

Managed Print Services

From controlling the fleet to improving the business

by: Ed Crowley, Photizo Group

Oftentimes, vendors and resellers make the mistake of assuming all managed print services (MPS) customers are looking for the same thing: reducing the cost of hard copy devices, maintenance and supplies. But is this really true? Are all organizations using MPS the same? Are they looking for the same thing?

A study by the Photizo Group, a research and consulting firm in the area of managed print services, has determined that not all MPS engagements are the same. These are just a few of the ways in which MPS decision-makers and accounts are different:

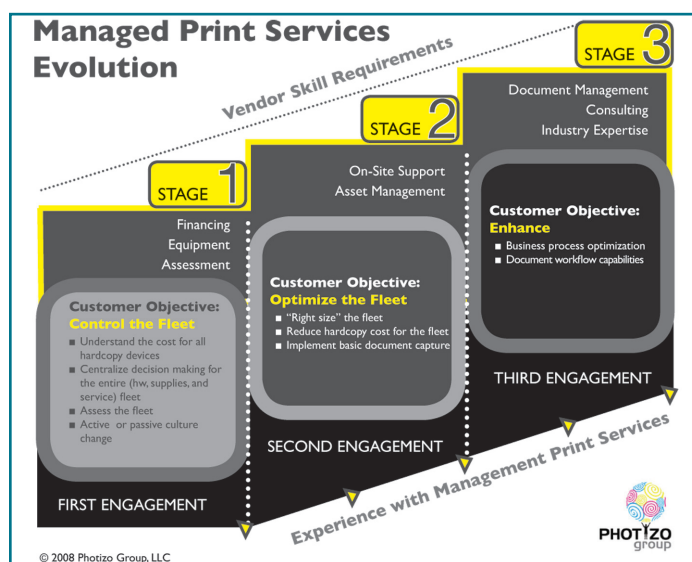
- In some companies, the IT department “owns” the decision for MPS. In other companies, it is the Facilities Management or Purchasing department;

- Many things change depending upon which department (IT or Facilities Management/Purchasing) owns the decision, including which MPS vendor is most likely to be chosen, what expectations are for the MPS program and even satisfaction levels with a vendor’s delivery of MPS programs for specific technology platforms (printers versus copier/MFPs);

- The expectations, requirements and contracts that are negotiated for MPS programs vary greatly depending upon the experience level of the MPS vendor.

This last point bears special discussion. The Photizo Group’s research, along with a significant number of one-on-one interviews with MPS decision makers in all sizes of companies, have clearly identified a difference in the three stages of MPS adoption.

At the initial stage — controlling the fleet — organizations implement MPS in order to gain control of the distributed hardcopy fleet (printers and copier/MFPs). This is often the point at which one department (either IT or Facilities Management/Purchasing) gains control of the decision for the entire fleet. Organizations entering into this stage are



often surprised at the cultural resistance, number of devices and variety of devices that are being deployed within the organization. This stage is the “infrastructure focus” stage that requires vendors to assist with basic financing services (leasing, “click charges” and others), device monitoring, assessments and other tools that help the customer understand the “true” cost of their hardcopy fleet.

In the second stage — optimizing the fleet — organizations move from gaining control of the fleet to optimizing the fleet. At this point, organizations want to ensure that devices are being deployed in a way that is not only cost effective, but is also the most efficient and effective in terms of supporting end-users’ needs. This requires an increasing level of sophistication from vendors and service providers in order to not only track device usage, but to actually move toward actively managing the fleet.

Finally, in the third stage, organizations actually begin to look beyond cost reduction or containment, to actually improving the company’s performance and business

processes by implementing electronic document workflow, document management, document repositories and other activities that actually improve and enhance basic business processes.

At this level, MPS vendors must bring an entirely new set of skills and abilities to the table. In fact, the vendor must move to a “consultant” role versus just providing hardware, supplies and maintenance/management services. This stage also requires that the vendor intimately understands the customer’s industry.

The graph on page 22 provides a representation of the “typical” managed print services evolution.

While customers may often enter into an MPS engagement with the expectation that they will move directly to stage three, our experience indicates that firms ultimately must move through the first two stages before entering the final stage.

For any vendor wishing to provide MPS, this model is a critical tool for ensuring you are taking the right approach with the right customer. If you approach the customer who is still at the stage of trying to control the fleet with a solu-

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tion for enhancing business processes, you will be overshooting their needs. Likewise, if you try to approach a firm that requires assistance in enhancing their fleet’s capabilities and impact on the business with a “control the fleet” solution, you will be proposing a solution that falls significantly short of customer expectations.

Understanding where the customer is in the adoption cycle is absolutely critical, both in terms of providing the right proposal, but also in terms of ensuring you have the ability to deliver the solution that truly meets their needs. ■

Ed Crowley is the founder of the Photizo Group. He has more than 20 years of industry experience including key marketing and management positions with QMS, DataProducts and Lexmark International. Crowley speaks around the world on topics of branding, technology development and the imaging industry. He is also an adjunct professor at Midway College, Midway, Ky., in economics, global marketing and business planning. Visit www.managed-print-services.com.

