Link Your Mobile Devices and Your Printers

Mobile printing is now more important than ever before and must now be integrated into an organization's overall print strategy to preserve productivity.

It's no secret that mobile technology is changing how organizations do business. The introduction of mobile devices has become one of the most significant enablers of business productivity but one key business process has eluded the mobility movement: printing. Even the most tech-savvy professionals are faced with the dilemma of troubleshooting how to print when they're away from the office.

In the era of tablets and smartphones, the boundaries of the work office now extend to virtually anywhere you can imagine. Although mobile devices are full of features and have countless apps to make work more efficiently, a print module is not one of them.

This anytime, anywhere mentality also means that mobile workers do not have pre-established connections to printers when they are outside the office. They need a plan for finding suitable printers, connecting to them,

and printing their documents securely. Fortunately, the print market is starting to address the needs of the mobile worker.

The mobile landscape

Mobile device usage is up, and experts predict that it will only continue to increase. Two-thirds (67%) of government decision-makers are now using smartphones, up from 58% in 2012. In addition, tablet usage nearly doubled in the past year, from 31% in 2012 to 60% in 2013.[1]

Mobile printing is more important than ever before and must now be integrated into an organization's overall print strategy to preserve productivity. Many operational processes and workflow practices still rely on printing (contracts that need signatures) and those that must be maintained for ethical,

authentication, or statutory purposes (HIPAA, OSHA, Sarbanes-Oxley).

Mobile print solutions should also be addressed from a security standpoint. Like mobile devices themselves, mobile printing leaves organizations at risk for data leaks. Unsecured mobile printing can result in confidential information being left sitting at a printer exposed to any number of unauthorized people. By providing the ability to submit a print job from any mobile device to any printer, securely and reliably, employees gain more flexibility and convenience to print while they are on the move.

Tools for mobile printing

A number of mobile print solutions are available to help agencies drive mobile productivity. Cloud-based printing (both private and public cloud options) and peer-to-peer printing provide a variety of options for mobile device users.

[1] *IDC 2012*

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Cloud-based printing enables workers to print anything from any device to any cloud-connected printer. Because the solution is web-based, printer drivers are stored and kept up-to-date directly in the cloud without any further maintenance. Cloud-based printers work whether the mobile device is in the next room or across the country . All that is required is an internet connection to print documents, photos and more straight form the cloud.

HP's ePrint is one example of a cloud-based solution. Users are empowered to print documents efficiently with app-based printing, email-based printing, or both. They can search their agency's print network to locate a printer or among thousands of HP ePrint Public Print Locations at UPS stores and FedEx locations, as well as many airports, hotels, and public libraries. HP offers an ePrint app for iOS, Android, and BlackBerry devices.

Peer-to-peer printing, on the other hand, establishes a direct connection between the mobile device and the output device. Common connection links include Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and USB cables. Apple AirPrint™ is one example of peer-to-peer printing. It allows an iOS device to print to any AirPrint compatible printer that shares the same wireless network. The iOS device will detect the printer and print to it — and allows the user to print directly from the native application used to create the document. Android devices, too, have similar wireless apps for direct printing to most vendor printers.

Making mobility truly mobile

Although mobile printing is not quite as easy as just hitting "print," technology now allows IT managers to address the needs of their mobile users. Successful implementations need to be flexible and incorporate into existing agency networks in order to make the transition from within the

physical confines of the workplace to outside the workplace seamless. Solutions also need to work with any printer as well as support any number of mobile platforms, like iOS, Android, Windows, and BlackBerry.

Implementing a mobile print solution can be complex. Security, cost containment, business process requirements, user needs, and delivery models are all issues that agencies must keep in mind when developing their mobile strategy.

Mobile printing is being embraced by most major printer suppliers, but the market is still in its infancy. It will continue to grow as the diversity of mobile devices continues to expand. Mobile print solutions are more affordable than ever before, and PCMG Account Executives can provide guidance in addressing your mobile print needs. Call today to learn how easy it is to bridge the printer divide. ▪

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