Canon Managed Print Solution helps East Lothian "Print Smart".

Company Name
East Lothian Council

Industry
Public Sector

Location
South-East Scotland

Services
Planning, economic development, council housing, schools, employment, libraries, sports & leisure facilities, building services, taxation

Website
www.eastlothian.gov.uk

Solution
Managed Print Services

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Overview

Julie Caughey, Finance Manager at East Lothian Council in south-east Scotland still looks a little surprised as she describes the findings of the Council's review of its printing and copying operations. But she's also relieved to be talking in the past tense. East Lothian is reaping the benefits of a Managed Print Service (MPS) solution from Canon that has not only greatly reduced printer numbers and consumables consumption but raised the whole profile of printing and copying within the Council.

Challenge

Like councils across the UK, East Lothian is faced with the challenge of reducing costs and increasing efficiency while maintaining services. Printing and copying came under the spending spotlight as the Council's existing contract entered its final six months. Caughey recalls: "Sticking with the status quo wasn't an option. We'd been trying to reduce the size of our printer fleet for five years, but numbers had actually grown. One big problem was the low profile of printing as a cost centre; people were unaware of how much was being copied or printed, and of the cost of doing it on, say, an inkjet printer compared to a Multi Functional Printer."

East Lothian took the opportunity provided by the new tender process to get a fresh take on things. "The Council hadn't worked with Canon before," says Caughey, but was impressed with the company's explanation of the benefits a Managed Print Service could offer. "It promised not only internal efficiencies, but an outside partner who would provide an external focus on cutting costs and meeting our objectives."

Solution

The vital first step was to discover exactly what assets the Council had, where they were, and how great the volume of printing and copying was. Time was tight, but deadlines were met – something Caughey puts down to the collaboration from the outset between Canon and the Council's procurement, IT and finance departments. "We were all working towards the same objectives – a more efficient and environmentally-friendly operation based on printing less on fewer machines."

She adds that the solution also had to be Councilwide, which presented its own challenges. "Like all Scottish councils, we're responsible for education, and a school is very different to a corporate environment, so whatever we decided on had to work in both." Another key feature of the solution had to be management information so that, unlike in the pre-Canon days, managers could monitor the use of every device in order to drive print and copy volumes down.

The Council and Canon tackled these issues during the design phase of the solution: "We had a rough idea of where we wanted to go, but we didn't know exactly how to get there. So Canon's experience of implementing a range of different solutions for other clients really helped us arrive at the right solution."

Canon

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Julie Caughey, Finance Manager.

The final solution began to arrive in the shape of more than 180 Canon Multi Functional Printers, including colour and black and white devices. The crucial component, however, was the uniFLOW Output Manager software, which provides the Council with the 'micro-level' monitoring that is vital to ensuring the project hits its objectives.

Caughey explains: "uniFLOW Output Manager is essential to our new process because it tells us everything we need to know about printing and copying – the volumes, who's producing them, which machines are used most and, just as important, which are underused. Through monthly and quarterly reports, it tells us whether we have the right size of fleet and whether machines are in the right place. And we can identify heavy-user departments and discuss strategies with them to reduce volumes or produce them more cost-effectively."

Such discussions highlight another important aspect of the project – the need to secure buy in from an internal customer base faced with a significantly new way of doing things. As Project Manager, it was Caughey's task to implement a communications campaign to explain why things were changing and what the benefits were. Under the internal 'PrintSmart' brand, the new strategy was explained to all levels of the Council. Volunteer PrintSmart champions were recruited and equipped with explanatory material tailored to the different audiences. It was, says Caughey, "a major task. It wasn't just about putting in new machines, it was about changing people's attitudes."

Achievements

Nine months into the new regime, the Council is well on its way to meeting its target of a £95,000 reduction in the annual print bill. There has been a significant rationalisation in the number of printers – an 85% reduction in those in corporate locations (274 fewer printers) and a 65% reduction in schools (500 fewer printers). As a result, the spend on ink cartridges has been slashed by 66% – exceeding the 50% target.

Asked about Canon's contribution to PrintSmart, Caughey admits to initial apprehension and scepticism. "I didn't know enough about a Managed Print Service to be sure it was what we needed and whether it would be money well spent. It's early days but I'm hopeful we've made the right decision. Canon now needs to deliver as per the business case." Looking to the future, she's enthusiastic about the potential to expand the solution to other areas of the Council. "With more intelligent devices in place, we have a platform for moving forward. We're already trialling electronic document storage and retrieval in the legal services department, and the signs are it will be very successful. The next step will be to roll it out across the Council."

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