

Dedicated Scanners

Seeking to further diversify your product mix?

by: Brent Hoskins, Office Technology Magazine

Given the increased focus on digital transformation, the rise in the number of remote workers, the decline in printed pages and the resulting need for product diversification, now may very well be a good time for more office technology dealers to look at offering dedicated scanners. Taking on the product category can help thwart competitors, provide new revenue streams and keep an office technology dealership from having too many eggs in one basket, which better positions that dealership as a total solution provider.

There are a variety of options for dealers to consider. Below are brief profiles of three of them. The profiles reveal that the vendors are poised to assist dealerships in getting up to speed and achieving success in the product category on an ongoing basis. Perhaps the insight shared will inspire you to take a look at dedicated scanners.

Brother International Corp.

“The world changed,” says Bob Burnett, director of B2B solutions deployment and planning at Brother International Corp. “There is a lot more need for taking hard copy and making it digital, and moving that into various formats, whether it be in the cloud or a shared network — wherever that happens to be so that your employees and customers can collaborate with you from virtually anywhere.”

Burnett says the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting increase in remote workers has likely forever changed the demand for dedicated scanners. “Customers had to figure out how to get their workforce to collaborate and continue to have business continuity,” he says. “They needed to have their teams interacting; having those documents available enables that interaction. In the past, you would walk over to somebody’s desk, hand them a printed document and say, ‘Hey, look at this. Tell me what you think.’”



Office technology dealers are seeing opportunity in the increased interest in dedicated scanners, Burnett says. “I think dealers have embraced this change,” he says. “They see how they can leverage scanning. It may be a different buyer who is looking to scan versus the one who wants to print. So, it gets dealers in a different door. It may also be ‘plus business.’ That is, the dealer may have been selling the customer print for the last 20 years, but can now start selling the customer something other than print.”

Burnett further illustrates a possible scenario. The customer says, “You’ve been selling into my print environment for years; I trust you,” he says. “Now I have 200 employees working from home, who may come into the office two days a week or who may never come back into the office. What can you do to help me keep my business running for those employees in the corporate work-from-home space? We believe this is going to be the new world moving forward, especially as younger generations become primary in the workforce. They want to be flexible, able to work from anywhere.”

While interest in scanners outside of the traditional workplace presents a growing opportunity for dealers, there are, of course, key verticals where demand for dedicated scanners remains high in traditional environments. “We’re seeing a lot of success in health care, in part due to regulations regarding digitizing documents,” says Shelly Radler, senior product marketing manager at Brother. “There are also mandates for digitizing documents in government agencies, including the court system. Beyond these areas, there is education, financial services and legal where scanners are used as an on-ramp for documents into a company’s workflow.”

Brother is poised to assist dealers in achieving success in the various verticals and otherwise, Burnett says, emphasizing the value of the company’s field engineering team, site

assessment team and training programs. “Brother does not sell direct,” he says. “So, we are happy to act as a representative on their teams, helping them win customer deals. In addition, we’ll come on-site and train their sales teams, solutions architects and service techs.”

Brother offers “a very broad spectrum of scanners, from mobile to compact to desk-

top,” Burnett says, noting that the company’s scanner line does not include a production model and offers a maximum scan speed of 60 pages per minute. “We recently launched a family of desktop scanners,” he says. “There are two models for our SOHO customers and three for business customers. The three business models come with three-year limited warranties.”

Burnett encourages dealers to consider offering dedicated scanners. “You’re selling print every day,” he says. “Odds are somebody else is trying to sell scan to that same customer. Why do you want to open the door to a competitor when you can sell them both print and scan?”

Kodak Alaris

“We’re noticing deeper conversations and a push by BTA dealers to add KODAK scanners to their offerings,” says Fred Scherman, director of Americas channel sales at Kodak Alaris. He notes that among the key reasons for that growing interest in scanners is the desire among dealers to keep competitors at bay. “If they’re not offering scanners to the customer, their competition is,” he says. “It’s kind of like if you’re locking all your doors and windows, but leaving one unlocked, your competition is going to find it. Then, potentially, they’ll try to steal your customers.”

Dealers also “want to maximize and receive all the spend that a customer is doing in regard to anything connected to their network,” Scherman says, noting that there are specific reasons for selling a dedicated scanner versus an MFP. “These include functionality, speed, where the product will be located and the needs of the customer. In addition, an MFP [if used largely for scanning] could be frustrating for the customer in different ways. For example, the feeder keeps breaking because the MFP is scanning all day. Plus, when someone is scanning all day, no one can print.”

Those dealers who are moving forward with Kodak Alaris are finding that the company is committed to their success through training and sales support, Scherman says. “Dealers can come to Rochester [New York] for personalized training;

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we also offer on-site training in their dealerships,” he says. “In addition, we offer on-the-job training — going with a dealership sales rep into a customer site to support specific opportunities.”

