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Technology Trends

TECH TRENDS: NOT JUST ANOTHER PRINT MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

written by Scott Cullen | July 17, 2020

A new print management solution makes its U.S. debut, but do dealers need another option?

Does the dealer channel need another print management solution?

If you ask Ed McLaughlin, the answer is a resounding yes. Of course, McLaughlin is biased. That's because he's one of the two movers and shakers here in the U.S. behind Predictive InSight (PI), a new print management solution that he says is better than the current solutions available to dealers. The other is Shawn Cashmark, co-founder and managing director at Cashmark Consulting Group.

McLaughlin and Cashmark made a strong case for PI's superiority during a product demo last month. The product, developed by a UK-based company, EKM, which was established in 2001, is now in use in 87 countries. PI was rolled out in the U.S. on June 1.

EKM describes itself as the world's leading managed print service software supplier and consultancy.

It is independent of any manufacturer and provides objective analysis of client's print operation using its EKM Insight and Analysis tools and delivers knowledge-based reports on how the client can streamline print operations. Customers include managed service providers, resellers, and wholesalers, as well as defense, education, health authorities, law enforcement, accountants, and manufacturing. Any organization with 10 or more printers/MFPs will reportedly benefit from the company's expertise and insight.

EKM owns the intellectual property, but McLaughlin's and Cashmark's company PI is essentially operating as EKM North America, even though they are not employed by them and are functioning as a separate company.

"We've acquired the North American marketing and support rights for EKM's Insight," explained McLaughlin. "We're working very closely with them. Shawn and I are on their product development committee and attend the meetings once a month. We'll do projects, improvements, and updates."

PI has been part of EKM's suite of print management products for some time. The company also offers additional products that feature the same sort of delivery for sales automation and order entry automation. McLaughlin and Cashmark are in the process of signing up for the whole suite.

More Than a Print Management Solution

PI is described as a managed print service that is positioned as a managed IT service.

It automates meter collection and consumables replenishment, and provides service alerts, as well as asset management. Its predictive consumables algorithms can reportedly reduce costs and give the dealer total control of supplies replenishment. It also integrates with back-office systems such as e-automate and FORZA.

Why would anyone, particularly a seasoned industry veteran such as McLaughlin, think there is a need for another solution that offers print management capabilities in an already crowded field?

Maybe because this one has more capabilities than other products on the market and because—as was emphasized during the demo—it drives costs down and value up.

McLaughlin and Cashmark believe this will change the competitive posture of the industry.

"This is useful knowledge, not just raw data," said McLaughlin.

The points of differentiation from competitive products include:

- Intelligent Data Collectors: Cleans data at the collector
- Optimized Data Collection: Only collects required data when necessary, reducing the workload
- Secure Military Grade Transmission Algorithm with store and forward, which eliminates lost transmissions
- Predictive consumables algorithms
- Predictive maintenance information
- Accurate normalized meters for simplified billing
- HPS SDS 2.0 certified, including predictive maintenance, configuration, USB, EWS, remote mediation

Unlike other print management solutions that dealers must run after hours, PI can run all day without interrupting a dealer's business. According to McLaughlin, because print is managed like an IT service and collected data stored in the cloud, there is no concern about losing this data, which is often a dealer's primary concern about print management software.

The PI solution will have its biggest impact in MPS engagements. EKM Insight reportedly has a strong understanding of page coverage and the demo clearly revealed that understanding. The software provides forecasts 90 days out as to which parts will go bad via a predictive failure message.

For dealers concerned about swapping out one print management solution for another, Cashmark told us that it is a relatively seamless process and that 40% of dealers can get themselves up and running on the system with minimal intervention from the company. For those that need enhanced support, the EKM Insight technical support team can walk them through the process, or if necessary, come on site to expedite the process.

McLaughlin and Cashmark have been meeting with dealers to educate them about this new solution and how it can effectively reduce their service costs. They are confident that dealers will embrace their message. The co-founders expect to expand their team in the U.S. as interest grows and as they sign dealers. Initial reaction among dealers has been enthusiastic. One OEM is currently white-labeling the software, and other office imaging industry vendors have set up trial sites, which is another positive development. At press time, McLaughlin reported that PI will be working with Hytec Dealer Services.

"Things are absolutely moving and moving very quickly," said McLaughlin, who added that he and Cashmark are looking at scaling the demonstration to keep up with demand.

More information about PI can be found at the company's website www.predictive-insight.com, or to schedule a demo, contact Ed McLaughlin at (215) 378-3639 or Edward.mclaughlin@me.com or Shawn Cashmark at (925) 209-7002.

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