

Printing a Plus at Ottawa event

by Richard Bray

More than 100 federal government managers in both IT and administration turned out in early June to attend "The Fine Print", a one-day event about Print Rationalization.

Organized by Ottawa-based reseller PrintersPlus, the event attracted some major vendors as sponsors – HP, Lexmark, Samsung, Fujitsu – as well as less well known companies - Ringdale Inc. of Austin, Texas, a printing and copying software company, and Sims Recycling Solutions of Brampton, Ontario. More important perhaps, for the significance of the event, Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC), the major government buying organization was well represented both by an exhibit in the display hall and by Linda Jellicoe, Supply Team Leader for PWGSC's Imaging Product Management Group. Jellicoe has the job of making sure Canadian government employees have the right printing and imaging products at prices that are good for the tax-payer. Her participation was a clear signal that her organization is working to understand the new opportunities in printing and copying technology.

Speaking the day after the event, PrintersPlus president Alex Milne said the event was designed to meet the needs of government departments and agencies looking for help in reorganizing their printing and imaging. "Whenever we brought it up with them the questions revolved around 'what is everybody else doing' and 'how do we do it' and that's how we came up with this thing." Even organizations that have made progress, Milne said, have generally only run relatively small trials within a branch or division of the department.

"The information they are getting is generally coming from one manufacturer," Milne said, "We think committing yourself to an entire fleet of one manufacturer isn't the best way to go. Clearly there are multiple categories the government purchases from and no one manufacturer dominates the number one position in all those categories."

Milne said print rationalization requires the efforts of executives at the director-general or director level, which are senior and middle management respectively, with responsibility for costs and capabilities, and IT directors are involved in areas like training, change management and security.

"Because it was held during Environment Week," Milne said, "we had some conflict with internal meetings that they had but I believe because we had this conference, it created awareness and now we are finding ourselves with a great deal of meetings with people who could not attend."

According to Milne, most federal government departments and agencies have had discussions about the need to move forward in print rationalization, but their efforts are typically directed at one area of the organization or just one aspect of a bigger challenge. "We try and put it all into one bundle and one understandable workflow so to speak, so they have all had the discussion but no one has really taken a broad step forward and said, 'This is what we're doing, this is the program that we are going to involve to accomplish what we have to do in regard to these issues.'"

Billed as the first annual conference of its kind, Milne confirmed that PrintersPlus would mount the event again next year.