

# PRINTING & OUTPUT

## Pay your printing costs 'as you go'

Flexible pricing models are finding plenty of favour with cash-strapped firms in a difficult economy, writes **Linda Daly**

**T**he print market is moving towards a pay-as-you-use model in response to growing demand for low-cost, flexible solutions, according to Morgan Murphy, business development manager with Datapac.

Murphy said the IT provider, which has a dedicated print and print management division, was seeing a growing emphasis on flexibility among cost-conscious companies eager to contain operational costs.

"The economic market has changed dramatically in the last couple of years," he said. "Things have been so fluid, and things have been changing so quickly that companies want to make sure any solutions they put in will be able to adjust with them and continue to be able to provide flexibility."

Cost control is top of the printing agenda for companies operating in difficult conditions, said Murphy.

"There is a huge emphasis on cost control and efficiency. The market is demanding transparency and flexibility in its costs. Businesses need to be fully aware of what services they are receiving and to fully understand where their costs are coming from," he said.

"The type of solution we provide focuses heavily on enabling the customer to pay for what they use rather than what they have. It gives them the

flexibility in the future to scale up, scale down, or to change their emphasis to colour or mono, for example, without massive penalties. Ultimately, we are trying to adjust to the market requirements."

Murphy warned firms to prioritise day-to-day printing costs as part of any move to minimise outgoings in tough trading conditions. Cutting costs associated with the paper trail are every bit as important as salary, utility or travel expenses, he said.

To make the right decisions, companies must have a full understanding of their own requirements and all of the options on offer to them.

"Like any cost, and there are more and more of them, consolidating or changing the print culture in an organisation can be difficult but, due to the climate we are in, organisations need to do that," he said.

One way to cut costs is to 'converge' equipment – swapping numerous printing, faxing and scanning devices for an all-in-one hybrid with capacity to fulfil all of these functions at lower running costs.

"Converging into one single device drives efficiency in both your maintenance and the cost, including the cost of the documents and maintaining the device," said Murphy.

Green practices, such as duplex printing, can also help to keep day-to-day costs to a minimum.

Duplex, a feature of both computer printers and multi-



Morgan Murphy, business development manager, Datapac: 'The market is demanding transparency and flexibility in its costs'

functional devices, enables automatic printing on both sides of a single sheet of paper, preventing unnecessary waste.

To ensure more economical printing practices among staff, Morgan encouraged companies to consider implementing a secure printing solution.

This is where companies take a top-down approach to prevent the waste associated with documents printed out by individual staff members, and then never reclaimed, or the unauthorised use of office printers for personal reasons.

Secure print management is commonplace in many larger

organisations, where ID cards, public key infrastructure smart cards or Pin codes are issued to staff to authenticate and control printer access.

The approach has a number of potential advantages. It can help to prevent a backlog of unwanted documents by storing individual files on the printer until the code to activate the printing process is inputted. By setting up logs and detailed reports, companies can also track print usage more easily.

In the current economy, colour printing is a luxury the majority of companies can ill afford. Murphy, however, cau-

tioned against an across-the-board ban.

"The problem with cutting out colour is that it can have a very important business role. Providing documents that have the clarity and ability to convey your message is absolutely vital," he said.

"Companies need a print solution that will allow them to effectively print those colour pages."

"You want to be able to control your colour usage, while being comfortable using it – or being without fear of penalty. Being able to print the colour documents you require is abso-

lutely vital for any organisation moving forward."

While laser printers are regarded by most as a faster and more efficient alternative to inkjet, Murphy said the latter was sufficient for the needs of many companies.

"It depends on the actual requirement. Some of the new inkjets can be quite a cost-effective option. Rather than focusing on print speeds, organisations need to focus on their needs."

Datapac offers both print supplies and print management solutions.

Printpac – Datapac's print

service solution – combines imaging and printing products from selected vendors with consulting services.

The idea is to give companies a fully automated print solution, tailored to their specific needs. "We can advise companies on printer consolidation, remote print management and print on demand," said Murphy.

Issues to bear in mind when implementing a new print solution include information and process flows, equipment and support logistics and usage patterns. "There is a certain amount of pain involved in re-

*'Businesses need to be fully aware of what services they are receiving and to fully understand where cost reductions are coming from'*

ducing your printing costs, but we can consolidate all those different functions into consolidated devices, providing transparency and flexibility and giving companies peace of mind so they can concentrate on the core running of their business," said Murphy.

