



# MADE TO MAKE YOUR LIFE EASIER

## Business Machines – Have you got ‘em tied in!

BY JANE SMITH

Following on from our investigations into Colour Printing over the last few issues we decided to dig a bit deeper into the subject of business machines to see what’s happening and the major trends. Remember the copier salesman who used to tie the consumables in with the sale of the machine? Well we could be set to see this method of selling re-emerge once again. Could you sell the ‘Pay per Page’ concept?

In terms of business machines in this context we are referring to Printers, Copiers, Fax Machines and Multi-function machines.

**THE FACT IS THAT AS TECHNOLOGY HAS DEVELOPED WE HAVE SEEN THE FOLLOWING TRENDS.**

1. **Personal printing, copying and faxing.**
2. **Higher volumes of computer to print**
3. **More desire to use colour – dominated by inkjet technology.**
4. **Increasing need for higher print speeds..**
5. **A separate machine for each job**

While writing this article, I have an inkjet printer, scanner, high speed black & white laser printer and multi-function fax/laser printer/scanner all attached to my pc.

**CURRENT AND FORECAST TRENDS ARE**

1. **Availability and affordability of colour laser machines offering higher speeds and cheaper running costs.**
2. **Increasing availability and use of multi-function machines**
3. **Computer to print volumes doubling every 3 years**

So what does all this mean. It means that we are inevitably going to have to face up to the costs associated with our printing habits, in other words the cost of ownership.

With the de-centralisation of print/copying needs many years ago businesses lost control over costs and what is printed and at what quality. Before then if you wanted photocopies of a document you would go to the big Xerox machine at the end of the corridor, plug in your cost centre code and take the copies you needed. For larger ‘jobs’ you’d send it to central copying – all designed to keep costs down in the ‘photocopying revolution’.

Well it looks as though we’ve hit the ‘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. These trends are already being recognised in USA and there has already been a big increase in ‘pay per page’ contracts where the machines and consumables have been combined into one tender. In some larger companies print needs are being outsourced to FM organisations.

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.

**Perhaps its time to develop your own cost of ownership audit/survey with your customers. Add some value by offering to help them evaluate their current costs. Use your relationships with suppliers to put together an innovative proposal that takes the worry out of printing/faxing and copying costs for your customer for the next 3 years. Don’t wait for the trend to arrive – lead it! ■**