

'Should I or Shouldn't I?'

Your questions regarding MPS need to be addressed

by: Mike Lecak, Supplies Network

When I make a purchase — an item of clothing for example — I typically have some data points I refer to when making my decision: the size, color and the current season. These data points help me get what I need. In doing this, I get to perform my own analysis to make sure my purchase makes sense. Some purchasing mistakes can be expensive and get in the way. So, I ask myself, “Should I or shouldn't I?”



Over the last five years, we have all heard the numbers. Managed print services (MPS) is a \$14.5 billion industry that is headed to \$25 or 30 billion, depending on who you listen to. We also hear that everyone is overpaying or mismanaging their output fleets if they are attempting to do MPS on their own. IT departments are being asked to do more with fewer resources, people and money. So should we outsource?

Questions regarding MPS are endless and the answers seem to be endless as well. Ask a question and you will generally get an answer — but is it the right one? It depends.

And that is just the customer side of the equation.

Now, let's look at the dealer side. We use the same data points and ask the same questions, but do we get a different viewpoint? I would say so. There is a knowledge gap that needs to be filled.

Are your sales staff members able to fill that gap? Are they armed with the tools and management support to do so? Can your sales staff members navigate the deep waters of a true MPS assessment? Is the assessment process manual? If so, does your compensation plan ensure that your reps can perform a true assessment that will bring value to your end-user customer as well as value to your business and, ultimately, your sales staff? Your reps are the drivers; do they have the right vehicles to get to the finish line?

Over the last eight years, (Supplies Network senior vice president) Doug Johnson and I have spent countless hours in front of both the dealer community and customers; we have

had the opportunity to assist dealers in setting up their MPS practices. We have participated in the on-boarding and training of sales staffs, the recruitment of specialists (which is a must; every dealership must have a champion) and the setup of compensation plans designed to drive behavior. We have been able to help dealership principals assess their current cultures and their abilities to accept change.

We have also designed and directed training sessions specifically geared toward the C-level sales process. The single largest challenge for any sales organization is to get into and stay at the right level. MPS is a C-level sale, period. Believing anything else delays and, most of the time, kills the sale. True MPS is a multifaceted decision that involves many players within an organization. The decision to make changes within an organization can only be made from the top. More importantly, the ability to execute and drive those changes down can only happen from above.

Of equal importance is actual customer engagement. What does this look like in your organization? Have you gone through the vetting process with your reps to identify who are the best candidates for MPS? Does your CRM system allow you to do so? Do the reps who are currently selling MPS understand the intricacies of the process? Or, have you, like most of the organizations we have seen, put your highest producers in charge of the customers they “own” and hope that the relationship they have spent years cultivating will produce the desired result? Do you even know what that result looks like? The people who hear your message and what that message is, as it pertains to MPS, are the keystones to the success you will have.

When we engage with dealers who want to “get into” MPS, we typically ask them what is driving the decision. What we hear most often are: “I am losing customers to other providers” (clearly a defensive move) or “I want to increase my margins and lock in my customer base” (an offensive move).

Rarely is this decision a strategic one that is backed up with infrastructure designed to drive out costs and enhance the customer experience. Or, it is done without much thought to who is actually going to sell it. Is it a product? Is it a solution?

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Has the leadership team bought into this direction? Is there a sales culture to move from transactional selling to solutions-based selling?

As a dealership principal, how many times have you heard these words from your top, go-to reps when trying to introduce a new initiative: “I don’t want my best customers to be the guinea pigs for something new.” We believe this happens because leadership has not communicated a strategic direction for these initiatives — why the company is moving in this direction. It has no stickiness due to the fact that it does

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not fit with the current state of affairs.

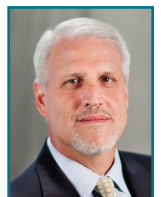
Whether you are just dipping your toes in the water with your own MPS program, or you are outsourcing it to someone else, there are a few questions you should ask yourself and answer:

- Do I, as an owner or sales rep, know what MPS is and what it represents to my business?
- Is MPS a strategic initiative or just a program?
- Are my sales reps trained to sell the concept or can they truly execute an MPS engagement?
- As an organization, do we sell at the C-level? (A must.)
- Does the current compensation plan reward this type of sale? (This is the single biggest roadblock to a successful MPS initiative.)
- Do I know my market?
- Do I have business intelligence that will allow me to most effectively prospect for the “MPS sweet spot,” and do I even know what that “sweet spot” is?

So, should I or shouldn’t I? Am I armed with enough information to make my decision to jump into MPS? The numbers say yes and the time is now. So, be prepared, strategize with your leadership team, prepare your rollout and set your course. Ask yourself the above questions. Once you have answered them, do not worry, because there will be plenty more. ■

Mike Lecak has been in the industry since 1983. After a successful 15-year career at ComDoc in Pittsburgh, Pa., he joined Toshiba as a district sales manager. After a period of running his own consulting practice, he joined Print Inc. in 2004 to manage sales for the company’s PrintValue Solutions program. His team was responsible for all facets of bringing MPS practices to Print Inc.’s channel partners, including sales, service, training and sales compensation models. In 2009, Lecak joined Konica Minolta to manage its West Region for managed print. He was responsible for the direct branch activity for the West Region, supporting both the sales efforts as well as the solutions teams that executed Konica Minolta’s OPS Program. Lecak joined Supplies Network in January 2011 to take on his current role as director of MPS and the company’s CARBON SiX program.

Visit www.suppliesnetwork.com. Lecak and Doug Johnson will be teaching BTA’s newest MPS workshops as front runners to BTA’s Capture the Magic district event, Nov. 15-16 in Las Vegas, Nev. Attendees to either front-runner workshop receive free registration to Capture the Magic. Visit www.bta.org/BTAWestFrontRunners for more information or to register.



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