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Printers are business critical devices and hard copy is still said to account for an average of 4% of an organisation's revenue. On top of that, for many years it has been estimated that around 40% of calls to IT support centres are print related. By all accounts, this has not changed.

Therefore, no organisation can afford to ignore the management of their hard copy fleet and can reckon on significant savings by getting their policies right.

Hewlett-Packard has, this week, launched a suite of solutions for businesses of all sizes that extends the customer's capability to employ a Total Print Management approach to their hard copy activities. This week we take a look at these new and updated software offerings.

Perhaps the most attractive element of each of these solutions is that they are all absolutely free – available for download from the hp.com web site!

Web JetAdmin v8.0

Web JetAdmin is certainly the biggest and most widely used professional printer management tool on the market today. With Version 8.0 comes the ability to manage more than just hard copy devices – network digital projector management is now also included when combined with the Jetdirect pn1050 network projector manager.

As a free tool (available for download from the Hewlett-Packard web site), Web JetAdmin will provide management functions for any SNMP (Simple Network Management Protocol) compliant printer.

devices to provide full Web JetAdmin functionality.

As a basic description, Web JetAdmin provides sophisticated management for a fleet of printers and MFPs, allowing IT staff to monitor the status and settings of devices remotely and to check on remaining consumables.

However, it is far more sophisticated than that! The descriptions of the key updates and new functions available in version 8.0 should give some idea of the true level of sophistication.

From standard web browser:
- Track usage by user
- Install firmware
- Configure device
- Conduct remote diagnostics
- Organize devices

Printer alerts and real-time status reports automatically e-mailed

Solve potential problems before they impact productivity

Auto-grouping allows administrators to group peripherals for ease of navigation

HP Web Jetadmin 8.0 process

This should include any new network laser printer and will include the majority of models released over the last few years. Other printers may be compatible with Web JetAdmin – for instance, Hewlett-Packard's networked Business Inkjet printers and OfficeJet products.

Full-power functionality is, of course, only achieved with Hewlett-Packard printers and MFPs although some other printer manufacturers are now building Web JetAdmin compliance into their

Key updates in Version 8.0
Web JetAdmin has been updated in six major areas that offer extended functionality in the following focus areas.

Firstly, whereas the majority of discovery applications search for network connected devices, not many are capable of discovering non-networked printers. Web JetAdmin now has the ability to interrogate the network down to PC level

to discover direct connect printers, which are linked to the PC via a parallel or USB cable, via the Web JetAdmin PC Printer Discovery Plug-in 2.0.

This will allow large organisations, where large numbers of personal printers have been unofficially smuggled in through the back door, to locate and identify those printers. Because the costs of running personal printers can be significant, and un-trackable, with the potential to cost organisations large amounts of money, this ability is very important in the goal to control costs and to maximise cost-efficiency.

In some instances though, personal devices may be officially sanctioned and supported. Previously, a call for support relied entirely on initiation by the user, meaning that proactive support could only be provided at a very low level. Now, Web JetAdmin allows the IT department to monitor that printer as if it were network connected – applicable to selected Hewlett-Packard devices.

Secondly, colour control can be managed on selected colour LaserJet printers. This allows the IT department to set colour controls by user, application and schedule so that colour printing can be restricted to only those printing needs that require colour. Unauthorised printing of personal materials can be reduced by locking out the colour facility on the machine during specified hours (for instance evenings and overnight).

Thirdly, reporting capabilities are greatly enhanced by the addition of Report Generation Plug-in 3.0, which increases the depth of reporting drill-down by user and application. The main focus of this feature is for analysis of asset utilisation so that the fleet's effectiveness and efficiency can be assessed with a view to modifying the balance of devices deployed.

One of the difficulties of managing a large number of hard copy devices is that each and every device needs supplies replenishment at different times. This makes the process of ordering supplies, and managing the delivery and distribution of those supplies around the organisation, very difficult and costly.

So, **fourthly**, Web JetAdmin can now produce predictive and consolidated reporting of supplies status across the organisation. This means that the purchasing department can prepare a single order from one single status report provided by the IT department, cutting the time taken to compile a periodic central order or to place multiple orders. This in turn cuts administrative costs and allows the organisation to take advantage of volume pricing from their suppliers.

Also provided is a link to HP SureSupply which provides assisted ordering of supplies from specified vendors, or indeed directly from Hewlett-Packard.

