



# CAUTION: MOVING PARTS

Business machines and consumables are a growing opportunity for everyone. Jane Smith takes a look at why you can no longer afford to be cautious about getting involved.

**T**he category of business machines encompasses a wide range of products. In almost all cases these days the products themselves are designed for 'plug and play' and require very little specialist knowledge on behalf of the buyer or seller. The majority are also available pretty much on a next day delivery basis from mainstream wholesalers and specialist distributors. This means that, without exception, all office products dealers are able to get involved. Here are a few areas to consider...

## PRINTERS/FAX AND MULTIFUNCTION MACHINES

As technology has been developing so the ability for us to have everything we need linked to our PC has become commonplace. We have seen:

- *Personal printing, copying and faxing increasing*
- *Higher volumes of PC to print*
- *More desire to use colour – dominated by inkjet technology*
- *Increasing need for higher print speeds*
- *A separate machine for each job*

And what we are now seeing as emerging trends are:

- *Availability and affordability of colour laser machines offering higher speeds and cheaper running costs*

- *Increasing availability and use of multi-function machines*
- *Computer to print volumes doubling every three years*

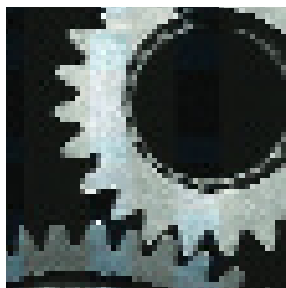
So what does all this mean? Well the experts believe that, increasingly, businesses will be looking at the costs associated with their printing habits, in other words the cost of ownership.

Some also believe we've reached the point of a 'printing revolution'. More focus is going to be placed on the cost of ownership, which is a calculation of the cost of the machine and the cost of output. In addition, businesses will start to ask questions about what should be printed and at what quality. And this will have a big impact upon the type of consumables being used; both ink/toner and paper. >>



To capitalise on the opportunities ahead you need to be thinking about how to ensure that you acquire machine sales through your consumables sales or how to acquire consumables through your machine sales. Either way, it is imperative that you build these links within your customer base. Not only do you want both sales, you don't want to leave the door open for a competitor. Why not take the opportunity to carry out an audit with your customers? You could use it to find out which machines are in their organisation and whether you are getting all the consumables business.

Outside of printers there is a raft of 'other' business machines that could help you meet your sales target. So, what machines come under the category business machines – 'other'? Good question. As a definition, how about something like 'a piece of mechanical equipment that can be used to help you to do something in the office to achieve a better and/or more cost effective result'?



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#### **SHREDDERS**

Take security and the huge growth in shredding machines. USP magazine has covered this subject separately and in some depth but it is still worth a mention here. No longer an expensive luxury – a shredder is a must. In fact it doesn't even have to be expensive. Pinpointing sensitive job functions and departments could mean that only a small, personal shredder is needed .

#### **BINDING AND LAMINATING**

There has been an awful lot of coverage recently about the explosion of colour printing and the use of digital images. When going to such expense, finishing the document off in an attractively bound way makes complete sense.

There are many tried and tested methods of binding documents on the market including comb, wire, thermal and specialist perfect binding and strip binding systems. All designed to deliver a certain 'look and feel'. There is also the opportunity for companies to get their consumables in their bespoke corporate colours and/or over-printed with their logo. Is this a service you could offer?

If a document needs to be protected as well as presented well

then laminating is a good solution. Laminating is used to extend the life of a document and once a document is laminated it is tamper proof – nobody can change the information.

#### **GUILLOTINES AND TRIMMERS**

Not such an obvious product category but worth a mention as it is still a growth area, driven by digital photography. Digital camera sales are on the increase so the correct equipment to print and trim pictures to size is also in demand. If you have the opportunity to analyse your sales you might want to target those customers who have bought a digital camera in the last 12 months with a special promotion.

#### **HANDHELD PCS AND DIGITAL ORGANISERS**

Again, a tremendous growth area and designed to integrate mobile working with the desktop, making sure we can be effective wherever we are. Which of your customers still rely on their secretary to collect everybody's appointments and put them on a movements sheet?

#### **DIGITAL DICTATION**

You may think that the market for dictation is mature and static. However the advent of digital dictation has grown the overall market size, attracting new users and shaking up the traditional dictation convert. Home working/remote working, mobile activity and overseas operations mean that the traditional exchange of dictation tapes has become outmoded. These new digital storage devices, such as multimedia cards mean that dictation can now be sent around the world at the touch of a button. ■