

Five signs that
enterprises might
be ready for
Analytics for Print

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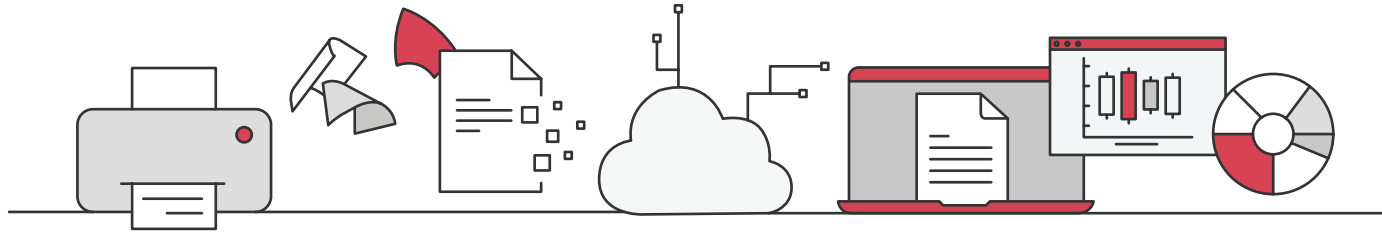
As print-system software and hardware get increasingly sophisticated, they are capable of generating continuous streams of data that can be leveraged to deliver real-time insights about document operations. Print fleet systems are a subset of the worldwide connected devices revolution, and it is increasingly apparent that identifying the underlying analytics between machine-human interactions is key to delivering a competitive marketplace advantage. Enterprise printing system assets generate data about printing behavior that can be fed to a central information loop that can prove to be a critical player in delivering operating efficiencies.

The advantages of making data-driven decisions are readily apparent, but it takes expertise to evaluate the data being presented. While there is more data presented than ever before, it is often delivered in a bewildering array of formats. Such data devolves to mere rear-view reporting if there are no experts to make sense of the numbers.

Analytics for Print is an essential ally for enterprises looking to work with print data to realize savings. It is an agile, customizable solution that tames such data so enterprises can increase their return on investment (ROI) and decrease total cost of print (TCOP).

Making the move to working with Analytics for Print usually requires a fundamental mindset reboot. Here are five indicators that might signal that enterprises are ready to take the next step.





1. Enterprises don't have a plan to track print analytics data

Enterprises already use data analytics in at least a few ways, but most of them are customer-facing initiatives. Such protocols might analyze sales efficiencies or gaps in the supply chain or ERP systems. Financial analytics to determine quarterly and annual goals is another prime area that enterprises dabble in.

What many companies don't realize is that print analytics can deliver additional cost savings. A holistic analysis of print workflows, instead of just silos that look at device and user-based print data, can provide transparency into the mechanics of printing and allow the C-suite to tweak processes for cost savings as needed.

Analytics for Print explores this under-evaluated aspect of enterprise business and ensures system-wide efficiencies over time. Equally important, its essential principles are easily applicable to a variety of other needs.

2. Enterprises know there's a problem, but can't identify it

An operations manager might have heard of erratic recommended monthly volumes for a printer, or may suspect that the Rules Based Printing protocols implemented two months ago are not hitting the mark.

In the world of business decisions, mere anecdotal data is not enough to sway C-suite decisions. Enterprises need to get their hands on hard numbers and trends: who printed and what they printed, as well as where and when. Such evidence-based analysis can yield insights into behavior and possibly enhance productivity while keeping TCOP costs low.

Data tied to print/service centers, mobile printing requests, and various output devices can provide the answers enterprises are looking for. When inefficiencies are expected, it usually helps to follow the crumb trail. Analytics for Print offers just that: a way of following the data crumb trail to pinpoint inefficiencies. These can range from ill-informed or wasteful "best practices" (always printing one-sided, for example) to asset downtime.