Fifthly, networked digital projectors can be configured and monitored by the central IT staff, allowing projectors to be managed for increased security and reduced costs. For instance, SSL (Secure Sockets Layer) and SNMP (Simple Network Management Protocol) protocol support provides a high level of network security and built-in security measures help organisations to protect their devices against theft.

In addition, power-down times can be scheduled by IT staff to reduce lamp usage and power consumption and firmware for all connected machines can be updated centrally.

Finally, Web JetAdmin provides a simplified user interface allowing common tasks to be pre-defined simply

and quickly. The interface also includes context-specific links to Hewlett-Packard's online Instant Support service.

New capabilities

Web JetAdmin has also been expanded with several new capabilities that offer even higher levels of functionality and sophistication with a specific view towards controlling and reducing management and usage costs for the provision of hard copy in the organisation as a whole.

A) Colour copy lockout functionality allows even the copy function, not just the print function, of new MFPs (starting with the recently launched Colour LaserJet 4730mfp) to be locked for colour usage outside of specified parameters. As MFPs become more pervasive in the enterprise, to be able to set lockout parameters is every bit as important on the copy function as on the print function for controlling usage and costs.

B) User/Application setup allows up to 50 users and 10 applications to be enabled and configured on new small workgroup colour printers – Colour LaserJet 3000 and 3800 – permitting printer lockout parameters at both driver level and device level to be managed centrally.

C) Reporting features have been added to in several areas, enabling much higher levels of sophistication to be achieved in the management and control of devices and thus, control of costs:
- **Scheduling** allows automatic production of reports to a predetermined schedule, saving time and effort by not having to run reports manually
- **Drill-down** to user, workgroup or application level to see where the hotspots are and to allocate costs by cost centre
- **Sorting by usage**, allowing managers easily and quickly to identify levels of usage by user and to see who are the heavy users, thereby allowing them to set usage limits with email alerts for users exceeding those limits
- **Direct PC-connected printers** can be interrogated and reported, as well as network connected printers, giving data on page count, status and supplies life
- **Predictive usage** reporting allows IT staff to anticipate service, maintenance or day-to-day supplies management requirements on a proactive basis, thus reducing or eliminating downtime and ensuring maximum utilisation of the devices
- **Assessment reports** allow managers to identify devices that are over or under-utilised, meaning that the fleet can be optimised for efficiency in a balanced deployment as plans are drawn up for future hardware requirements.

Furthermore, Hewlett-Packard's Web JetAdmin 8.0 can integrate with a number of key enterprise management and help desk software tools. This further reduces uncertainty and vulnerability in the management of an organisations' hard copy fleet, decreases technician response times and reduces potential for device downtime.

In practice, this functionality means that the system proactively prepares repair job sheets that are accurate and timely (with no manual data entry), allowing engineers or technicians to attend the device with the correct materials or parts and knowing exactly what actions have to be performed. Responses will be faster, repairs accomplished with the correct materials first time and users' time will not be swallowed up, and workflow interrupted, by having to place service calls to help desk or IT services.

Systems capable of interfacing with Web JetAdmin currently include: HP OpenView Operations; HP OpenView Service Desk; CA Unicenter; IBM Tivoli; BMC Remedy;

Easy Printer Care

For the small company with a number of hard copy devices, but no in-house professional IT resource, Hewlett-Packard's Easy Printer Care software provides central management of printers and MFPs with a range of monitoring and assistance functions.

Essentially a cut-down version of Web JetAdmin, Easy Printer Care is restricted to 15 devices and only manages Hewlett-Packard devices. In fact, those devices have to be Easy Printer Care compliant to achieve full functionality from the system.

Compliance was started with the Colour LaserJet 4700 and 4730mfp. All subsequent devices will be Easy Printer Care compliant. Some basic functionality will be available on most legacy Hewlett-Packard LaserJet and Colour LaserJet printers to include: printer discovery; basic printer status; basic support tools; together with basic supplies status and ordering.

Automatic discovery enables fast and easy installation for the non-professional maintainer of all compliant devices on the network.

Easy Printer Care provides that maintainer with simple reporting by user, printer, application or time and date. In addition, the system will report on colour and mono pages including tracking of colour printing. This provides the maintainer with a high level of information from which informed decisions can be made that allow the fleet to be managed, and future developments to be planned, in an effective manner.

