

## **10 Best Practices in Printer Fleet Management**

Corporations recognize that they need to address out of control costs associated with network printing. How do they get there? Many are looking to solve it by outsourcing their managed print services.

### **What's hot?**

Gartner surveys show that organizations are currently researching the costs of office print, copy, and fax functions, and assessing a managed print services approach to meet its office output needs. In addition, most of these organizations believe they are playing catch-up to react appropriately to trends in office printing, such as the role of color printers, multifunctional products (MFPs), and managed print services.

### **How does Printer Fleet Management differ from traditional print service?**

Traditionally, Dealers and printer vendors are involved in break/fix delivery, device maintenance, equipment installation, and supplies delivery, and have developed relationships through these support channels.

Print consultants focus on content and information, providing both hardware and software solutions. The Dealer has the expertise of understanding the output devices, and particularly with their support network, should be able to transition into managing print services for the entire corporation.

The holistic approach deals with all the print and print related costs of the entire corporation. It is important to see all the pieces in relation to one another. The challenge is to move from supplying and supporting commodities and presenting in terms of ppm, meters and duty to understanding how the printer fleet can address a corporation's business needs. To make this transition, a tool to gather knowledge of the client's fleet on an ongoing basis and identify where printing dollars can be saved is required.



*Managed Print Services  
considers all print and  
print related costs of the  
corporation*

## 10 Best Practices

Best practices follow the six sigma model of define – measure – analyze – improve – control. The following ten items list some thoughts on best practices for managed print services.

### 1. Develop a Print Strategy

For any corporation who wishes to reduce costs by managing their printing, a document and print strategy is essential. Best practices conclude that fleet assessment and strategy development should be hardware vendor independent. A high degree of independence should deliver a high degree of objectivity. Without this independence, the assessment will likely be focused on hardware technology, not business needs.

*A document and print strategy is essential to reduce printing costs*

A Print Strategy includes baseline print costs, recommendations, a solution extrapolated to corporate-wide, and method for measuring results of implementation. A proposal for more services and/or hardware does not constitute a strategy. The strategy decision tool should be independent from the hardware vendor. Relying on the manufacturer to propose a corporate print strategy is in conflict with his goals – to sell more devices and associated consumables. The corporate print strategy should be revisited every 3 to 5 years.

*The baseline includes all costs in a period of time, not a point in time*

### 2. Establish a Baseline

The baseline assessment is used as the kick-off point for developing the corporate print strategy. During baseline assessment, best practices incorporate all costs into the picture, not just consumables, the largest cost being human resources. The baseline should consider device and printing behavior over a period of time, such as 30 to 60 days, and include how, what, where, how much, and what it costs.

Typically, only 10% of the office document costs relate to equipment, supplies, and service expenses. For every \$1 spent on equipment, supplies, and service, another \$9 is spent on other overhead costs. These overhead costs include IT support and infrastructure, procurement and facility costs, end-user interaction time, and document management expense. These costs are typically fragmented in budgets and processes across the organization. Only about 10% of the real document costs are typically exposed by an assessment, which means that 90% of the actual costs are being ignored. In many cases, Total Cost of Ownership is not even close to the real “Total” cost.

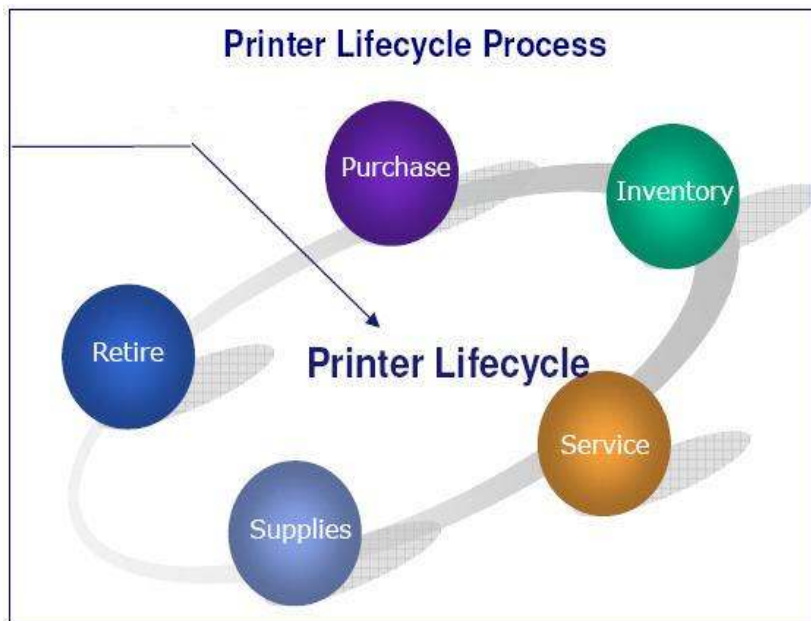
*90% of printing costs are overhead costs*

If the Print Service Provider already has a printer fleet management tool which contains a database of device inventory, printing activity and printer events, his revenue can be increased by offering assessment services. In addition, the Service provider can prepare a competitive managed print services proposal based upon the inventory and understanding of his client's printing history. A greater knowledge of the printer fleet than both his client and competitor is a significant strategic advantage.

### 3. Treat printers as an asset

Best practices recognize that the Printer Fleet is a corporate asset, and thus, should be managed as any other IT asset. Printer asset

management looks at a device through its lifecycle and the fleet from the enterprise perspective. A printer life encompasses purchase decisions, printer financials, maintenance, supplies management, and retirement. The enterprise perspective looks at the fleet inventory using corporate metrics, comparisons and trends, making decisions from a global, rather than, unit or commodity basis.



