

CASE STUDY

Miele

Cleaning up big with powerful output management



Organization

Miele is the world leader in the field of premium domestic appliances including cooking, baking and steam-cooking appliances, refrigeration products, coffee makers, dishwashers and laundry and floorcare products. This line-up is augmented by dishwashers, washer-extractors and tumble dryers for commercial use as well as washer-disinfectors and sterilisers for use in medical and laboratory applications (Miele Professional).

The company, founded in 1899, has 8 production plants in Germany and one plant each in Austria, the Czech Republic, China and Romania. 2010/11 turnover amounted to approx. EUR 2.95 bn with sales outside Germany accounting for 70%. Miele is represented with its own sales subsidiaries and via importers in almost 100 countries. The Miele company, now in the fourth generation of family ownership, employs a workforce of around 16,500 with two-thirds in Germany. The company headquarters are located in Gütersloh/Westphalia, Germany.

Centralized SAP and print management

For over 15 years, Miele has been steadily increasing their investment in SAP applications. Today, these systems encompass most of Miele's core business functions – from financials to production, shipping, and more.

"Though they are used by Miele employees around the world, nearly all of these applications run centrally in our Gütersloh, Germany datacenter," explains Hartmut Brinkmann, the leader of Miele's SAP Competence Center. "Over the years, we developed an in-house method of managing SAP output, based on native operating system spool facilities."

In addition to keeping their SAP environment up and running, Brinkmann's group is also responsible for the company's HP NonStop (Tandem) applications. As with their SAP-generated counterparts, documents from these applications were sent directly to printers via operating system commands.

The challenge of internationalization

Managing thousands of printers across disparate networks is a daunting task, especially when limited to the constraints of native operating system commands. But it was the challenge of internationalization that finally prompted Miele to look into a dedicated output management system.

"Our team was asked to roll out a new SAP application to support the Greek market," remembers Brinkmann. "Buying DIMM cards for hundreds of Unicode-enabled printers would have added nearly €400 per device. This was a key factor in our move toward a packaged software solution."

The IT group evaluated several third-party output management software packages from small, German-based companies as well as large international software firms. In the end, Miele chose output management software from Levi, Ray & Shoup, Inc. (LRS) to handle both their SAP and Tandem application printing.

LRS' software-based solution eliminated the need for costly data stream conversion hardware and lowered network bandwidth requirements. It also gave administrators a single global view of all their print jobs, devices, and potential output problems while enabling Miele to standardize their printer fleet.

A leading appliance manufacturer needed a robust output management system to support the rollout of a global SAP® business application. They replaced their in-house printing solution with reliable LRS® Output Management software. Results: a 30% reduction in help desk calls, improved service to end users, and dramatic cost savings.



“LRS software really acts as our universal output channel... That makes life a lot easier for our support staff and our end users, which means we can spend a lot less time fixing print problems and more time improving our business.”

“The LRS software was the only technically feasible solution,” says Brinkmann. “Internal figures show a 30% decrease in second-level problem tickets so far, saving us over €35,000 a year. We’ve also seen a 50-60% reduction in first-level support calls related to printing. But the main advantage is that the connections to the destination printers are more stable – they simply don’t go down as much.”

A template for worldwide sales

To help their sales teams capture increased market share, Miele is rolling out a major SAP-based business system. The ‘Global Sales Template’ combines a variety of SAP applications—from CRM, ERP, and BW to Supply Chain Management—to give worldwide sales units a comprehensive view of their business.

“Naturally, such a system generates classic business documents like order processing, pick lists, tracking codes, invoices, and sales reports,” Brinkmann explains. Many of these documents are created using StreamServe customer communication management software from OpenText Corporation. “These vendor solutions work great together. LRS software handles all communication between the SAP application, StreamServe, and the target devices.”

In addition to the many StreamServe-formatted documents from the Sales Template system, some of Miele’s applications still contain hard-coded PRESCRIBE commands for printing on legacy Kyocera devices. LRS’ intelligent routing capabilities monitor incoming data streams and decide whether to transparently pass the documents to Kyocera printers or convert PRESCRIBE commands into PCL format for printing on standard office printers.

Updating a production IT infrastructure with more modern print systems can be like rebuilding a ship during an ocean crossing. However, by establishing a standard interface for all application printing, Miele has been able to minimize the impact of data stream and printer changes on business users.

Centralized management, distributed control

The IT group at Miele runs the majority of its enterprise applications from the Gütersloh data center. However, with regional help desk staff in all corners of the globe, they want to empower local support teams to directly handle local user issues.

“With our previous system, it was not possible to sort printers by country, branch, status, or defined roles,” says Brinkmann. “Going forward, we need the ability for regional support centers to manage their own printing. In this respect, the LRS solution is far more advanced than similarly priced competitors. It’s one of the main reasons we chose the LRS solution.”

From a streamlined web interface, Miele help desk staff can easily identify which devices are offline, jammed or out of paper and toner. They can then divert the jobs to another printer or dispatch someone to address specific problems. LRS software also provides SAP applications and administrators with real-time output status through use of a sophisticated feedback interface. All of these functions enable Miele’s IT staff to maximize the efficiency of critical business processes.

Any document, from anywhere to anywhere

Like most companies, Miele relies on printed documents for many business processes. But not all output is destined for hardcopy form.

According to Brinkmann, “We say that LRS software manages printing, but it’s really more than that. It prints, it emails, it sends to fax servers – we even use it to send documents to our archive system.” In each case, the method of document delivery is specified by the originating application and passed to the LRS solution via a standard SAP interface.

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