

MARKET NOTE

Ricoh Looks to Simplify Print Management with RICOH CloudStream Print-as-a-Service Platform

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EXECUTIVE SNAPSHOT

FIGURE 1

Executive Snapshot: RICOH CloudStream Provides a Unified Platform for Cloud Applications/Services Delivery

Ricoh recently introduced the RICOH CloudStream platform. Based on Y Soft's technology, RICOH CloudStream provides a cloud-native solution to help customers reduce or eliminate on-premises print infrastructure. At the same time, Ricoh will leverage the RICOH CloudStream platform for delivery of a broader range of cloud-based applications and services.

Key Takeaways

- RICOH CloudStream is based on the EveryonePrint cloud print management solution, which was rebranded as SAFEQ Cloud following Y Soft's acquisition of EveryonePrint.
- RICOH CloudStream is a SaaS-based platform that allows customers to reduce the costs and complexities typically associated with the print environment by migrating print infrastructure to the cloud.
- RICOH CloudStream can be deployed either as a private cloud solution or as a fully hosted public cloud service running in Ricoh's AWS datacenter. RICOH CloudStream is offered under a per-device licensing model that is scalable to support implementations ranging from a single device up to thousands of printers and MFPs.
- RICOH CloudStream will eventually serve as a common platform for application integration and cloud service delivery. The ability to integrate a broad range of cloud-based offerings under a unified platform will help customers by simplifying cloud application/services management and creating an ecosystem that can evolve along with customer needs.

Source: IDC, 2023

IN THIS MARKET NOTE

In April, Ricoh quietly rolled out a cloud-based print management platform and service called RICOH CloudStream for general availability in the U.S. market. Introduced last year in Asia/Pacific, Canada, and Europe as RICOH Print Management Cloud (PMC), RICOH CloudStream is a new Ricoh engineered solutions platform based on the Ricoh Smart Integration (RSI) strategy. The printing module is based on the EveryonePrint cloud print management solution, which was rebranded as SAFEQ Cloud following Y Soft's acquisition of EveryonePrint. The scanning modules are Ricoh developed, and additional functionality will be released frequently during the year. With RICOH CloudStream, Ricoh provides a cloud-native solutions platform to help customers manage, reduce, or eliminate on-premises print infrastructure.

According to Ricoh, the platform is designed to address key business challenges in the market today:

- Enable a more effective printing experience for hybrid workers
- Improve print security by supporting zero trust requirements
- Streamline print administration by making it easier to deploy, monitor, control, update, and manage print infrastructure from a single web-based interface
- Accelerate digital transformation initiatives
- Reduce costs and improve financial flexibility by moving to a subscription model for print

From a print management perspective, RICOH CloudStream offers roughly the same functionality and capabilities as Y Soft's SAFEQ Cloud. Essentially, RICOH CloudStream is a SaaS-based platform that allows customers to reduce the costs and complexities typically associated with the print environment by migrating print infrastructure to the cloud. Removing or reducing the IT burden associated with print server management is a fundamental benefit of RICOH CloudStream. Because RICOH CloudStream removes the need for on-premises print servers, IT departments no longer need to worry about critical issues such as print server management, device driver management, or print server capacity.

With a feature called location-aware printing, the solution adjusts to intuitively display only those printers that are available to the user in the local environment, not only making it easier for users to select the right printer but also allowing organizations to provide better support for employees who routinely move between offices and print environments. These features reduce the number of help desk calls and eliminate common pain points typically associated with print, which allows IT departments to focus more freely on other business priorities.

One of the most important benefits of RICOH CloudStream is the fact that it is a multitenant solution that can operate in multiple environments and locations while enabling a more effective print experience for different types of users and hybrid work employees. As a result, RICOH CloudStream is vendor agnostic, meaning that the platform works in a mixed fleet environment supporting multiple hardware brands, drivers, and operating systems.

The ability to improve print security in hybrid working environments is another important part of the RICOH CloudStream value proposition. According to Ricoh, RICOH CloudStream is designed for zero trust requirements, with the ability to optimize data protection through features such as end-to-end server and hardware encryption, user authentication, auditing functionality, and integration with cloud-based authentication systems. Of course, pull print functionality is supported with RICOH CloudStream. Users can authenticate and release jobs either through a mobile app or directly at the device, which requires an embedded client that runs on the MFP.

RICOH CloudStream can be deployed either as a private cloud solution or as a fully hosted public cloud service running in Ricoh's AWS datacenter. RICOH CloudStream is offered under a per-device licensing model that is scalable to support implementations ranging from a single device up to thousands of printers and MFPs. The ability to scale up and down as business needs evolve is one of the most important aspects of migrating to a subscription model for print. There are basically three components to the licensing model: A "core" license is required for each printer or MFP. A second per-device license is required for each MFP running the embedded client for secure print release. For those customers wishing to deploy as a public cloud service, an additional per-device license is also required.

RICOH CloudStream will be sold two different ways: as a subscription with a 12-month minimum term, and as a prepaid five-year license.

