

Save Money with a Strategic Approach to Ink, Toner, & Printers

It's your third largest operating expense, so it's time to take a close look at how much you're spending and how to save.

By Michael Mancuso

Do you know how much your organization spends on printer costs? Nearly 90% of organizations don't. Because most organizations don't itemize managed print costs such as ink, toner, printers, and service, those costs are often overlooked. In reality, the trusty printer that sits quietly in the corner of the office is the third largest operating expense behind rent and payroll.

Nonprofit organizations waste thousands of dollars a year by not taking a strategic approach to purchasing, supporting, unifying, and managing their printer supplies, hardware assets, and service maintenance. It doesn't have to be this way. There are several ways to remove managed print costs as an unknown expense, reduce your costs, and enable a more efficient cash flow without compromising quality or service.

Calculate internal printing costs

The most common mistake nonprofits make is undercalculating the cost of internal printing collateral. It's important to realize that there are more facets to account for than just the cost of paper and ink. You also need to identify the time your staff spends printing, collecting printer materials, and researching cartridge prices, not to mention the time misused for troubleshooting and printer maintenance repairs. After you acknowledge the parts of your organization that need improvement, it's time to pursue some solutions.

Outsource to a local, total-solutions printing provider

Instead of paying full price for printer brands from big-box retailers, you can save as much as 30% on printer cartridges by buying high-performance ink and toner from local providers who specialize in printing products and services. In addition to cost savings, such providers often offer easy, automated ordering, printer installation, and repair services.

In addition, local printing experts provide independent, unbiased advice to ensure your printer meets the needs of your organization. Unlike brand-specific sales



representatives in big-box stores, alternative providers can recommend all printer brands and multiple ones to suit your organization's needs because they carry a variety of brands.

Stay away from leasing copiers

Unlike big-box retailers, some alternative printing providers offer print programs with unlimited access to the latest printing technology, which is ideal for budget-strapped nonprofits. Instead of signing expensive multi-year contracts for copiers and printers from office supply stores, copier companies, or service organizations, nonprofits can invest in budget-saving printer programs. An example is Cartridge World, which offers organizations a complimentary printer as long as they purchase printing supplies from the company. The program includes printers, cartridges, service, maintenance, and recycling. Whether nonprofits require one or 100 printers, they can eliminate the high cost of hardware, service, long-term leasing, and overpriced supplies.

Right-size your printer

You can save additional costs by "right-sizing" equipment to your needs and not overpaying on unneeded functions.

A vital way to reduce costs is matching your printing needs with the right machine.

It's important to note that color inkjet printers aren't designed to print hundreds of black-and-white pages. For high-volume colorless printing, it's best to use an all-in-one, multifunction laser printer and high-yield toner cartridges. Doing so will double your printing output at almost half the price.

Also, be sure to consider connectivity. Ensure that the printer can be shared on a network with multiple people and that employees can print in-office from wireless devices such as smartphones and tablets.

Below is a breakdown of the three main types of printers to help you determine which machine will best fit your organization's needs:

Inkjet printers tend to be the least expensive option and the best choice for printing a combination of text, graphics, color documents, and photos. The downside is that they have a high cost per page.

Laser printers produce black-and-white text documents much faster than inkjets and are the best option for offices supporting a small team. Known for their text-printing abilities, laser printers use toner and often have larger paper trays than inkjets. If you print a considerable number of documents, then laser printers will almost always outperform traditional inkjets, and they typically have the lowest cost per page.

Multifunction printers, also known as all-in-one printers, offer the ability to print, copy, scan, and fax. They save space by combining the features of a number of devices while maintaining the size of a regular-sized printer. Available in inkjet and laser options, multifunction printers are the perfect addition to the fully functional office. The cost of multifunction printers, both in inkjet and laser varieties, has gone down significantly in recent years, making it one of the best options for added features.

Optimize your settings

Many nonprofit organizations come across problems when trying to match the paper to the media they're printing. This is a simple fix: Many printers (especially multifunction printers, discussed above) let you print on various materials, including heavier paper, labels, and envelopes. However, most printers are set to print on 20-pound bond copy paper. To optimize your quality, be sure to adjust the printer settings to reflect the thickness of the material you're using.

Change color settings

As a standard rule, if 80% or more of your printing is done in black and white, change the printer settings default mode to mono instead of color. Then, when printing in color, change your setting back to color in the print menu. By doing so,

you'll ensure higher quality results and save on the amount of color toner being used, reducing your overall printing costs.

Use sustainable printing products

Many people don't realize the impact cartridges have on the environment:

- **The average laser printer cartridge can be remanufactured** three to four times.
- **Each recycled ink cartridge saves** about two ounces of oil.
- **Each remanufactured laser cartridge keeps** two pounds of waste out of landfills.
- **Inkjet cartridges discarded in landfills** leak into soil and waterways.
- **More than 350 million printer cartridges are discarded** in landfills annually.
- **Nearly 70% of empty printer cartridges throughout the world** are discarded.

When choosing vendors, be sure they provide printer cartridge collection programs to reduce the amount of printer cartridges being sent to landfills. You'll not only save money but also support the environment. 

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Keep Your Spending Low

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25 Ways to Cut Costs (Vol. 26, No. 2)

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Beyond Outsourcing: Five Shared-Service Ideas (Vol. 26, No. 4)

Top Tips for Rough Times (Vol. 27, No. 4)

How to Cut Overhead Costs (Vol. 30, No. 4)

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