



Potential pitfalls when selecting software

Product not designed for single server printing

The products offered by most print management solution providers were initially not designed as a single server concept. In recent years the trend towards single server printing led those providers to adjust their products to fit into this trend, but remain limited by the initial solution design. Check the background of these companies. The solution offered might not be what it looks like.

Print-related WAN traffic / server load / performance / scalability

For very large organizations handling all printing over one server sounds like it must lead to a server overload and performance issues. When looking for a single server solution for a very large enterprise, you should look for scalability and ensure that the solution can actually handle the total print output. Questions to ask:

- How scalable is the solution?
- Do print jobs hit the server?
- If yes, in which form does it hit the server (compressed or uncompressed)?
- Does other data hit the server?
- Which resources (client, server side and other) are needed to handle the print job that way?

One server could be a single point of failure

When considering a single server solution, one must also consider and understand failover strategies as well as consequences of these failover strategies:

- What happens if the single server handling all printing fails?
- What happens if the connection to the single server fails?

Driver conflicts with native drivers

Does the proposed solution work with printer drivers provided by the printer manufacturers? If yes, how does it handle different versions, different languages, different bit versions and future generations of the same driver model? Make sure that the variety of drivers you use can all be handled. You are looking to offload IT, not add potential new problems.

Vendor-independent universal drivers

If a solution comes with its own universal driver, what are the consequences of using this "one-fits-all" driver? These drivers might actually not fit all printers, but x % of printers. So if you consider a solution that comes with a universal print driver, make sure that this driver actually supports 100 percent of the current printer fleet. Also enquire about how long it takes to support new printer models after their release.

Equally important, are you willing to limit the device capability by using a driver that only supports common features? Universal print drivers might come with limitations in regard of the finishing options. Print equipment with advanced finishing options tends to be very expensive and limiting its features by such a driver contradicts the initial extra investment for these options and immediately destroys the previously created value.

Charges for upgrades and updates

Solutions are flexible and undergo improvements, making updates and upgrades necessary. When choosing your solution, ask about whether or not updates and upgrades are available free of charge.

Why is this important? Many organizations require you to be on the last version as part of the maintenance and support contract. But if you are charged for updates and / or updates, you can face high costs.



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Too small to support large organizations

Check if the provider of the solution you consider can comply with your support needs.

- How does the support of the provider work?
- How support-intense is the solution, what is the experience in that regard?
- Are any other large, global, leading and known enterprises or organizations already existing customers? Ask for the actual deployment and be sure to exclude trial versions and deployments in test phase.
- Does the solution provider have any strong partnerships with big and known IT Service providers, printer manufacturers or other that can resell and support the solution?
- What are the success stories and references?

High costs for accessories

Software sometimes requires hardware accessories. Some solution providers require you to buy accessories from them. The cost for these can quickly add up. For example, when wanting to authenticate at the device, a card reader can be a required accessory (to swipe and release print jobs).

When card readers are offered by the solution provider, prices can be six to ten times higher than the actual cost of the readers. When accessories are required, check if they must be purchased from the solution provider. If so, compare the total cost for the solution including hardware with other offerings as the offer on table may actually be much more expensive than other solutions when looking at the total cost including hardware.

Always be sure to compare prices for the hardware as there are great differences out there and the offered price may not be reasonable.

Provider does not have his own add-ons or strong partnerships for future printing needs like Follow-Print or mobile printing

In the short or long run your organization will develop further needs when it comes to printing. A common need is secure printing and a current trend goes towards mobile printing. What does the proposed solution have planned for the future? How flexible are they? Do they make custom changes to the product if needed? Look beyond the single server product. You are choosing a solution for the long term.

False compatibility claims

Some environments are not a good match for single server printing. Citrix and VDI are examples of such environments. The basic concept of single server printing is keeping documents local (stored on a laptop). For it to work it requires installation of a piece of software on a user workstation or on a terminal server. Within a Citrix or VDI environment it is (often) not possible to install anything on the user workstation. It is however possible to install software on a terminal server. That is the only way single server printing functions in a Citrix or VDI environment. But it comes with a restriction.

When more than 50 printers or printer queues are connected per terminal server, a print spool server is required for printing to be reliable and functioning without affecting other business processes.

It is not said that the solution can't function at all, but single server printing is not possible here. Features such as print rules, accountability, secure printing (simple or embedded) remain available - if part of the solution.

In addition, check if the solution compresses print jobs to reduce the size of files transferring over the network.