

2018 Industry Forecast

Manufacturers look to the year ahead

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What will be the greatest opportunities in the new year? To find the answers, Office Technology magazine asked 11 MFP and printer manufacturers to share their expectations for 2018. Perhaps the insight shared will help you better position your dealership for success.

Each of the contributors was asked to address the following questions in essay form: What do you believe will be the greatest market and product opportunities for dealers in 2018? What are the best sales and marketing strategies for dealerships in pursuing these opportunities? What will be the most significant challenges dealers will face in 2018 and how can they best address them? What notable changes in demand/needs/expectations do you anticipate from end users in 2018? What do you see as the characteristics of the office technology dealership that is best positioned for success in 2018? Following are their responses.



SMB market. With MPS, dealers capitalize on a growth opportunity they know — print — while building a point of differentiation from their competitors, more touch points within their clients' businesses to strengthen relationships and customer value by better managing print assets. Partners not only grow — many report their year-over-year growth is largely driven by providing MPS solutions to SMBs — they protect their customer bases. To make the most of the opportunity, dealers should take advantage of OEMs that offer robust MPS portfolios that include custom training, access to sales and assessment tools, pricing

considerations and marketing support.

A second strong opportunity in 2018 is in meeting client needs for more device integration to streamline workflows unique to their businesses. More and more channel partners will meet this need by building applications for their customers' multifunction printers, an emerging trend that will grow exponentially in the coming year.

One model of success with this approach is Just-Tech, a Maryland-based print, network, IT and apps solutions company. Just-Tech has developed and sold custom apps for multifunction devices for the past two years, with apps now accounting for 10 percent of the company's revenue. Just-Tech hopes to triple app sales next year. In addition to providing a new and accelerated source of recurring revenue, apps are a competitive differentiator for dealers like Just-Tech because they increase the partner's value to its clients.

As with MPS offerings, dealers should partner with OEMs that provide training and ongoing assistance with building, pricing and marketing custom apps for MFPs, including help getting started, and in using hardware and software tools to efficiently create apps for customers.

Finally, we see production color as an area of continued



Xerox Corp.
Darren Cassidy, President,
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Broader demand for managed print services (MPS), rapid advances in apps-based solutions and continued growth in production color among small- and medium-sized businesses (SMB) will make 2018 a year of golden

opportunities for BTA members.

The SMB market BTA members target is highly lucrative and rapidly growing. With 75 percent of office technology sales to SMBs made through indirect channels, the opportunity is ripe for the taking.

In 2018, we see MPS as a great opportunity for dealers who put a strategic focus on targeting the underpenetrated

growth. Color page volumes continue to grow as offset page migration to digital accelerates, particularly for short runs. Specialized media applications can add true differentiation and deliver high margins.

With careful planning to get business basics right, coupled with growth opportunities into such print adjacencies as MPS, BTA members can reap the rewards of added profit and, in turn, fund further business expansion.

The new year will bring some significant challenges as well. Technology adoption has enabled completely new ways to interface with customers, mostly online or mobile.

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Increasingly, acquisition decisions are practically made before customers talk to sales representatives, making a strong digital presence online and through social media more important than ever.

Nonetheless, print continues to offer a tremendous growth opportunity, particularly in the SMB space. Partners that make the effort to become more relevant to their customers and more

market-specific, and that leverage MPS and make their online presence a priority, will be well positioned to prosper and grow in 2018, and for many years to come. ■