



Print Rationalization A new level of value

By Alec Milne

All across Canada, government departments are talking about Print Rationalization. In fact, research shows that at every level of every department in every government - provincial and federal - a significant number of decision-makers are starting to look at printing costs in a whole new way. They are not just ready but eager to see new kinds of solutions, to achieve lower costs, greater efficiency, reduced administrative overhead and high-quality results for the user. By the end of 2009, it was not surprising to see most departments going beyond studies to action on Print Rationalization.

Print Rationalization may not have a clear definition yet, but everyone can agree that Print Rationalization is a process of analyzing all your printing and copying needs, sourcing the best products and implementing a solution that can be managed department wide. In a way, PrintersPlus has always done Print Rationalization because our approach has been to deliver the appropriate solution to each customer.

Printing Trends

Many organizations are trying to 'right-size' their printing today to better align the number of devices and their placement with user needs. Often, organizations are finding out that they can make substantial improvements in productivity and save money at the same time. Questions being asked and answered are: who is in charge of the transition to rationalized printing and who will make sure the objectives of the change continue to be met?

Policy for Printing

Policies can and do cover everything from IT technology standards and security to moves, adds and changes. 'Exceptions management' can even provide a policy for making decisions when the other policies don't apply. By assigning roles and responsibilities, the policies bring clarity and predictability to printing and imaging.

Security

Security has taken on a new importance in printing and imaging. Among other responsibilities, managers need to consider who has physical and network access to devices under their control. This is where practical experience with a range of printing and imaging equipment is important because some devices that meet all the appropriate security standards in theory may not deliver on that promise in practice. As well, managers should try to avoid paying for higher levels of security than they really need.

Environmental Policies

Managers are looking for energy efficient, environmentally responsible products that can also be reused or recycled at end-of-life. Carbon footprint is a new measure of printing and imaging equipment and supplies that organizations need to consider. Clearly, a good print rationalization program provides the opportunity to reduce energy consumption by consolidating devices. One simple measure is to mandate duplex as the default setting for most situations to reduce paper use.

Change Management

Change management is key to the success of a print rationalization program. In the end, success or failure depends on the end user. Carefully crafted policies can be defeated if users either don't understand or don't care about the goals of the print rationalization exercise. Management needs to sponsor and drive a comprehensive communications program to support the change, and provide training for every level of the organization, from management to the shop floor.

Technical Support

Individual printing and imaging devices have become complex technical devices in their own right, and the complexity increases when they are networked in complex and changing IT environments. Technical Support for rationalized printing deployment should be able to perform a great deal of the work remotely, to discover, monitor, troubleshoot and manage devices across the entire printer fleet. That level of Technical Support allows both customer and vendor to manage warranties and SLA's in a granular manner, with detailed data from the entire fleet.

How to Get There

Today, for all kinds of good reasons, most organizations operate in a multi-vendor environment. Right away, organizations should take a look not only at their existing situation but their possible future needs, to decide whether multiple vendors are right for them. Instead of a single platform solution, a reseller can deliver all the advantages of each manufacturer's solution without taking away the organization's future flexibility. Circumstances beyond the organization's control, like a change in the national standing offer in the case of a government department, or the cancellation or forced upgrade of a product line could drive the organization to unexpected expense. In fact, a single platform may prove to be cost-prohibitive and unsustainable in the long term. Changing an entire platform is much more expensive and risky than a process of gradually adapting to

change. As most environments today are a mix of equipment, multiple vendors allow the organization to make the most of its legacy equipment and keep it working.

No manufacturer has all the answers in Print Rationalization. Since we represent a range of printing, imaging and IT products from a range of leading manufacturers, we have learned how to put together the best combination of price, value and support for every unique situation.

Controlling costs is an important part of Print Rationalization. PrintersPlus can find ways to save money in printing but there is a whole spectrum of issues to consider, not just copiers and printers. Customers can't just point to a printer in our showroom and say the problem is solved. Preparing the business case for real Print Rationalization takes a department-wide analysis and a departmental decision.

