Forecast for print: Cloudy with a chance of innovation

How cloud is enabling a new era of printing simplicity and security



Lexmark

Forecast for print:

Cloudy with a chance of innovation

Today's business world is one of mobile connections, virtual conversations and digital transactions. From eSignatures to eBooks (like the one you're reading now), we live in an era where the screen is king.

It's only natural to assume that all of this means the days of the printed page are over.

Not so fast.

In reality, print is alive and well. Despite digital trends, paper is a vital component in conducting business, and research shows it will continue to be as we look to the future.

"With trillions of pages still printed annually around the world now and into the future, print is still a fundamental need for business organizations. Any paper-to-electronic transition will be, at best, very gradual." [1]

From forms and documents flowing into your organization, to communications in which print is the required or preferred method of delivery, the bottom line is that the need for paper remains.

That's not to say that print environments are the same as they were just a few years ago. In fact, all of these digital demands are making device and infrastructure management more complex. Growing security risks and the need to connect and integrate with an ever-increasing number of digital channels means your print environment must be more agile and seamless than ever before.

In short, you need a way to arm your print infrastructure, processes and users with the means to handle today's challenges and proactively prepare for tomorrow's complexities. You need new cutting-edge solutions that help you manage every piece of the print puzzle.

You need cloud-based print technology.

It's true that printers and the cloud may seem like an unlikely partnership. But cloud-enabled print has the power to unleash your devices, empower your users and liberate your IT staff. And that means saying goodbye to frustrating complexities and security upkeep, and hello to more effortless print management, designed for the digital age.



Section One:

Unleash your printers



The sky's the limit

Unleashing printers to reach new heights

The problem with print servers

Most of today's print environments are made up of devices that are connected to numerous servers, dispersed throughout the organization. This scattered, disconnected nature of the infrastructure makes management tasks difficult, leaving printers without the most up-to-date technology features and making lag time a common problem.

This issue is magnified during periods of growth or seasons when an organization's print volume is at its peak. When print volume goes up, businesses have two options, both of which are less than ideal. They can add more servers to their already complex print environment, which can be costly and time consuming. Or, they can operate with their existing infrastructure, and expect their servers to get tied up by the sheer volume of print jobs, keeping their devices from operating at maximum performance.

The fact of the matter is, being tethered to print servers keep printers from operating to their fullest potential, and keep businesses from maximizing their hardware investments. Cloud technologies offer a new approach that enables printers to reach new heights.

Your printers, unleashed

When it comes to solving these management challenges, a broad range of cloud-based capabilities are starting to emerge. From enabling print jobs to be sent to and received from the cloud, to making it easy to configure and update devices anytime, anywhere, cloud services has the potential to impact every part of your print environment.

What does this mean for the devices throughout your organization?

- Updates and monitoring made easy: Gone is the requirement to be on site in order to perform updates and analyze device usage. With the cloud, you can make updates to your printers from wherever you are, and gain powerful insights that let you know how your devices are doing.
- Fewer variables, greater security: Scattered print servers are difficult to maintain and leave devices and information vulnerable to security breaches. By moving to the cloud and getting rid of print servers, you're able to eliminate these variables that hold potential risk.
- Performance that impresses: Cloud implementations simplify scalability. Easily expand or contract your print capabilities as business needs change. Add or remove users or devices with a few simple clicks. There's no need to provision servers or configure on-premise software.



Section Two:

Empower users



Take Flight

Empowering users with a new approach to print

When printing can't keep up with users on the move

Today's employees are more mobile than ever before. In order to keep moving and stay productive, these users need a way to send a print job from any device (laptop, tablet, mobile phone, etc.), to any printer within the organization. Instead, they're often required to stop what they're doing to find a way to print what they need, causing disruption and frustration. In addition, users don't always retrieve their documents, which leads to waste and security risks, as sensitive documents are left on the printer for all to see.

Anytime, anywhere printing that enhances the user experience

Cloud technology elevates your environment with mobile printing that is as easy and intuitive as printing from your desktop. By enabling your users to send print jobs from any device at any location to the cloud, and then retrieve it at the printer of their choice, you'll make a true "bring your own device" environment possible.

In addition to anytime, anywhere printing capabilities, the cloud has a lot to offer your users:

- Greater access to features: Since users send print jobs directly to the cloud, they're not tethered to a single assigned printer. Because of this, they can print to the device that offers the features they need—from stapling to hole punch, and even complex media.
- User-driven sustainability: Cloud technology allows your users to feel good about their printing practices. Cloud-enabled print release only prints what your users need, when they need it, cutting down on wasted paper from print jobs that are never retrieved and making your office more environmentally friendly.
- Ensure user and business security: Since printing from the cloud eliminates unwanted or forgotten pages from sitting at the printer unattended, your users can rest assured that only those who should have access to printed information sees it.

