

New Trends in Office Technology

By Gregg Tipple

Office Technology – Pretty interesting times

Even if you are only remotely involved in how things get done ‘electronically’ today in your office, you probably are aware there’s a lot happening and it’s difficult to keep up. Fifteen years ago, experts said we’d now have a ‘paperless office’. Well it didn’t happen. But it’s not really fair to say the “experts” were completely wrong, because today we do use a fair amount of ‘Electronic Paper’. More importantly, we haven’t gotten to the ‘Paperless Office’ because something else has been happening at the same time, the information explosion.

We’ve all heard the info-bytes, such as, ‘the weekday edition of the NY Times contains more information than the average person was likely to encounter during his entire lifetime in 17th century England’. We all deal with many times the information we did 15 years ago, and even 5 years ago. Fortunately for us, technology is trying mightily to keep up. In just the last couple years, it’s really been picking up speed, with incredible advancements. The challenge to business now is to keep up, to try to understand what’s available, what can be easily integrated into their workflow, and what the benefit will be to their bottom line.

If someone asked me to explain what we thought were the latest-n-greatest office tech trends, I’d probably say there are at least 15 or 20, (and I’d need more space for this article). If we just take the top 3 or 4, that would be a start. The answer would be **MFP**, **B-to-C**, **EPM**, and **DOR**. I should have mentioned, our industry-speak is riddled with acronyms. I’ll translate. **MFP** is Function Peripheral, **B-to-C** is Black to Color, **EPM** is Electronic



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Paper Management, and **DOR** is Document Output Review or Report.

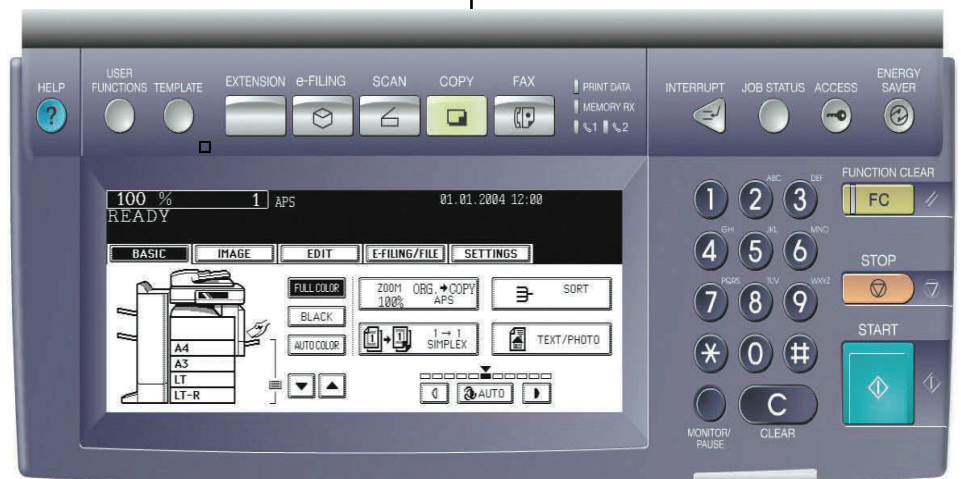
Today’s output devices are **MFPs (Multi-Function Peripherals)** that means they probably can print, copy, fax, and scan, all from that one footprint. This is not a new concept because today’s devices are 3rd or 4th generation digital that have evolved into very dependable & powerful devices. The general idea here, is that ‘all-in-one’ is generally good. Why? One footprint instead of 3 or 4 things to plug into the wall, one set of supplies to source and then to have on-hand, the operating cost is definitely better than the 3 or 4 separate devices combined (more on that latter), and lastly, many people find it easier to understand & utilize one device rather than many. Also, it can be

“The new black-to-color products have made the 7¢-color print a reality.”

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mentioned, there are definite tech benefits in coordinating the four related hardware functions and their applications, into one shell.

Color is now free (or at least affordable) and that’s what **B-to-C** is all about. A recent business study said that 40% of business users have documents they “would” reproduce in color if it was available. They also say they’d print as much as 15% of their present black and white (monochrome) documents in color, “if” the cost per impression was under 10¢.



Top view of the panel of the E-Studio451C MFP.

No one argues that adding a bit of color to a document, helps it's appearance and impact. But, slow speed and high cost have always been the enemy's of printing in color. The new B-To-C products solve that. At first blush these devices look like,

act like, black and white printer/copier/scanners, and then you see there is a 'color' button on the control panel and then you also see the same on your print driver. What's happened is your regular black & white device can now do color and also that the 10¢ color print has become reality. That's good news for business that have those inkjet printers here & there, some that have operating costs that are almost obscene. Essentially these new **B-to-C** products have color capability at no additional cost, and when it is used, the 10¢ is pretty reasonable. All the output comes from one device so we can finish-staple-fold-punch one document all from one print driver.

Electronic Paper Management (EPM) pulls it all together. This is where we see people really getting benefit from the new products. On TV you may have you heard the ad..."How well do you share?"..... OK, the ad is for a particular brand we do not sell, but I have no problem admitting it communicates well the power of **EPM** & these new products. Anyway, the easiest way to understand **EPM** will be that it's the opposite of printing everything, distributing everything that's been printed/copied (often referred to as 'the sneaker network') and finally filing away everything that's been printed (in hopes you or someone will find it again). **EPM**, on the other hand, is easily sharing and accessing information.

Everyday, we help people understand how they can scan-to-file (so they have an electronic vs. a paper document), scan-to-Email (one button sends the doc to all the desired locations), scan-to-FTP & URL which allows large docs to be shared w/ others or easily accessed over the intranet or internet. Lastly, docs or forms can be pulled down and printed as needed ("Print-On-Demand") which brings 'just-in-time inventory mgmt' to office documents & forms. **EPM** is simply what today's devices can do, along with a simple applications (software), and along with a bit of training and instruction. Most industry experts refer to the latest digital MFPs as "on-ramps to the digital super highway". That's another way of saying they are progress in technology winning against all the information we



New MFPs have larger buttons and a panel that tilts down for easier wheel-chair access.

have to deal with (and 'share').

Document Audits, or **Document Output Reviews (DORs)** are something only fortune 500 companies did a few yrs ago but today it's not uncommon for us to help companies with only 20 or 25 people. Quite simply, almost any organization today is not optimized (or organized) in managing & tracking their output costs. Printers have been bought over time, the expense of supplies & consumables is not tracked and the same might also be said for fax machines or even copiers. The cost to business is huge. Industry data says that companies spend anywhere from 5 to 15% of annual revenues in document-related activities and a document is either copied or printed an average of 9 to 11 times at a cost of \$18 and, that companies can not find 5 to 10% of their documents. A good Document and Output strategy commonly saves a business 30%. Some local companies provide a Review product for their clients. At G-I office Tech we offer, and use, a fairly stringent Six Sigma methodology by providing what we call our Encompass **DOR**, Document Output Review. A good Output Strategy, should not only provide current information but also provide a way to track & manage total cost going forward. If the vendor proposes & installs new or different systems, that vendor should also be back in six months or so to review the data and see if the plan is working (and Technology is winning the battle against paper).

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