



Managed Print Services at the heart of Ashland University's streamlined technology deployments

Background

Ashland University is a nationally accredited, private, non-profit university located a short distance from Akron, Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio. The university serves more than 6,000 students across all its departments and disciplines.

Challenges

"It used to be the wild west here." That's how Matthew Portner, Ashland University's Director of Auxilliary Services described how departments and individuals at the university approved and purchased technology hardware and software.

"In some cases, decisions made by individual departments varied widely. Over the years, it led to a very mixed bag of equipment that often was extremely expensive to operate."

The Team

Portner was the project lead for Ashland University, while Craig Iceman, Ashland's long-time Account Manager, led the effort for MT Business Technologies (MTBT).

Solutions

Good things sometimes take time.

"This whole process has been a decade long, when you think about it.", said Portner, reflecting on the effort to streamline and apply institutional standards to the purchasing and deployment process.

The university begins with a constantly updated menu of devices that have been vetted by IT and approved for deployment on campus.

"We look at everything to try to create choices for staff that are appropriate for their needs, and also fit into the university's strategic goals," Portner explained. "Older devices that 'age out' get retired and are sometimes not replaced if there's a lower cost multi-function device nearby that can serve the user's needs."



MTBT's Iceman walks in lockstep with Ashland's goals to be more cost efficient. He is often in the loop when a printer purchase request comes in.

"We worked really hard with this latest contract to right-size the fleet. When new purchase requests come in I can evaluate them versus what's on the approved menu. If the request doesn't meet the needs, I recommend that Ashland not make the purchase."

Wait... what?

"We realize it sounds counter-intuitive, but our goal is to sell fewer devices to clients," Iceman said. "It isn't about the volume of printers in use, but that the devices we have on-site are custom-tailored for a customer's usage patterns."

Results

The results have been dramatic. Over the course of the consolidation project, the number of installed devices has been reduced from over 1,100 to less than 500. The vast majority of the retired devices have been units with a high cost of operation, which the teams at Ashland and MTBT have strategically replaced with highly efficient multi-function copiers or heavy duty workgroup printers.

Hard and soft costs to Ashland were reduced as well. In fact, Portner says that is par for the course.

"We have been working with MTBT since the mid-90s and every time we've done an agreement we've become more efficient and costs have gone down."