The bottom line is, your users need technology that enables them to work smarter, not harder; to truly take flight when it comes to their productivity. And cloud printing meets them where they are with the tools they need to get the job done.



Section Three:

Liberate IT



Up, up and away

Lifting management burdens and liberating IT staff

The cost of cloudless print management

IT-associated challenges with print management are widespread and impact businesses of all shapes and sizes. Small businesses often have limited IT resources and struggle to afford and implement best practices when it comes to print. On the other hand, larger enterprises often put print management at the bottom of their IT to-do list, as they focus on higher priority tasks.

Regardless of where you fall on the spectrum, it's likely that today's methods of managing a print environment are cumbersome and time consuming for IT. Servers spread across multiple locations are difficult to manage and secure, and a lack of visibility means it's nearly impossible to achieve an optimized environment. All of this culminates into quite the burden for your IT staff.



Liberating IT with cloud-based tools and insights

A major benefit of cloud-based technology is that it liberates your IT staff with unmatched tools and insights. Because when devices are cloud enabled, there's less infrastructure to manage. For smaller businesses, this means a more affordable way to attain print and document management solutions. And for enterprises, this means simplicity that translates into major savings in time and resources...not to mention the freedom for your IT staff to focus on more value-added activities.

- Updates made easy: When it comes to firmware updates or deployment of new device features, tasks are fast and effortless with the cloud. Actions that once took days or weeks can be completed in minutes.
- Better decisions through analytics: When implemented across your organization, cloud services can generate powerful, aggregated analytics. This gives your IT staff the insight to uncover potential security gaps and find areas that could be operating more efficiently. They'll be able to make better decisions when it comes to which devices to place where, and feel confident about the optimization of your print environment.
- Scale without the hassle: Cloud technology enables IT to adapt to changing business needs easily. Gone are the days when additional devices, users, or print volume meant adding more servers and more resources to support them. Instead, you can scale up (or down) effortlessly.

Without a doubt, your IT staff has enough to worry about without the burden of a complex, at-risk print environment. The cloud makes it possible to lift that burden, all while taking your devices and print processes to the next level.

Section Four:

Finding a cloud print partner



On the horizon

What to look for in a cloud print partner

At the end of the day, a successful cloud print strategy has the power to optimize your entire environment so that you're printing less across your organization. That can mean significantly lower costs in maintenance, supplies and services.

And this future vision of print management may be closer than you think. But it's only possible with the right partner.

Here are five things to look for in your cloud print services provider:

- An expert in device and print management: You need a partner that has a proven track record of helping organizations solve the print puzzle. From understanding your device needs, to knowing how to help you gain actionable insight, your provider should be well-versed in print first, and have an understanding of the cloud specifically in the context of your printing needs.
- A provider that prioritizes security: When it comes to implementing cloud technology on any level of your organization, making sure your information is protected is a key concern. To feel confident about the state of your device and document security, look for a partner who has a proven track record in this area. Your cloud print provider should prioritize security every step of the way, and go the extra mile to make you feel at ease.
- A hybrid cloud option: In some instances—for certain groups or departments within your organization—you may prefer to keep documents on your side of the firewall. For these situations, it's important to look for a vendor that offers a hybrid cloud option. This option will allow you to control exactly how, when and where you leverage cloud capabilities, giving you the best of both worlds.
- A solution that can flex with your changing needs: One of the major benefits of leveraging the cloud is that it's technology that can adapt to changes without additional resources. To maximize this, look for a provider that offers a subscription model, so that you're only paying for the features you use.
- A true suite of services—not just single, one-off features: A good cloud print services partner will be forward-thinking, anticipating your future needs when it comes to cloud technology. To ensure this, find a provider that offers a robust, growing suite of services; one that provides you with options and has the power to help you manage every part of your print environment.





To learn more about Lexmark's approach to cloud-enabled printing, visit:

www.lexmark.com/cloud

Lexmark's all-new suite of cloud services was carefully designed with your needs and concerns in mind. Whether you're just starting your search for the right cloud partner, or you have a list of specific requirements, we're here to help.



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Sources:
1.IDC FutureScape: Worldwide Imaging, Printing, and Document Solutions 2018 Predictions (October 2017, IDC #US43152617)

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