Platform Strategy

It is important to point out that RICOH CloudStream is much more than a print management solution. Indeed, Ricoh positions RICOH CloudStream as a platform strategy: leveraging a genuine container-based cloud design to create a modular approach for solutions/services delivery. This is a key part of the now-familiar RICOH Smart Integration (RSI) strategy. With RSI, Ricoh looks to connect edge devices (such as office MFPs) with digital solutions and services through a cloud-based ecosystem. Up to now, Ricoh has primarily positioned RSI as a platform for enabling access to cloud workflow, apps, and solutions to enable workflow anytime or anywhere.

Eventually, however, RICOH CloudStream will serve as the core engine for the delivery of a comprehensive set of RICOH Smart Integration solutions and services. Ricoh points to the plethora of cloud-based applications and the need to provide customers with an integrated approach for service delivery, with user and subscription management, onboarding, analytics, auditing, and reporting, all delivered through a common dashboard. While print management is a key component, RICOH CloudStream will continue to evolve to support a full range of cloud-based applications and services as Ricoh continues to migrate toward an everything-as-a-service model.

IDC'S POINT OF VIEW

Hybrid work is a particular area of focus for Ricoh as organizations continue to look for ways to reduce IT workload while supporting onsite, mobile, and remote workers. While there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the hybrid work model, there is now more clarity among most organizations as to how their individual workforce will be structured moving forward. Companies are establishing hybrid work policies that consider factors such as return-to-office mandates, remote and in-office requirements, communication/collaboration platforms, and employee preferences. IT strategies need to evolve to support these policies, and print is a big part of that conversation. With RICOH CloudStream, Ricoh is in a strong position to help clients navigate the challenges associated with enabling a more secure and effective print environment for the hybrid workforce.

It is important to point out that RICOH CloudStream does not replace Ricoh's Streamline NX print management solution. Streamline NX was designed for on-premises deployment and remains widely used by many of Ricoh's existing MPS customers. While Streamline NX can be hosted and managed in the cloud, it is not a native cloud offering, and it cannot be deployed as a multitenant public cloud solution. As a result, Ricoh will offer Streamline NX and RICOH CloudStream as separate offerings to appeal to specific customer needs. At the same time, Ricoh stresses the importance of RICOH

CloudStream as a platform that will continue to evolve along with its own cloud strategy. The initial release for RICOH CloudStream provides multibrand cloud print management support, along with scan management functionality for Ricoh devices. Meanwhile, Ricoh has an extensive road map for adding print/scan management functionality to the RICOH CloudStream platform in the future.

Cloud is now the driving force behind the evolution of the office printing landscape. Capabilities such as remote monitoring, management, configuration, and support have become more important as businesses seek to develop stronger IT policies for remote or at-home employees. Meanwhile, IDC is seeing greater demand from organizations for more effective tools around security, cost management, reporting, and tracking of at-home printing devices. Businesses are looking to leverage IoT and data analytics to provide better management and support, not only around security but also for proactive and predictive service to improve productivity and lessen the need for onsite service technicians. RICOH CloudStream can help customers address these variables with a fully hosted cloud service to completely modernize the print environment.

Meanwhile, the fact that RICOH CloudStream will serve as a common platform for application integration and cloud service delivery is very important. Over the years, Ricoh has established a broad portfolio of offerings through acquisitions such as DocuWare and Axon Ivy. RICOH CloudStream could also be used as a platform for enabling subscription-based services for solutions such as RICOH Kintone plus and RICOH Spaces, just to name a couple. The ability to integrate a broad range of cloud-based offerings under a unified platform will help customers by simplifying application/services management and creating an ecosystem that can evolve along with customer needs.

Ricoh continues to separate itself from competitors by pushing beyond print into areas such as digital transformation, information management, workflow automation, and managed IT services. RICOH CloudStream could serve as a launch pad, enabling Ricoh to bring a full range of cloud-based applications and services to customers and expand further up the value chain.

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Related Research

- *Ricoh and Toshiba Take Bold Steps to Thrive in the New World of Print, Form Joint Venture to Consolidate Manufacturing Operations* (IDC #lcUS50726823, May 2023)
- *Worldwide and U.S. Managed Print and Document Services and Basic Print Services Forecast Update, 2022-2026* (IDC #US48532822, March 2023)
- *Worldwide Document Workflow Automation and Optimization Forecast, 2023-2027* (IDC #US50128923, March 2023)
- *Y Soft Takes Steps to Solidify Its Cloud-First Strategy with Acquisition of Denmark-Based EveryonePrint* (IDC #lcUS49452722, July 2022)
- *Worldwide and U.S. Device and Print Management Market Shares, 2021: Stalled Recovery Drives Weak Revenue, Pushes Cloud Adoption* (IDC #US48531322, June 2022)
- *Worldwide and U.S. Document Solutions Software Forecast, 2022-2026* (IDC #US49158822, June 2022)

Synopsis

This IDC Market Note looks at Ricoh's recent launch of the RICOH CloudStream platform. Based on Y Soft's SAFEQ Cloud, RICOH CloudStream provides a cloud-native solution to help customers reduce or eliminate on-premises print infrastructure. At the same time, Ricoh will leverage the RICOH CloudStream platform for delivery of a broader range of cloud-based applications and services.

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