Advanced reporting capabilities provide supplies status charts, information on the number of pages remaining in the installed supplies, supplies alerts and part numbers of the supplies that need to be ordered.
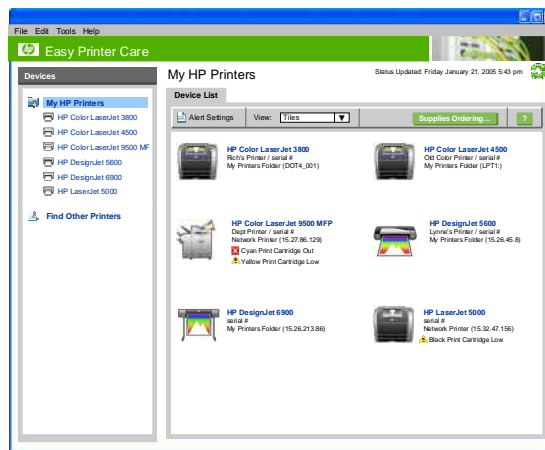
One of the best features for the small and medium business is the ability of Easy Printer Care to produce a consolidated view of supplies status so that the supplies purchasing process can be streamlined and administration costs minimised – as with Web JetAdmin.

For an amateur printer maintainer in a small company (where 40% of service calls are printer related!), one of the most frustrating jobs is responding to user difficulties and unscheduled maintenance situations – especially if that response has to be remote. Easy Printer Care includes troubleshooting help with links to Hewlett-Packard's Instant Support system. This facility should allow the maintainer to solve many printing problems more easily and without unnecessary recourse to a service engineer.

This application is sure to be a real boon for small companies with modern Hewlett-Packard hard copy equipment.

Hewlett-Packard Easy Printer Care will be available for download from the hp.com web site in January 2006, although it is due to ship on-CD with the new Colour LaserJet 3000, 2600 and 3800 series printers.

Universal Printer Driver

Hewlett-Packard's Universal Printer Driver is a unique piece of software that can be used with a mixed fleet of Hewlett-Packard LaserJet printers and MFPs in organisations from small companies to the enterprise.

Using the Universal Printer Driver means that an organisation only needs to maintain one print driver for all devices in the fleet, regardless of the precise model concerned.

This means that a user who has access to a personal laser printer, such as the LaserJet 1020, as well as a full-blown colour MFP, such as the Colour LaserJet 9500mfp, will be able to access both machines through the familiar interface of one single driver. There will be no need for users to familiarise themselves with different drivers for different printers, for printing to MFPs as well as to printers or even for a new printer to the fleet.

In fact, the driver is sophisticated enough to be able to handle control of all the paper finishing functions of an advanced MFP rather than only providing basic print functionality.

Quite apart from making printing easy for the average user, the Universal Printer Driver will make life much simpler for the mobile user who may need to print in a variety of environments ranging from home and office to customer's premises.

Benefits for IT departments and non-professional printer maintainers are also evident in that the universal driver will make driver roll-out much easier and more straightforward and much easier to update with new versions.

For organisations with no IT department or in-house professional, and that do not wish to go the full Web JetAdmin route, the Universal Printer Driver will also assist with troubleshooting. It provides device discovery, a degree of printer management, diagnostic tools, links for driver updates and links for supplies ordering, as well as security and lockout features - all similar to those features of Web JetAdmin and Easy Printer Care.

Again, this software is completely free and is available immediately in a choice of Hewlett-Packard's PCL5 or PostScript 3 emulation versions!!

Peregrine Service Center; as well as others.

Ultimately, the purpose of a sophisticated system of this nature is to improve the efficiency of the IT department in an enterprise and to improve the ROI on hard copy assets.

Hewlett-Packard certainly claims that these are the primary benefits of Web JetAdmin 8.0. From the customers' point of view, one of the best features of the system is that it is free!! Certainly there will be an incentive for users of

Web JetAdmin to buy Hewlett-Packard hardware but then, that is part of the marketing game – Hewlett-Packard wants to set the standards in the industry.

On a more practical level, to finish off where we began, an organisation cannot afford to ignore an asset that costs on average 4% of revenue or expect that it will look after itself. Web JetAdmin is one tool that can be applied to manage the fleet better.

Web JetAdmin 8.0 is available now as a download from hp.com.