

Are Your Printers A Drag On Your IT Budget? Dec. 9, 2005

Pennsylvania attorney general's office will cut printer costs by 21% over three years after conducting a thorough review.

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[InformationWeek](#)

Minor headaches like paper jams and toner replacements are what usually come to mind when printers are mentioned. As long as you can click "print" and your documents appear there is no need to think about printers, right? Wrong. Printing is a large part of many IT departments' operation, and with today's tight budgets, IT managers should take the time to assess their printing needs.

Jim Ingalzo, technology manager for the Pennsylvania attorney general's office, did just that.

"When I decided to assess our printing function, I had no idea how many printers we had," Ingalzo says. "We have 22 offices spread across the state of Pennsylvania, and it was impossible to keep track." Ingalzo knew that he needed to do something because calls to the help desk to report printer malfunctions were tying up his staff. He also saw his budget eaten up by repair and toner costs.

"With an aging fleet of printers, the costs of repair and consumables [such as toner cartridges] were a significant portion of the budget," Ingalzo says.

IT professionals looking to simplify their IT spending might want to take a close look at their printer fleets. That's what Ingalzo decided to do after realizing that the majority of his printers were at least 7 years old. Enter Oki Data Americas Inc. and its print audit software.

Ron Bassett, director of customer satisfaction for Oki Data Americas, says his team audited the attorney general's headquarters in Harrisburg, as well as offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburg.

"We loaded the print audit software onto their network and ran it for 30 days to make sure we had a complete analysis," says Bassett.

When the 270-page report came back, it revealed that the attorney general's office had a fleet of 1,000 obsolete printers. Combining the report with blueprints of the attorney general's office buildings told Ingalzo and his team exactly where each printer was located, who was using it, and for what purpose.

"After the assessment we saw where we could save the AG's office 21% of their costs over a three-year period. Controlling costs and improving productivity is the main goal," says Bassett.

The attorney general's office started a complete overhaul of its printer fleet in mid-September and is

scheduled to finish this month. The recommendations Oki Data made included networking the printers to Ingalzo's office at the attorney general's headquarters, downloading print-management software to keep track of the non-networked printers, and upgrading the technology used to report problems to the help desk. Now all of the equipment and document output can be monitored from a central location with a click of a mouse.

"After the new system was implemented, we had \$20,000 worth of cartridges sent back to Harrisburg. That's four skids of toner," says Ingalzo, noting how poorly printer supplies had been managed previously. "Now we control all of that, the system automatically knows when it is time for new toner, and schedules for it to be shipped. In terms of output there is no limit on the desktop printers, but on the network where there is color printing there is control and security. We deal with a lot of sensitive documents, and so we are able to send a document to the printer but it won't print until you put a [personal identification] number in."

Before the printer network was overhauled, the help desk received an average of 35 calls per week regarding printer-related issues. It has experienced a 20% reduction in the number of calls, and there's no need for the offices to stockpile toner because the system automatically does the ordering.

Because the attorney general's office decided to continue operating a combination of networked and non-networked desktop printers, there needed to be a way to keep track of all the printers. Oki Data's Print Manage software made that possible by allowing Ingalzo's department to "see" every printer, whether it's on the network or not.

"This was a great experience for us," Ingalzo says. "We replaced an aging fleet of printers with newer and better technology and decreased our repair costs. Also, because many of our printers were outdated, the cost of supplies was very high."

"On a scale of one to 10, many companies rate the importance of their print functions at a two, and after we complete an assessment that number increases to an eight or nine" says Bassett. Printers are often an afterthought for IT managers. But in these days of tight budgets, they might want to take a second look.