Optimise your print environment in three steps

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In-house corporate print rooms and commercial printing operations such as print bureaus should be looking at innovative business models that will enable them to drive down operating costs and improve efficiencies.

Many commercial printing operations are now looking at ideas such as copy-plan strategies to make their costs more transparent and improve the margins made on selling their services. Copy-plan schemes allow a print shop to structure contracts where a service provider provides hardware, consumables, maintenance and support services for a fixed price per printed page. They don’t need to sink capital into hardware and they have a clear idea of the costs and profits they make on their services.

Corporate print shops, meanwhile, are looking at options such as facilities management agreements with specialised service providers. In this model, an external service provider runs the entire print shop and offers transparent pricing per page or per job.

In either case, you will have a realistic cost per page for printing, and will be equipped to keep optimising your document environment. We believe that the process of optimising your print environment with these approaches can be broken down into three steps.

1. Analyse your environment
You can’t manage what you don’t understand. For that reason, the journey towards a print shop with optimised costs begins by working with a service provider to understand how much your print infrastructure is costing you every month. Since you will usually have tight controls in place for usage of your devices and billing of your services, this is usually a fairly easy and short process in a print shop or large print room.

2. Control and consolidate your fleet
Armed with an in-depth analysis of your print environment, you can begin the process of optimisation in earnest. You’ll look at your real cost per page and compare it to the costs of a copy plan or facilities planning model. You may also want to install software that will help you to bill more accurately per page or per job. In addition, a good service provider will be able to remotely monitor your print infrastructure and dispatch a technician for repairs as soon as it receives an automated alert about a fault or outage in one of your devices. By cutting down on downtime, you can substantially boost your productivity and profits.

3. Streamline your business processes
The third step is to look at ways to optimise your business processes and streamline your workflows. You might benefit from software solutions that allow you to route print jobs to the best-suited device, or that allow you to manage settings for documents centrally so that you don’t need to redefine settings for documents when printers are changed.

Another workflow function you may find invaluable is colour split – a feature that allows print rooms to split the colour pages in a job to a colour printer and the black-and-white pages to a monochrome printer. The important thing is to keep looking for opportunities to do things faster and more cheaply than before.

Closing words
Your success in optimising your print environment depends a great deal on the service provider you choose to work with. You need to find a partner who has a proven track record with complex business relationships and financing models and who can offer the software tools that can help you understand and manage your print environment. It goes without saying that your partner needs a national infrastructure and experience in managing multi-vendor print environments.