

Color MFPs from Lexmark make it fast and easy for staffers at the City of Oakland's City Attorney's Office to scan documents directly into its Interwoven EDMS, while reducing costs and improving employee productivity.

The City Attorney's Office in the City of Oakland cuts costs, improves productivity with Lexmark MFPs

The Organization

With 35 attorneys and total staff of 80, the City Attorney's Office of Oakland, Calif. abides by its motto – Law in Service of the Public – by advising the Mayor and the City Council, defending Oakland's progressive policies in court and by initiating legal action when the community's quality of life or economic interests are jeopardized.

The Challenge

Documents, both paper and electronic, are an essential part of any law office's workflow, whether it is a public-sector agency or a private practice. The Oakland City Attorney's Office is no exception.

Driven by its unique workflow and privacy requirements, the City Attorney's Office is the only city agency with its own IT department. The IT staff of just two manages 16 servers, 100 desktop computers and printers scattered throughout five floors of Oakland City Hall, and the network infrastructure.

"As we've become more automated, two requirements stood out – the ability to copy and print in color, and a method for scanning physical documents directly into our Interwoven® electronic document management system (EDMS)," said R. Craig Strunk, IT Manager. The two monochrome laser printers installed on each floor could do neither. Experimenting with a color inkjet printer yielded unsatisfactory print quality, was too slow and far too costly to operate.

The need for imaging documents in color grew more critical as each attorney penned annotations in different color inks. For complex contracts or litigation, it was common for comments and edits to appear in up to a half-dozen different colors. With copies printed in monochrome, one attorney's edits couldn't be differentiated from another's. "It was apparent that we needed color copying and printing to eliminate any possible misinterpretation and prevent the onset of productivity losses," said Strunk.

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–R. Craig Strunk
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As for its EDMS, capturing images of evidentiary and other documents received by courier, fax or mail had devolved into a convoluted process. Fed into standalone scanners connected to traditional monochrome photocopiers, the images were then sent via e-mail back to that same worker, who then profiled them for EDMS storage. The process was a productivity-robbing time waster and took money out of the pockets of Oakland taxpayers.



The Solution

After researching competing products and several onsite visits to see Lexmark products in use at a major California law firm, the Oakland City Attorney's Office installed two Lexmark color multifunction printers (MFPs) on its network.

With a high-quality business-class color laser printer at its core, Lexmark MFP technology seamlessly integrates an auto-feed document scanner; copier; and network fax into a single space-saving unit. Lexmark MFP devices feature an integrated, fully customizable touch-screen operator panel that can reduce complex document imaging and routing jobs to a single finger tap.

Behind the scenes, Lexmark Document Distributor (LDD) software handles imaging, optical character recognition, routing and insertion into the office's EDMS. A flexible server-resident enterprise routing application, LDD uses the power of customizable scripts to automate manual processes. The result is individual users with the power to scan, fax, copy, print, e-mail or archive documents from the push of a button.

Though the office had witnessed many demonstrations of competing color MFPs, it was the Lexmark product's ability to communicate directly with the Interwoven EDMS – and its underlying file structure – that set it apart.

"With the abundance of color photos as evidentiary files, our project focused on scanning in color and then rendering the images electronically for instant viewing," said Strunk. "We were most impressed with Lexmark's ability to scan documents directly into our Interwoven EDMS or create a PDF without the need to e-mail scans back to the desktop and then convert them in a separate operation."

Strunk's team and systems integrator Analysts International developed a script that interfaces with the office's EDMS file structure. At the scanner, the employee presses the custom scan-to-EDMS icon and selects the appropriate document folder. The document is scanned, profiled, and archived, and is ready for retrieval by any authorized staffer in minutes.

The Results

"This project delivered amazing 'bang for the buck'," said Strunk.

"Lexmark's scanner was not the most expensive and the software was not a huge investment. Script writing allowed us to complete everything

much sooner than we expected and well under budget." Scheduled for nine months, the entire project was completed in just four.

User response to the first two installed MFP units was excellent and training was minimal. Strunk acknowledges that a few "low-tech types" were reluctant with the prospect of automation. "After seeing how much time other staffers were saving, they all quickly got on board." Not long after, Strunk had the competing products removed and installed Lexmark MFP units on each floor.

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With the initial project complete, Strunk and the Lexmark team are developing a list of enhancements, including identifying barcodes to create intricate load files to interface with CT Summation iBlaze™, the software the Oakland City Attorney's Office uses for discovery and litigation support.

"For us, the real power here is the Lexmark Document Distributor software," said Strunk. "I don't see any other product with comparable back-end document management and routing capabilities, even at twice the price."

For Strunk and the City Attorney's Office, implementing a Lexmark document scanning and routing solution saved time, cut costs and made document images available and searchable in just minutes. In an age when squeezing every last cent out of municipal budgets is critical, the Oakland City Attorney's Office completed its transition to an all-Lexmark solution under budget and more quickly than expected. Case closed.