"We have a wide range of customers in any sector, and all have one thing in common: the need to control their printing and control their costs."

"We want to partner with those organisations and to help them move to environments in which they can expand and contract."

## Outsourcing brings peace of mind

By **Dermot Corrigan**

**C**ompanies are outsourcing their print functions to realise savings in the downturn, according to Martin Deignan, director of sales and marketing with Oki Printing Solutions Ireland.

"The managed print service is our biggest growth area," he said. "It is hitting the spot with its cost saving message for businesses. Print is a function that can be relatively easily sectioned out and treated on an outsourced basis. This brings cost savings and enables the company to focus on its core activities."

Print vendors typically design bespoke solutions suited to the print requirements of a particular company.

"We go into their premises and talk to them directly, usually on behalf of our channel partners, and do a complete audit of their print requirements free of charge without any obligation," Deignan said. "We look at the layout of the building, the usage by individual staff members, their current hardware and their current cost per page."

The vendor would then manage the upkeep and support of the entire print device fleet, in return for a fixed fee. Deignan said savings resulting from the deal were often in the region of 20 to 30 per cent.

"A proper managed print service arrangement is normally paid for on a quarterly basis, with a fixed charge over three years," he said.

"The 'pay per page' or 'click charge' model is usually more appropriate for one-off machines. New machines will often be included in the mix, but paid for over the minimum three years as part of the fixed charge."

This approach is designed to increase productivity, taking the pressure to maintain, repair and upgrade printing equipment away from firms.

"Companies have people involved in maintaining their various devices who could be carrying out their core activity instead," said Deignan. "We



Martin Deignan, director of sales and marketing with Oki Printing Solutions Ireland

look after the hardware and the consumables via remote and on-site support in conjunction with our channel partners. It depends on the terms of the contract, but usually next-day service is the minimum."

Deignan said that Oki provided managed services for its own devices and those of its manufacturers. "There are quite a few people offering managed print services, but our offering is different as it is multi-vendor," he said.

"We can maintain and supply consumables for the existing non-Oki products while making changes and refreshes to the hardware where it is sensible. There is no point in shifting out machines that have only been bought quite recently."

The Irish print market has been hit badly by the downturn. Despite this, Deignan said sales of multi-function printers (MFPs) were holding up to some degree.

"MFP would be one of the busier areas at the moment," he said. "Products that include printing, copying and scanning, and also perhaps fax, are growing in popularity, even with the recession."

"There is a consolidation argument. It is more cost effective to invest in an MFP, carrying out their core activity instead," said Deignan. "We

machine with colour and mono also saves space and adds efficiencies for an organisation," he said.

Deignan added, however, that shared devices were not always suitable for everyone in an organisation. "In some cases, security concerns mean that certain people – in particular, managers and HR people – like to have a personal device close to their desk, rather than sharing it with others," he said.

"Our own software product is called Print Control," he said. "This enables an administrator to manage a work group's use of their printing devices. For example, they can restrict some users to just monochrome, or account for printing done to date by each individual and see how much it is costing."

More sophisticated print management tools are evolving all the time. "In a full managed print situation we use a tool called Print Audit Facilities Manager," said Deignan.

"This gives an enormous amount of control and data to the client. We can show where the biggest users are, how the

machines are being used, and make recommendations on printing more effectively."

In January, Oki Ireland signed an alliance with document management specialist Sofico to bundle the on-demand business automation management solutions, sold by the Irish company, with Oki products.

"Sofico had been largely operating in the corporate area, but we have signed an agreement with them for document management solutions for the SME market," said Deignan. "Their solutions fit nicely with our managed print services offerings. Once you are looking at devices, there is an obvious synergy with documents."

Deignan said that future developments in print technology would focus on business efficiencies.

"Next year will see new technologies to address issues like ease of use and cost of ownership. We are also going to see more software facilities being built into machines. These will be the major themes for 2010," he said.

"We are assuming for now that there will be a pick up next year, but it will be slow and patchy. Anything bigger than that will be a bonus. In the short term, gaining new business from other people is the only way we can grow."



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