probably more difficult are the people and cultural changes required. The easy option is to ignore the Paper Elephant and hope it goes away.

However, restricting output will only ever be a short term tactical choice, it will not lead to long term sustainable benefits and in many cases can lead to decreased productivity with an associated net increase in business process costs. Organisations need to look beyond restricting printing and understand why users print. The ultimate aim must be to remove paper and not the printers. This is the only approach that will deliver long term benefits and will also deliver competitive advantage.

Going back to the car analogy, reducing the numbers of cars by reducing access to roads will only work if used in conjunction with providing alternative options to meet the needs of people. For example in London the congestion charge works because if people don't need to drive they can use public transport.

Paper based business processes are the Elephant in the Room that many organisations just dont want to tackle

About transcend360

transcend360 provide independent and unbiased consultancy specialising in Managed Print Services (MPS). We provide services that support end user customers in the definition, procurement, delivery and management of an MPS, providing support throughout the complete contract lifecycle.

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