In reality, Print Rationalization calls for a big change in behaviour and a big change in perspective. Managers are not used to looking at printing in the context of the entire department or branches of large departments. However, we believe that is the way departments are going.

For more than a year, Printers Plus has been presenting monthly seminars called "The Fine Print - Print Rationalization Defined" to groups in Ottawa. A greatly expanded version of these seminars was the Print Rationalization Conference in Ottawa on June 3. When she was working on her presentation, keynote speaker Michelle Warren, president of MW Research and Consulting, pinpointed the three important factors influencing the change in the printing and imaging industry: the environment, a printing solution and reduced TCO (Total Cost of Ownership).

Senior managers look for more than just a quick and efficient printer. They want a complete solution which will address their users' demands, improve productivity, reduce costs and increase efficiencies. And, more than ever, this solution must be green," Warren said the conversation encompasses 'cost to manage,' 'productivity' and the organization's 'environmental interests.'

Environmental Initiatives

PrintersPlus selects suppliers who are committed to our environment, with green innovation and sustainable practices. Purchasing process is easier when you know the products you select already meet your own environmental standards. Wherever possible, we work with EPEAT (Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool) and EPSC (Electronic Product Stewardship Canada) registered manufacturers, to help you with procurement decisions.

Across the country, governments and organizations are developing new, green standards and rolling them out. We help departments, businesses and individuals to turn those standards into practical solutions in the context of a print rationalization program. With our national reach, we know the products and strategies that can cut the carbon footprint and keep the office green. PrintersPlus believes that "what's good for the environment is good for business."

Alec Milne is the President of Printers Plus. For more information, visit www.printersplus.net.

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Imaging & Printing Specialists

WHAT'S AN 'EDGE LINE'?

At PrintersPlus, we think everybody will know Edgeline, the new copier from HP. This machine uses breakthrough, environmentally-friendly technology to deliver speed and reliability at a cost that has dramatically lowered the cost of colour printing. In the future, all copiers will be like the HP Edgeline. PrintersPlus is the Canadian Edgeline expert. With almost two dozen Edgeline installations at federal government departments, the response to exclusive dealer PrintersPlus has been overwhelmingly positive.

Since customers already trusted the HP name for printers, they were more than open to accepting this new machine that is capable of producing 71 pages per minute of brilliant colour print. Another feature receiving accolades is the device's ability to 'scan to email.' In fact, it's changing the way people work and for the better! After all, what could be better than scanning documents, emailing them to yourself and arriving already converted into Word format without waiting? Our government customers need this feature and it's something they really like.

More and more departments insist on personal authentication for printing, so government managers are impressed with the Edgeline's security features. They are built into every machine, not sold as an optional extra. Jobs don't get printed until a personal PIN code is entered. When it comes to the environment, Edgeline is as good as it gets with a tiny carbon footprint. Only two things come out of the Edgeline - brilliant colour and water vapour.

People who manage copier contracts know the price difference between colour and black and white pages and it doesn't take much colour on a page to push costs way up. The Edgeline divides the costs into a quadrant - black, spot colour like a logo, half page and full page colour. That is unique to Edgeline and it is a huge feature - it makes attractive colour letterhead available at an attractive price.

When HP engineers started developing Edgeline technology, they wanted to revolutionize printing and we think they did. This technology has performance, reliability and low cost. The printheads inside the machine span the width of a page and they never move. Only the paper does. That means more accurate printing, higher reliability and low cost. In fact, we think Edgeline delivers the lowest total cost of ownership on the market.

That means managers can promise better quality, much less downtime and low cost - and they can deliver. How good is HP Edgeline Technology? It is even being used in photo kiosks, to deliver 20 4 x 6-inch photos in about two minutes, at an affordable price. Before long, everybody will know Edgeline.