

Big issue

Toner management

How to enhance your managed print

**Mike Burke, Managing Director,
Purpose Software, says improving
your toner management will
enhance your provision of
managed print services**

Maintaining an efficient supply of toner is at the heart of delivering of an effective managed print service that meets customer SLAs and enables a sustained level of profitability to be achieved. Resellers can no longer rely on traditional manual methods of handling the end-to-end toner management process and must consider how workflow automation can deliver the required efficiency gains.

To ensure that customer devices stay fully operational and maintain service profitability, customer sites must receive toner on a timely basis. The delivery of replacement consumables to customers is optimised by using meter readings. These automatically calculate the expected percentage of life remaining and expiry date of tracked parts against manufacturer specifications, to determine if they have achieved the correct usage. This ensures that toner is only delivered to customer sites when needed and helps to combat the hoarding that commonly occurs when the supply process is not sufficiently controlled.

The integration of service management systems with automated meter reading software, such as Capture-IT, further enhances the toner management process, by automatically sending email alerts when consumables reach predetermined limits and replacements are required. Toner replacement requests that have achieved yield are automatically logged as toner required tasks, triggering the despatch of a replacement. The service management system is automatically

updated when the new toner is fitted to show the job as completed. Consumables that have not achieved a reasonable yield are highlighted as possible warranty claims or indicative of excess coverage.

Toner Outsourcing

The market for consumables is steadily coming under threat as users print less, machines become more efficient and costs continue to reduce. This trend shows no signs of abating so anything that can be done to remove cost will be critical to the ongoing profitability of resellers.

This is where outsourcing the supply of toner to specialists such as Westcoast, Data Direct or Parsia can make a real difference. It not only speeds up the end-to-end toner replenishment process, but also allows resellers to take advantage of the greater buying power of these organisations to reduce the cost of toner, both OEM and compatibles, and drive greater profitability to the bottom line.

According to Alex Tatham, Managing Director at Westcoast: "Resellers that have invested in the latest industry-focused ERP systems, such as those from Purpose Software which have been developed specifically for the print market, will gain a significant competitive advantage by outsourcing the toner replacement process. It automates the time-consuming and costly manual workflow processes to increase efficiency and profitability."

Purpose Software's
Mike Burke - resellers
must take a holistic
approach



Big issue

Toner management

‘The cost savings for vendors and resellers that outsource are substantial’



Some technical support issues can also be consigned to history

Further savings can be achieved eliminating the need for resellers to maintain costly warehouse stock for all print devices supported. There are no warehousing costs, stock loss or cash tied up in working capital which can be deployed more efficiently in other areas of the business.

“Outsourcers such as Westcoast are driving innovation by holding more stock which enables manufacturers to recognise sales earlier, improves their cash flow, reduces warehousing costs and improves customer service both for direct and indirect business. The cost savings for vendors and resellers that outsource are substantial and our expertise in the print after-market will create best-in-class service for end-users,” concludes Tatham.

Outsourcing will improve the toner management process for resellers whether orders arrive by telephone or automatically generated and logged through the service management system. Purchase orders are automatically raised and sent to the outsourcer without having to rekey data through a vendor portal. The order is picked and despatched direct to end user customers with next-day ‘just in time’ delivery. The outsourcer sends acknowledgements to resellers confirming when orders have been despatched with comprehensive track and trace visibility. Invoices are sent via EDI for automatic posting and matching in their service management systems for payment.

Resellers that are already outsourcing the logistics of toner delivery include Apogee Corporation Ltd, a leading independent European provider of digital office solutions and managed print services.

Rob Fisher, Director of Logistics at Apogee Corporation, says: “Outsourcing the logistics of toner delivery to Westcoast has been an extremely positive experience for us as it has enabled us to focus on the timing and efficiency of toner supply to our clients in line with their usage and freed up working capital to invest in other areas of the business.

‘Resellers that have invested in the latest industry-focused ERP systems, such as those from Purpose Software which have been developed specifically for the print market, will gain a significant competitive advantage’
Alex Tatham, MD, Westcoast

Big issue

Toner management

‘Resellers must take a holistic approach to delivering an efficient MPS service to achieve customer SLAs’



Developing an effective working relationship is key to maximising the benefits

“We are also able to respond faster to customers should they call about an order as our CBS service management software integrates tightly with Westcoast. The system delivers significant operational efficiency by providing us with full order tracking and real-time updates that result in an enhanced customer experience.”

The technical support issues that can occur when end users have problems installing replacement toner cartridges can also be consigned to history using the efficient online and telephone-based support services provided by outsourcers. As well as reducing the burden on their technical support staff, outsourcing allows resellers to redeploy picking and delivery staff more productively and repurpose office and warehouse space.

Developing an effective working relationship is key to maximising the benefits to be gained from outsourcing the toner replenishment process. Resellers need to ensure that their chosen partner offers dedicated account managers with named customer service managers and credit controllers that understand their needs and provide enthusiastic and timely assistance when required.

Resellers must take a holistic approach to delivering an efficient MPS service to achieve customer SLAs. An effective service management system consistently plays a big role in this process at the heart of the business operation.

This is why it is so important to be working with an outward looking software supplier that understands the UK market and is committed to ongoing product development to ensure that the system continues to meet the evolving needs of this competitive sector. It is equally important to ensure that the chosen software supplier has invested in support and can provide a rapid and responsive service to resellers. ■

‘We are also able to respond faster to customers should they call about an order as our CBS service management software integrates tightly with Westcoast’
Rob Fisher, Director of Logistics,
Apogee Corporation

Contact details

www.purposesoftware.co.uk