

# WE MEAN BUSINESS

Outside of printers there's a raft of 'other' business machines that could help you meet your sales target. And not only does the cash margin on a machine add up to a lot of paperclips, there's the added bonus of consumables business that automatically becomes available. You just need to make sure you get it all!

BY JANE SMITH

And to help, here's a tip that's paid off in the past. A Supplies Audit.

And this can be applied to ALL machines.

Make yourself a form to fill in when you next visit a customer's premises. Make a note of all the machines you see as you walk around (or why not ask permission to carryout the survey). Alongside each machine write what it is being used for and by how many people. This can then be used to identify a list of consumables needs that you can offer to quote on.

Remember to think broadly when you do this. There are some less obvious areas that need to be captured in your survey. For example in discussing printer consumables also talk about pc accessories such as digital storage and back up needs too.

Even if you have their business I bet you'll find some gaps and opportunities just by going through

the exercise. It's a good talking point too and an opportunity to 'talk machines' generally. Again you could find some gaps or some upgrade requirements.

So, what machines come under the category business machines – 'other'? Good question? Well – we think the definition could be 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'?

This would cover the more obvious products such as fax machines, copiers, multi function machines and printers but there are plenty of other product categories too.

The thing is there are lots of opportunities and many product categories are still growing as businesses strive to differentiate themselves in their outward appearance, increase efficient and reduce costs internally to a minimum. Just take a



few of the examples below. How could you deliver solutions to your customers that will enhance their presentation, protect their competitive advantage and/or save them money?

**TAKE SECURITY**. It seems to be in the papers everyday. Fraud and

the theft of personal information resulting in unauthorised transactions and monetary loss. It's just as important in business too. A company's competitive advantage needs protecting. Are discarded quotations, price lists and correspondence simply put in the bin or are they disposed of safely by shredding them? Ask about the security policies that are in place within your customer's organisation. Explain that this is not an expensive luxury – it is a must. In fact it doesn't even have to be expensive. Just pinpointing sensitive job functions and departments could mean that only a small, personal shredder is needed in three PA's offices. And don't forget it's not just paper that needs to be disposed of in a confidential manner. Lots of sensitive documents are now stored on media such as CDs and DVDs. There are now shredders on the market that can deal with this kind of media too.

**BINDING MACHINES.** The old adage 'first impressions count' holds true in most circumstances. So in presenting documentation we should be encouraging documents to be bound as attractively and professionally as befits the job in hand. There are many tried and test 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 are even more consumables to choose from that will help. Different colour finishes to combs and wires and everything from transparent to glossy, 'leather grain' to hardback covers.

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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?

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

#### **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?

**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 is shaking up the traditional dictation convert. Very much linked into the concept of the cost of communication and the need to keep presentation standards high, digital dictation products allow you to get documents typed up by the professional typist and offer the flexibility to cope with the way modern companies work. Home working, out of the office and mobile activity, remote typing resources and overseas operations mean that the traditional exchange of dictation tapes has become outmoded. These new digital storage devices, such as multi media cards mean that dictation can now be sent around the world if necessary, via email, at the touch of a button. And there are

additional benefits too like clear reproduction and the ability to insert text into completed dictation as well as to delete.

#### **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 putting them on a movements sheet?

Finally, and not strictly a business machine but an opportunity that we hope you have been focussing on for the last couple of months is headsets and hands free mobile phone equipment. D-day has become outmoded. These new digital storage devices, such as multi media cards mean that dictation can now be sent around the world if necessary, via email, at the touch of a button. And there are