

Canon e-Maintenance boosts teacher-power at David Lister School

At the David Lister School in Hull every moment of the school day is touched by IT, from registration taken on the teacher's laptop, to completing and submitting homework online. Now thanks to Canon e-Maintenance, supplied by Canon PLUS Business Partner, IT@Spectrum, even the school's printing and copying devices are following suit, freeing up valuable teaching time and delivering real cost benefits.

The Problem

David Lister School (DLS) is a busy inner-city secondary school catering for around 1,400 pupils. Since April 2002, when the school was selected for the government's Pathfinder project, which sought to identify ways to reduce teachers' workload, they have embraced IT throughout the entire organisation. The ICT team has introduced a school information system that enables online learning and lesson planning, every teacher is equipped with a laptop and there are over 250 networked workstations for student use.

As a result the school has an enormous demand for prints and copies, producing upwards of two million pages a year. This, as well as the sheer number and type of user, means the wear and tear on the photocopying and printing equipment is considerable. But it is also an environment in which maximum uptime is essential. Students and teachers invariably require copies at the last minute and if a fault occurs, or the machine has run out of toner, they are often too busy to report it as they have to find an alternative before the bell goes for the next lesson.

Chris Jennings, ICT Manager at DLS, explains: "With the help of IT@Spectrum we had already installed a fleet of Canon copier-based multifunctional devices on our network. Canon's NetSpot solution allowed us to identify faults with the machines remotely, but this still meant we had to keep proactively checking and then contacting IT@Spectrum to send out an engineer. All of this was time consuming and still involved periods of downtime that meant we weren't getting the full benefit from our equipment."

The Total Approach to Technology

Ken Sturdy, Managing Director at IT@Spectrum takes up the story: "We had provided DLS with photocopier products and service for about five years and more recently document management systems, so we were already well acquainted with the school's needs, IT infrastructure and the level of service and maintenance required. It was clear that e-Maintenance would be of enormous benefit to them so, as some of the more recent models installed could now support it, we worked with Chris' team to develop a recommendation."



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Canon's IT Solution

With Canon's e-Maintenance DLS's networked multifunctional devices report detailed information directly to the service team at IT@Spectrum. This provides many benefits, for example it allows them to provide the school the necessary toner stock before it runs out and to track and rectify errors and faults without the ICT team needing to be involved.

Unlike many of the alternatives offered by competitors, the Canon system depends on one-way outbound communication via an encrypted email attachment so the security of an organisations network is not compromised by granting external access.

The Vision Realised

IT@Spectrum worked on the installation with Chris's team and their Internet Service Provider and since completion at the end of 2004, the school has been experiencing increased device uptime, fewer call outs and more accurate billing.

"Now if one of our printers has a fault requiring an engineer visit," explains Chris, "it automatically sends IT@Spectrum an email to arrange a service call. Although I'm notified I don't need to do anything. I just relax knowing they are already on the case." Of course it is sometimes quicker for Chris's team on-site to rectify the problem in which case the service team get in touch and advise them accordingly.

But it isn't only when something goes wrong that e-Maintenance is beneficial, as Ken Sturdy is keen to point out. "The real power of e-Maintenance is that it allows us to avoid faults through preventative maintenance. We even know when component parts are wearing out or reaching the end of their life-expectancy so we can replace them before there is a problem."

The devices also report on usage, including quantities, use of colour, different sizes and the deployment of any accessories fitted. As well as resulting in more accurate and prompt billing by automatically counting copies, it also enables more effective resource management, allowing the customer to identify training needs, select the most appropriate models when upgrading and make accurate decisions about where to site devices to maximise their use.

So how does Chris feel the school has benefited since the installation? "As expected the significantly reduced downtime has freed up time throughout the organisation. The ICT team can concentrate on other issues and projects. Meanwhile teachers and students are enjoying a more efficient service and can get on with the business of education. The financial benefits are considerable too: Like many schools our budgets are really tight. Prompt billing and the accuracy with which we can monitor usage takes the guesswork out of budgeting, helps to justify new purchases and ensures we are getting the best value out of existing resources."

And what of the future? "We're completely convinced by e-Maintenance and long-term we'll be upgrading our entire printer fleet with models that can offer this service. That way we can enjoy these benefits to the full."