

Canon helps Hertfordshire Council increase efficiency and lower costs

Hertfordshire County Council is at the forefront of a new Government drive to create and store information electronically instead of on paper. Network Print Manager Don Preece explains how a consultancy-driven approach from Canon has helped the Council increase its efficiency and dramatically lower costs, through a complete review of their print output strategy.

The Problem

Like all local authorities, Hertfordshire County Council is responsible for providing the best service and value it can to its constituents, and for regularly monitoring its achievements to demonstrate accountability.

“Accountability for costs and exploring sustainable ways to improve savings are prime drivers in local authorities these days,” explains Don. “With the Government programme to create and store more and more information electronically, it was important for us to review how that might impact upon our print output strategy.”

Over time, Hertfordshire had adopted separate print room and desktop printing approaches to print output, with both approaches duplicated over two sites – one in County Hall, accounting for 14,400,000 black and white prints per annum, and 7,728,000 prints per annum from another site at Hatfield. Both locations maintain high volume print rooms that rely on print information stored on disk or CD Rom, which is then manually delivered to the relevant site print room for output.

Both sites support a large number of staff working in small print groups using desktop inkjet or laser printers. In all, the two sites produce a staggering 60 million digital printed pages and over 24 million sheets of lithographic print annually.

Don realised that Hertfordshire was likely to increase its print and copy output as the Government programme matured, and that any inefficiencies in its current strategy would be multiplied. Canon was appointed to examine how this situation could be improved by looking at how the authority’s printers were being used and recommending more intelligent alternatives.

The Total Approach to Technology

During the consultancy period, Canon found that not all desktop printers were being utilised effectively. Indeed a number were not being used at all.

“We went through a best value process with Canon. The biggest driver that came out of that was to look at how desktop printing was done, and then reduce the number of desktop printers while increasing output resource availability,” explains Don.

Canon recommended that these printers should be removed altogether, and that a large number of them be replaced by a few multifunctional devices that combine copy and print functions. This would give Hertfordshire’s staff the opportunity to output more double-sided prints, reducing paper costs and saving time.



Instigation of Canon's desktop replacement strategy will yield 80% cost saving by 2005.

"We saw that there would be quite a reduction in costs, where we could have, on average, one multifunctional device doing the work of twelve printers," says Don. "From this, we could predict that if we'd got about 700 desktop printers at County Hall, we could probably reduce that number to about 70, and do roughly the same at Hatfield."

More importantly, Canon advised a more workgroup/departmental printing strategy so that staff could share resources more effectively, maximising usage so that all devices were used to their full potential.

This principle was also applied to Hertfordshire's two print rooms, where valuable time and resources could be saved by networking users directly to the facilities for higher volume print runs.

"The hard copy print room culture, which uses disks, is very old fashioned. With Canon's help, there was no need to continue it," says Don.

Canon's IT Solution

Canon's consultants worked with Hertfordshire to devise a road map for reduced costs and increased efficiency, culminating in the supply of multifunctional devices to replace hundreds of ineffective desktop printers.

The authority's outmoded hard copy disk system was replaced with shared network access. Instead of manually delivering disks to the print room, the information is sent over the network, saving travel time and expense and allowing printing of high volume jobs to commence more rapidly.

Canon also supplied two iR110 high volume digital printing devices to complement the newly enabled network access with an ultra high 110 pages per minute production rate. In-depth technical and operational training was also provided. This explained how to use the new systems and how to get the most value from them, ensuring a measured change in culture.

"The training back-up given by Canon was crucial for us," says Don, "without this support, the whole project would have failed."

"Also, Canon guarantees us full after-sales support, which has proved to be very good," he adds. "A phone call or an email always gets a response. Previous suppliers never seemed to be able to provide this level of support."

The Vision Realised

Hertfordshire has already begun realising hard cost benefits from its relationship with Canon. In its fiscal year ending April 2004, it expects to save around £95,000, increasing to £455,000 in the following year as the programme gains momentum thanks to the implementation of the Canon print solution.

In 2004, it projects that its print rooms will save 20% of their costs, rising to 50% the year after. Instigation of Canon's desktop replacement strategy will yield 80% cost saving by 2005.

"This new approach to our print strategy will be spread out County Council-wide, and could spread to schools and universities in the area," hopes Don. "Canon has been essential in unlocking these possibilities."

This case study was printed on a Canon CLC 5000+.