While the company does not sell direct, Kodak Alaris has “inside sales [personnel] who are here for a dealership rep out in the field who has a quick question,” Scherman says. “That ser-

vice helps to differentiate us from our competition, adding an extra layer of support for reps.”

Scherman emphasizes that with the various forms of sales support from Kodak Alaris, any general-line rep can sell the company’s scanners. “You used to need an expert, but that’s no longer the case,” he says. “Kodak Alaris and our reps become your scanning champions. You don’t need to be certified. You just need to know the basics and our team of experts can work side by side with dealership sales reps to help close deals.”

Today, selling scanners is not a speeds and feeds sale, but is “about getting data into a workflow, whether that’s something simple, like pushing a button on a scanner to scan to a PDF, or automating a complicated process through integrations,” Scherman says. “We have Smart Touch technology that is built into the scanner where the operator can easily push a button, like our INfuse Solution, or an ISV [independent software vendor] can integrate its workflow.”

Scherman says a tool like the network-connected Alaris INfuse Smart Connected Scanning Solution is reflective of the type of strides that Kodak Alaris is making with scanner technology. “It allows us to integrate directly with our IT partners to become a full solution and no longer just a peripheral on the network,” he says, noting that the scanner seamlessly becomes a smart terminal once integrated with an ISV solution. “We’re taking the computer away. It works directly with the ISVs. That makes the scanner more user friendly, because there is not much IT integration to set up. If you have 500 to 600 scanners, you don’t want an IT person going to every scanner.”

Contrary to what some may believe, “there is money in scanners,” Scherman says, noting that Kodak Alaris works to protect product pricing so that margins remain intact for dealers. There is also revenue for dealers through the company’s service offerings and software licenses. “So, it’s not ‘sell a scanner today and forget about the customer for three to five years until they need a refresh.’ Instead, there continues to be an income stream.”

PFU America Inc. (Fujitsu)

When the pandemic arrived, there was a flurry of activity among employees working from home in terms of “trying to figure out how to keep the business moving,” says Bernie Schweiss, vice president of sales and business development at PFU America Inc. (Fujitsu). Many people “bought a \$99 mobile scanner on day one or bought an inexpensive inkjet MFP.”

Today, “we’re seeing a nice refresh among people who bought early in the pandemic who are now saying, ‘OK, I need to stabilize what my work environment looks like,’” Schweiss says. Part of that stabilization is the increasing recognition that documents need to be digitized. Workers, particularly those who are remote, are saying, “I need to be able to retrieve documents that are highly secured, of high image quality and I need to start workflows,” he says. “There has probably been more digital transformation in the last two years than in the previous decade.”

Schweiss emphasizes that Fujitsu has “embraced the cloud,” given that much of that digital transformation is cloud based. “With the evolution of where COVID-19 has driven us with digital transformation projects that are all cloud-centric, our entire new series of products are all natively cloud ready,” he says. “They work in the traditional USB format, but they also can be connected directly to a cloud server and we can push documents directly to an application with the image specifications [resolution and document type] that the application is seeking.”

Of course, cloud-based documents are not only being embraced by remote workers, but by workers in traditional workplaces, too, particularly in key verticals, Schweiss says. “We’ve got a huge footprint in government, health care, pharmacies and financial services,” he says. “In addition, education is hot right now. A lot of the CARES Act money is going into education, so we’ve been very successful with our dealers going after that business.”

Cloud-enabled scanners that provide “cloud-based capture” comprise the fastest-growing segment in the dedicated

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scanner market, Schweiss says. “We are seeing a lot of new people talking about on-ramping to their cloud-based applications,” he says. That should be “especially interesting to BTA Channel dealers, because that is a consultative sale — a digital transformation project.”

The consultative sale — a solution sale — is “much more profitable,” Schweiss says. Success with the sale

of dedicated scanners “starts with a solutions sale. If you’re just chasing bids and not adding any value, it’s probably not a good product for you,” he says. “But if you are selling solutions, you are looking to the future, helping customers on their digital transformation journeys. They want to reinvent their business processes. They want to automate them. They are looking at AI. If you are having those conversations with your customers, we’re the ideal partner for you.”

Fujitsu can lend support to the solution-selling dealership, Schweiss says. “If you are designing solutions, we have a team of solution analysts who are geographically based throughout the field to work with dealers; to help architect solutions that bring value to customers,” he says. “We want to make sure these dealers are not out there on an island on their own. We’ve got a team approach to make sure they are successful.”

Schweiss shares two other key considerations for dealers looking to sell dedicated scanners — in general and for Fujitsu scanners in particular. First, “for the dealer selling dedicated scanners, we reduce the cost and increase the revenue for MFPs by reducing the cost in maintaining those MFPs,” he says, noting the benefit of transferring non-revenue-generating scans from an MFP to a dedicated scanner. Second, Fujitsu handles the service on its products via depot service, exchange or on-site, “so, we take on the risk, but our dealers can go out and sell these services as annuities.” ■

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