Sometimes, the C-suite might need cost efficiencies implemented and it's up to other stakeholders to pinpoint problem areas and achieve those goals. At the same time, it's critical that the fat is not trimmed too close to the bone. Understanding the whys of printing behavior, through analysis of print data, can help all stakeholders get there. To achieve such outcomes, it's a good idea to invest in an analytics for print service.



3. An enterprise's IT department is too busy managing other priorities

It's tempting for most enterprises to slide anything vaguely technical over to IT's plate. The problem is, most IT departments are already stretched way too thin. They're busy supporting large strategic initiatives, such as migrating systems to the cloud, or they're trying to reroute document workflow for the printer fleet in one department, while handling calls about faulty VPN connections hampering printing from another.

If the last thing that enterprise IT departments want to do is also become data scientists to analyze all that data from printer fleets, it might be time to leave that to trusted external experts. Leveraging data through Analytics for Print has an added advantage that just might win enterprises huge brownie points with IT: Analytics for Print can solve many routine IT headaches so in-house IT and system administration personnel can concentrate on more strategic initiatives, such as system-wide upgrades, instead of constantly battling fires.

Enterprises that use Analytics for Print don't just delegate work to experts. They also make their in-house personnel much more efficient.

4. Enterprises don't know where to look to make meaningful interventions

If only finding actionable insights from print data were as easy as reading a map! Real life is much more complicated. Even the most modern enterprises have hybrid assets. How do you separate the noise from the actual signal? Enterprises need to understand which parameters must be measured and when.

What's worse, one document software solution might not necessarily be the law of the land across an entire enterprise. It is easy for legacy assets to stay in place because of acquisitions and mergers or distributed purchasing capabilities from silos in various departments. You might have some departments using Equitrac, others using eCopy, TRAC, or Streamline NX. You could also be getting device information from one system, user print behaviors from another, log-in information from a third and none of it might match or make sense. Which data is to be aggregated and how should that process be done so that all the data flows into a single channel?

It is tempting for enterprises to analyze all the data just because they can. Sound data analysis starts by working with the right data, which must be determined based on what enterprises are looking to solve. Trying to cut costs? Find out how much paper is being wasted through single-sided printing. In such an instance, knowing how many people are printing remotely is not a valuable variable to measure, but understanding how many pieces everyone is printing, is.

Precise and meaningful data analysis requires specialized expertise. Enterprises that don't know where to start are ready for Analytics for Print Services.



5. Enterprises need ongoing support

It is important that enterprises understand the point of print data analysis: to generate insights that can – and should – be acted upon to yield efficiencies.

Predictive analytics, where enterprises can proactively act on the recommendations of Analytics for Print, is one big bonus for the services. What are a few of the problem areas that Analytics for Print might unearth? Enterprises might have a skewed device-to-person ratio. One printer per every two people might be too much, while one for every 100 might be too few. Enterprises might be working with the wrong technology stack. Or Analytics for Print might reveal that there's a lack of synergy among departments about the execution of print protocols.

Enterprises might be ready for a professional to hold their hand and make recommendations for concrete actions that can achieve the business roadmap they outlined together.

It is also important to remember that technology is constantly changing. The print software solutions enterprises might be working with today may not be what they have on deck tomorrow. Analytics for Print keeps a finger on the pulse of the changing landscape and provides support and insight to its customers. Equally important, the service evaluates what's right for an enterprise – its objectives, its data, its solutions – and tracks that over time.

Such an ally is a valuable asset for enterprises. If they need expertise in wrangling print data and leveraging it to their advantage, it might be time to invest in services like Analytics for Print. In today's business operating environment, with razor-thin margins, this could be a strategic investment. Ricoh can provide enterprises with a comprehensive 360 degree view of their print environment, delivering a complete picture of the current landscape, recommendations for how to improve processes, and tools to measure progress. Such insights can together yield rich dividends.

¹ Columbus, Louis. "2017 Roundup of Internet of Things Forecasts." Forbes, 2017. www.forbes.com/sites/louiscolombus/2017/12/10/2017-roundup-of-internet-of-things-forecasts/#e1201101480e

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