



STREAMLINING PRINTING OPERATIONS: 4 OFFICE AND LEXMARK PARTNER TO DELIVER COST SAVINGS AND MUCH MORE TO THE LCBO

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To increase efficiency and reduce cost, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO) undertook an initiative to streamline its printing practices. Phase II of its Managed Print Services (MPS) project involved replacing its Multi-function Devices (MFDs) and printers at its warehouses, offices, and 629 retail locations.

MPS Project Benefit Summary

Cost: The LCBO's savings are approximately 9% across multiple areas, including energy consumption, product maintenance, paper and toner supplies, and increased uptime. This initiative follows Phase I, implemented through 4 Office in 2007, which delivered 40% savings through fleet consolidation and additional spend-reduction initiatives.

Productivity: Print Management Tools improved the LCBO's centralized IT team's productivity. Lexmark's Markvision Enterprise (MVE) provides a simple dashboard from which the LCBO's consolidated print fleet is remotely monitored and managed, while the Universal Print Driver (UPD) provides the LCBO with a single-driver solution province-wide.

Customer Service and Operations: Retail employees are now able to

reliably print multiple sets of unique product information on cardstock, such as bin tags and shelf talkers, providing customers with continually updated onshelf product and pricing information.

Deployment Details

- Retail stores: Started on September 23, 2013 and finished on October 30, 2013; in 23 working days, 917 printing devices were deployed to 629 stores throughout Ontario;
- Office and warehouse locations: Started on October 18, 2013 and finished on November 26, 2013; in 15 working days, 164 devices were deployed to 24 locations;
- Installed approximately 200 machines per week, all while the stores were open and operating;
- Store sizes range from small, rural locations to Toronto's flagship Summerhill store.

Project Challenges

As the LCBO continued to operate during deployment, several guidelines and restrictions were in place:

- The store network had to be completed by October 30, and the entire project by November 30, 2013 for the LCBO to be ready for its busy December holiday season;
- Devices could not be installed on the LCBO's busiest shopping days (Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays) nor on statutory holidays;
- Access to the individual retail locations depended upon the LCBO's IT and Retail staff availability;
- All printers had to be pre-configured and custom scripts run to complete onsite installation;
- All LCBO staff had to be trained on the new equipment.

LCBO's Five Main Goals

1. Optimize and update its entire print fleet, at its offices, warehouses, and Retail locations, to reduce downtime, improve performance, productivity, and customer service;
2. Use one comprehensive, reliable, and efficient management system to control print costs, simplify operations, and streamline device management;
3. Optimize Service Level Agreements (SLAs) to streamline help desk and break-fix operations;
4. Find a proven, reliable, proactive supplier who would be responsive to their needs, knowledgeable about their culture, and work within tight deadlines and restrictions;
5. Train LCBO users and IT staff on the newly deployed solution.

4 Office and Lexmark responded to the LCBO's needs Optimizing the printer fleet

"Initially, we had three different printer brands in our stores and in offices," says Andrew Lawson, Manager, Document Services, LCBO. "We made the decision to consolidate to one brand, Lexmark. We now have a smaller pool of printers, which means that our internal IT department has improved response times and is better equipped to deal with potential problems."

The LCBO decided to go with leasing its printers, essentially transferring any hardware problems to their suppliers. "Leasing equipment was our wisest decision," notes Lawson. "The LCBO is now proactive in updating technology, and managing the hardware 'end-of-life' process has become a lot easier."

Lawson continued: "Lexmark's MFDs and printers have surpassed our expectations in terms of productivity, reliability, and output. Another challenge was coordinating product inventory. Several purchase orders were issued, each with tight delivery schedules. 4 Office worked with Lexmark to access inventory to ensure the right products arrived to match our deployment schedules."

One Print Management Tool

The LCBO uses Lexmark's Markvision Enterprise (MVE) print management software to oversee the activity of its printer fleet. "Markvision has proven to be a very intelligent tool providing us with a wealth of knowledge," comments Lawson. "Enabling oversight on printer activity, it restores device control to the

internal IT department, and features a centralized lock-down capability.”

MVE automatically emails 4 Office orders for toner and consumable parts, based on predetermined thresholds, dramatically reducing calls to the LCBO’s internal help desk.

The IT department now has, “a lot more transparency on our fleet and our ability to react has therefore improved,” Lawson says.

Optimizing Service Level Agreements (SLAs)

The LCBO has a two-tiered help desk:

1. Its centralized internal IT department provides the first line of defense;
2. 4 Office is contracted to provide the second line of services, including break-fix.

All incidents reported to the LCBO Help Desk are logged in its internal Incident Tracking Management System and generate internal service tickets. Should Help Desk personnel ascertain that the service incident requires escalation; an electronic service notification is immediately generated and relayed to 4 Office. 4 Office’s IT professionals created specialized middleware, enabling communication between 4 Office’s back office system and LCBO’s Incident Tracking Management System. A fully integrated automated service process supports the timely dispatch of technicians, improves response times, and increases fleet uptime.

Depending upon the store location, the SLA stipulates a six-(urban) or an eight-

(rural) hour fix time. It includes ongoing device management, specialized reporting, and penalties for missed SLA instances.

One of the key benefits of this improved SLA procedure is that every LCBO location, including even the most remote store, now experiences improved response times and better customer service.

Training across Ontario

LCBO’s urban and remote locations, combined with internet and travel restrictions, meant that three training options were required:

1. On the LCBO Intranet: for smaller locations, enabling Head Office and Logistics Facility staff to continue to serve customers;
2. In-class sessions: for large Retail outlets, warehouses and Head Office;
3. DVD sessions: for remote locations, which do not have reliable high-speed Internet services.



(left) Andrew Lawson, Manager, Document Services, (centre) Chris Chang, Manager, Retail POS Help Desk, (right) Susan Lee, Director, Procurement & Administrative Services

Responsive Supplier

4 Office provides, “very good service, has the ear of Lexmark, and is very responsive to our needs,” comments Lawson. “4 Office ensures all products are correctly imaged prior to installation, while coordinating product delivery and training our staff. They understand our requirements and our operations, and work diligently to exceed our expectations.”

4 Office tracks, manages, and reports on all expenditures, which provides the LCBO with insights on fleet performance and highlights areas requiring further attention.

The Final Word

Precise planning enabled 4 Office, Lexmark and the LCBO to join forces and successfully deploy 1,081 print devices to 653 locations in just 38 business days. The LCBO’s MPS initiative centralized its printing services, simplified operations, improved customer service, and helped deliver cost savings of 9% in addition to the 40% realized previously in Phase I.