

Straight Talking – Print issues in black and white

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Despite the growth in digital communications and promises of the paperless office, printed documents remain critical to most enterprises. Which is why the print environment should be managed just like any other element of the IT infrastructure and with the same strategic focus.

In fact printing and imaging are becoming more complex and costly to manage. They account for between one and three per cent of an organisation's total revenue, according to industry estimates.

Most organisations simply do not know how much their print environment costs. Many businesses do not even know how many printers they have, how many pages are printed daily, the operating costs or the total printing cost across the enterprise.

There are several reasons why organisations have so little insight and control. First, the management of the printing environment is often split between IT, procurement, facilities, department managers and even individual users.

These groups typically operate independently, resulting in organisations owning a range of printing devices from multiple vendors with incompatible software, consumables and supplies.

Uncoordinated procurement is not only time consuming but also costly because it reduces purchasing power and complicates service control.

An unmanaged print environment also reduces productivity and creates support headaches and problems with supplies.

Uncontrolled printing also raises security issues - through the printed documents themselves but also through the data stored in device memory or hard drives.

When it comes to the total cost of ownership, most organisations do not fully understand the hidden costs of printing. This relates not only to

the upfront purchase price but also the running costs - consumables, power, maintenance and support - and environmental impact.

On top of all this, few organisations have document accounting systems that accurately measure the true usage for printing and imaging.

A fragmented and disparate printing environment is unmanageable, strategically ineffective and costly - but through better print management these problems can be mitigated.

Often organisations initially assess their print environment themselves to save money. But many eventually turn to outside specialists with managed print services because of the scale, complexity and escalating costs of printing.

Managed print services control all or some of the print environment and optimise a mixture of printing and imaging equipment, efficient network controls and improved workflows.

By consolidating existing equipment, managing supplies and remote print management, businesses can reduce costs, improve productivity for IT, end-users, procurement and facilities.

Many organisations hand over only certain elements of managing their print infrastructure to a third party. Features to look for in a managed print service are:

- **Document assessments**
This is the first step to understanding current printing costs and how savings can be achieved by making printing more efficient and adapting document workflows.
- **Utility-based pricing models**
Contracts offer a range of pricing models, in contrast to the traditional pay-as-you-go model where consumables are bought as required. Contracts can be usage-based or cost-per-page, telling the customer upfront what the cost of printing will be each month and covering

everything from the equipment and consumables, to maintenance and helpdesk support.

- **Multi-vendor management**
This is important where organisations need to retain multiple brands because of functionality or cost. Independent specialists are worth considering, although some manufacturers such as HP and Xerox also offer multivendor support and a single point of contact and accountability for negotiation, procurement and management of multiple service contracts.
- **Ongoing management and support**
Often managed print service providers will take complete control of the administration, monitoring, maintenance and support of the printing environment which can include an extended helpdesk facility dedicated to print-related problems.
- **Document workflow**
This can involve integrating paper processes with electronic business processes using either a manufacturer's

own proprietary tools or third-party document capture and workflow software.

- **Change management**
Through training and education a managed print service provider needs to address the technical and cultural impact of shifting to new printing practices.

Whether printing is managed in-house or outsourced to specialists, any print strategy must gain the backing of departments to manage because it may need to evolve as business needs change.

A think-big-start-small approach can quickly demonstrate how assessing and optimising the printing practices of one department or location can eventually translate into savings and efficiency improvements across the enterprise.

For more details on how better print management can create business value download Quocirca's white paper [Creating the Print Intelligent Enterprise](#).

About Quocirca

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With world-wide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first hand experience of ITC delivery who continuously research and track the industry and its real usage in the markets.

Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption – the personal and political aspects of an organisation's environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to advise on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca's mission is to help organisations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time.

Quocirca has a pro-active primary research programme, regularly surveying users, purchasers and resellers of ITC products and services on emerging, evolving and maturing technologies. Over time, Quocirca has built a picture of long term investment trends, providing invaluable information for the whole of the ITC community.

Quocirca works with global and local providers of ITC products and services to help them deliver on the promise that ITC holds for business. Quocirca's clients include Oracle, Microsoft, IBM, Dell, T-Mobile, Vodafone, EMC, Symantec and Cisco, along with other large and medium sized vendors, service providers and more specialist firms.

Details of Quocirca's work and the services it offers can be found at <http://www.quocirca.com>