

Disruptive technologies affect document management

There has been a major shift in the way companies manage documents and the way vendors operate in this space. "A new era of communications and computing, triggered by a combination of the precarious global economy, a fresh generation of business workers and the fast-paced evolution of technology, is now upon us," says Andrew Griffith, product manager: office products at Bidvest company, Konica Minolta South Africa.



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"The uncertainty of today's economy has meant that businesses immediately focus on factors that they can control, such as the expense line and efficiencies."

In addition to the precarious economic climate, new generations of business workers (Generations X, Y and Z) are taking the lead in business decisions. These groups have always had access to technology, from e-mail to mobile phones, and show a greater readiness to adopt the latest technologies than older generations.

"This is certainly reflected in the speed at which technologies are currently being developed. These new generations' speedy adoption is boosting the progress of cloud and mobility-focused technologies in particular, due to their huge demand for constant access to information from wherever they are."

Influencing document management

The impact of these three 'disruptive forces' has had a significant effect on the document management sector.

"Even software has become commoditised. It is all about the automation of business process solutions now and which document management solutions can provide more business intelligence and incorporate workflow processes. This field has moved past managing the output of documents, the focus is now squarely on content management."

The market has also moved far beyond the connection between a PC and a multifunctional printer (MFP) to a greater focus on mobile printing, where users can connect and use printing services from their own laptops, PCs or mobiles anywhere, facilitating the growing productivity and cost imperatives surrounding mobility.

"In the same vein, we are moving away from PC software hosted on a local client towards applications hosted on individuals' devices. The SMME market, where there is no requirement for an onsite solution and the associated outlay for networks and other infrastructure, is driving the increasing adoption of cloud technology."

IP most valuable commodity

He maintains that in addition to these changes, intellectual property is today's most valuable commodity, meaning that it needs to be protected at all costs. "With this in mind, it is clear that security is still one of businesses' top-of-mind concerns. The difference today though is that instead of keeping the 'bad guys' out, you have to assume that they're already in, making the awareness of internal threats critical. The effect on our sector has meant that document management companies have needed to look at the securing of both interactional (PowerPoint presentations and so on) and transactional (invoices and POD for example) information."

Finally, there has been a massive change in the way that document management solution providers view their clients' environments. Today's managed print services (MPS) methodology is to help businesses spend less money, improve efficiencies and increase profitability over the longer term.

"Companies are realising that by taking this approach, they can run a more efficient business by outsourcing the back

office function and focusing on core operations. The obligation for today's document management vendors is not to merely provide a means for output, but to manage content, while also simultaneously improving security and compliance," Griffith concludes.

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