Echo Group, Inc.

Saves Time, Reduces Cost and Downtime with Managed Print Services

Echo Group is the go-to sales and support resource for the wholesale electrical supply market, with a product list that ranges from lighting to industrial and home automation components. Its distribution centers work diligently to fulfill orders, using 61 printers to print the shipping tickets and transfers to skillfully distribute product. Using MPowerPrint® managed print services, the company saves time, reduces costs and decreases printer downtime.

Background

Founded in 2000, Echo Group, Inc. provides sales and support for the wholesale electrical supply market. The company employs 435 people and operates 15 distribution centers. Based in Council Bluffs, Iowa, and with 26 locations throughout Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota and Minnesota, Echo Group is positioned for growth and success.

The Challenge

Echo Group's mission-critical printers once caused headaches for the IT department. "Originally, every request for printer repair came through IT, and it was constant. If someone from IT couldn't get to the location, we'd have to contact outside resources," explains Kris Hopkins, Echo Group's vice president of IT. "It wasn't the best use of our time, and we weren't particularly effective. Meanwhile, printer downtime had a significant impact on our ability to process orders — particularly in our high-volume facilities." Hopkins also had no way of tracking service calls or accurately maintaining a printer inventory, save a manual Excel spreadsheet.

Toner management, also an IT responsibility, was equally frustrating. "We'd tell people to order a new toner cartridge as soon as they put their last one in, but, nine times out of 10, that didn't happen. People got busy and forgot, until they were completely out. Then it was a mad scramble," Hopkins says. "One location ran out of toner on a Saturday at year end, a time when we're printing out all sorts of things for audits. We knew that there had to be a more efficient way."

The Solution

Echo Group management had previously hired HTS technicians to fix some ailing printers when their own staff couldn't. When they saw the opportunity to engage HTS through the IMark Group, a member-owned marketing group for electrical distributors, there was no hesitation.

"For us, it was a no brainer," Hopkins says. "We'd free our IT staff to get back to the work that adds value to our company, and we'd reduce printer downtime and the last minute rush to get toner where it needs to go. The HTS team came in and labeled all the printers with all the information the staff needed to initiate a ticket. Having our branch staff call Harland directly when something goes wrong, instead of contacting IT, has saved us a ton of time."

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>
> *Kris Hopkins, Vice President of IT, Echo Group, Inc.*

Results and Ongoing Impact

Printer problems are now resolved faster than when repairs were handled in house. "I was actually on location and realized that I'd never been on a support call — and the experience was great. The technician was on site within two hours. The service is consistently so outstanding that we don't hear much about it. They respond quickly and they get the job done."

"Flawless" Toner Program

"Harland's toner auto replenishment program works flawlessly. We've literally never had an instance when the toner wasn't there." In one instance, Hopkins got a support ticket requesting toner, so she told the employee to "look around." Sure enough, the box was there, according to plan. "Toner is something we just don't have to think about anymore, which is a huge benefit. Our IT department saves a lot of time and our facilities are more productive because they don't have to stop, call and request toner, then wait until it gets there. When the toner runs out, the new cartridge is there, ready to go." The MPowerPrint program also includes cartridge recycling. "Harland makes it easy to be an environmentally responsible organization — something that we're all striving to be."

Better Insight. Fewer Headaches. Total Satisfaction.

The MPowerPrint program provides a "big picture" of printer inventory as well as ongoing service and support activity for each printer. "Our account manager recommends what we can do to reduce costs — like replace a printer with one that uses less toner. Based on service calls, we can also identify which printers are near the end of their lifecycle

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and justify the cost of replacement in terms of efficiency gains and reduced repair costs. Now, we have pages of insight, so we can manage our assets more effectively."

The Managed Print Services team schedules periodic reviews to go over the numbers and discuss any outstanding issues. "It's like having a teacher conference for a straight-A student. There's just not a lot to talk about," Hopkins says. "The cost of the service is so minimal that it's not worth digging into the numbers to justify ROI. We know we're getting much more out of HTS Managed Print Services than we're paying for it. I'd never want to go back to the way we were doing things before."

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