

MPS STRATEGY: What You Need to Know Before 'The Rollout'

by Tim Brien • PrintFleet

In the world of managed print services (MPS) there are many ways to take a program to market. How you do this is largely dependant on your business structure and capabilities. There are several types of businesses in the print and copy world, which means following any "one-sized fits all" implementation program will not necessarily work.

When we define the different types of companies in the MPS space, there are print-based organizations, which deal predominantly with printers and historically don't touch the copier side of the end-user environment. Then there are copier-based companies that have chosen not to touch the printer and printer consumables side of the things. The two worlds are colliding and there is a new trend developing where we now see hybrid dealers emerging; these dealers are working towards supplying the best of both worlds to their customers.

Are you the print-based dealer, the copier-based dealer, or the hybrid dealer? Ultimately, the program

you bring to market has to benefit both you and your clients. Regardless of your current state, take some time to review the following strategies to see what will fit best for your program rollout.

There are many factors that are required in order to execute a proper managed print services program, but the two main considerations are deciding who will sell the program and what backend resources are needed to drive the program. Many companies believe that you should train all of your sales representatives to take the program to market, while others believe that you should hire or assign specific sales resources to sell the program. Printer-centric companies are well suited to sell the program through their standard sales representatives (this is not a huge departure from their current business model and margins on a per deal basis), whereas many copier-centric organizations decide that it is best to have a separate group sell the MPS program.





Who is selling the program?

The method that you choose is specific to your company, the existing sales people that you have in place, and whether or not you are willing to hire additional talent. Proper training and compensation plans are imperative to the success of your program. Sales people will sell to where they are compensated, so make sure your program meets that goal. Also consider the various aspects of a print management program that you will need to implement prior to roll-out: automated meter collection, proactive service notifications, proactive supplies fulfillment, and ongoing customer management.

Training requirements are like any other program you take to market. The more knowledge your teams have, the more success you will have. There are considerations and decisions that must be made before you start training your staff and ascertaining all the back end logistics such as supply and parts fulfillment.

The specialist

Whether you adopt a sales-based deployment or service-based deployment, you need a specialist that is able to talk about all aspects of the program and application used to support the program. This specialist should be a person with mid to high-level computer and network knowledge, as they will be the go-to resource for difficult installations or in-depth client conversations. A MCSE is an asset, and many people believe that your systems or solutions engineers are a good fit, as their conversations around print management should initiate leads to other software application sales.

The back-end resources

Remote monitoring technology is an essential part of an MPS program and is becoming a widely accepted practice in the business world as companies realize the benefits — freeing up internal IT resources by having a third party manage specific business processes.

To take advantage of remote monitoring technology, you must first supply your customer with information about what technology needs to be installed at his/her company, and how the technology works. This action can be accomplished by having a set of

documents that discuss the technology and its function. In addition to a technical piece, you will need a marketing sell sheet that describes the benefits to the customer: what will they gain from your MPS program? Without a direct benefit to the customer, it is difficult to get anyone in an IT department to grant permission to install software. Marketing materials are a critical but commonly overlooked component of a go-to-market strategy.

The final item that you need is documentation on industry specific regulations that may be a barrier to you installing a remote monitoring package.

All marketing material should be customized to match your company's brand, as it is your company that is known in the market, not the software manufacture.

You may also decide to brand your MPS program under a different name than your current business name.

What is the focus of your MPS deployment? Is it a sales focused deployment or a service focused deployment? There are benefits to both and hopefully we can shed some light on the long-term success of both. Ultimately, it is possible to do both simultaneously, but most organizations start with one in order to maintain focus, and incorporate the other over time.

Sales-based deployment

Sales-based deployment is the most widely seen and adopted deployment strategy, which I have seen over the last six years of working with different dealerships. The core focus is presenting a new sales-based strategy to clients. This type of strategy means that a great deal of the resources is spent initially on training the sales team and specialist. The specialist's time will then be spent looking at new opportunities. In order to be effective, this program must involve proper customer analysis procedures and a method to easily generate proposals.

The other issue that arises is the fact that you are attempting to build a program with new customers where you must ensure that you put your best foot forward. Whenever a new program is brought to market, there is always a learning curve associated to deployment, and technical issues do arise. This can lead to a longer than expected rollout as you are constantly having to rework parts of the program as you are presenting it.

If the sales-based rollout is to the main focus of the company then it is prudent to look to your current customers first. Always choose an existing customer where there is an opportunity to gain more traction. For a print-based dealer it may involve taking the typical transactional customer base, and rolling them into contractual customers where you are managing their entire fleets in short or long term contracts. The copier-centric dealer should look at bringing the additional devices (printers) that currently are serviced by a different company under contract for supplies and service. Both of these programs require a change in business strategy, but the long-term benefit is a better relationship with your customer and increased business opportunity.

Service-based rollout


This rollout method is the least commonly used, but it can potentially offer the greatest long-term reward and the quickest ramp up of your print management program. The service-based rollout is ultimately focused around customer satisfaction and the reduction of costs associated with doing business in the short term. Some of the recoverable costs associated with running a dealership are meter read collection, supply and service delivery. These are all costs that can be drastically reduced by remotely monitoring your current base of devices in the field.

The key to a proper service-based rollout is mass deployment of technology into your customer base. One of the most efficient ways to get remote monitoring into your customer base is to use service technicians to install the end user portion of the application. The service technicians have a rapport with the customer base that the sales people would work for years to develop, and may never reach. They are the trusted ones, the knights in shining armor. Having the rapport with the customer base will allow them to get data collection agents installed quickly, and with less effort.

The more data collection agents in the field, the more customer processes / costs associated with managing a client will be reduced. Long term, you will set your company up for a more successful MPS launch due to your sales reps having a complete list of devices in field. Companies around the world sell client lists for cold calling; now imagine the success of your reps if they had a complete list with all the service history, page coverage, and usage trends on

competitive equipment. Selling MPS is much easier and quicker if you already have all the print details. This will also allow you to understand the backend technology prior to entering into a sales discussion.

The bottom line

MPS can be an extremely effective selling tool and can increase a company's revenues drastically, by giving the sales representatives a new talk track, or by simply allowing them to take over the additional business in existing accounts. At the end of the day, MPS must be more than a sales pitch: it is a way to do business. The heart of managed print services is "managed," and we must remember that once the customer signs on, we must deliver more than just a cartridge or a printer. We must help them manage their environments, which will create a long-term mutually beneficial relationship with our customers. 

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