Most solutions look at a snapshot in time to track, optimize and identify cost savings. To do this, approximations for costs are used. Your print strategy tool should address inventory and its changes through time, maintenance, supplies and the associated vendors. The print strategy should include a device retirement strategy with an understanding of the corporation's business needs. Devices are retired and added similar to any other corporate asset. The strategy tool helps you to decide when to retire printers, schedule orderly replacements, and identify which model/manufacturer is most cost effective as a replacement.

### Printer Lifecycle Process

The printer asset management strategy should build in compliance. It is current best practice to ensure that all data and systems are in compliance with regulatory requirements.

#### 4. Reduce

Best practices focuses on optimizing(!) the number of hardware manufacturers, the number of models, the number of suppliers & service providers, and the number of devices. The objective is to increase device throughput and yields and to reduce inventory costs due to assets and toner supplies.

The direction of managed print services is to reduce – to reduce total costs, to reduce the amount of printing, to reduce the number of devices, to reduce the number of manufacturers and models, and to reduce the number of vendors. Any vendor providing a regular report card on the client’s printing may have an inside advantage to increase the number of devices managed and to offer additional services in other areas of managed print services.

*The objective is to increase device yields & reduce inventory*

#### 5. Automate

Managing print services in a cost effective manner requires automation of many of the processes involved. Automatic device discovery and meter reads are only the beginning. The printer fleet management tool should also automate -service requests in the event of a device alert or toner request, maintenance reminders, device retirement and replacement, scheduled reports, printer yield comparisons, and so forth. The managed services should not add to the human resource burden.

#### 6. Manage desktop printers

Desktop printers are often the most expensive component of the printer fleet on a per page basis. Not only do they tend to be underutilized, but supplies are expensive and the printers are complex to track and manage.

Best practices do not recommend printing using direct-attached printers. Without going into detail, the logic for not using direct- attached printers includes: (1) the highest per page printing cost (TCO), (2) complex supplies management, (3) greater supplies inventory costs, (4) increased software management complexity,

(5) added complexity for asset management, and (6) regulatory and compliance issues. Unfortunately, there is a proliferation of direct-attached printers, resulting in a challenge to organizations to wean employees off their desktop printers.

*Desktop printers are the most expensive component of a printer fleet*

If the print strategy permits desktop printers, best practices recommend that the printers be restricted to a limited number of hardware model choices and should be network-attached, not USB-attached, to make them visible to the network and to the management tools.

## 7. Govern vendors

Best practices require that vendors be actively managed. That includes all vendors: hardware, software, service, supplies, and consulting. Your vendor's objectives are not necessarily compatible with your corporate objectives. Some corporations hire independent consultants during the assessment and strategy phase, but the deployment and ongoing operational phase also requires vendor governance.

*Governing vendors ensures that the fox is not guarding the hen house*

Service Level Agreements (SLA) specify contractual activities that ensure your printers are available for use. The only way to ensure that the service vendor adheres to the SLA is to monitor over time the critical items. These metrics include % uptimes, average time it takes to resolve any printer problems, and frequency of breakdown.

Other areas of vendor governance include billing accuracy and corporate resources expended for the vendor.

## 8. Sustain savings through Continuous Improvement

Once the fleet strategy is deployed, the corporation optimizes enterprise printing through pro-active monitoring of printer assets, contracts, supplies management, and service level agreements. As with every aspect of managed print services, a tool which collects and stores this device and printing data is necessary to support the intelligent recommendations the Managed Service Provider offers to his customers.

Continuous improvement requires active and continuous attention to print assets. Human behavior can easily slip back into old printing habits. Active monitoring can alleviate increases in costs rising from such fallbacks. This means continuous monitoring and ongoing measuring of the relative costs of printing on each device. It is a fallacy to rely upon the manufacturers' benchmarks for each model. Each organization has different printing behaviors.

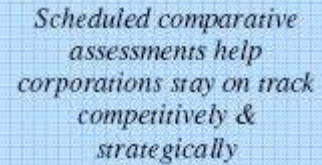
*Savings can be sustained through Continuous Improvement*

## 9. Monitor, Measure, Manage

The key to sustaining the savings reaped from managing printing is to measure, adjust, measure, adjust on a continuous and ongoing basis. This is where Managed Print Service Providers can retain and increase business by pro-actively demonstrating their value with regular report cards on their customer's printing which include trend graphs showing pages, costs, and problems. This report card should provide areas where improvements can be made such as moving, swapping, or replacing – always with an eye to reduce total printing costs and increasing availability.

## 10. Schedule Report Cards

Inherent in managed print services is a regular re-assessment of the corporate print environment. As with any business best practice, scheduled comparative assessment are necessary to stay on track competitively and strategically. The primary objective is to ensure that the savings realized by managed print services is being maintained. For instance, your strategy may have a target of 7 employees per device. Without due diligence and constant attention, this target can and will likely decline. A comparative report card would highlight any slide from target.



*Scheduled comparative assessments help corporations stay on track competitively & strategically*

Reporting according to a schedule is critical. A best practices recommendation is to obtain a report of the corporate printing environment every 6 months. When and if corporate printing behavior aligns with the corporate print strategy, the report card may become annual. As a cost-effective approach, this report card can be performed by any print management tool that continuously monitors printer and printing activities.

The more you know about your corporate printer fleet, the greater potential in cost savings. Continuous attention to the printer fleet by managing print service on an ongoing basis will pay off on the bottom line.