Horizon Beverage Group

Leading spirits distributor gains efficiencies and productivity with HUB Technical Services, HP MPS

Industry
Wholesale distribution

Objective
Help reduce costs and provide timely service and supplies replenishment for multi-state print infrastructure

Approach
Engage HP MPS

IT matters
• Increase uptime with consistent service response

• Achieve 92% * first-time fix rate

• Provide timely supplies replenishment with Original HP Supplies

• Deploy future-ready devices featuring simple, consistent user interface

Business matters
• Help reduce print costs by thousands of dollars each month

• Increase business competitiveness

• Enhance employee productivity, free IT staff

• Leverage data to optimize deployment, usage

"As we evolve our use of technology, HP and HUB are right there with us with solutions and services that help keep us competitive."

– Lew Pollock, vice president of technology, Horizon Beverage

Horizon Beverage Group is one of New England's leading distributors of fine wines, spirits and malts. Founded in 1933, the company currently employs close to 800 workers and maintains facilities in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Maine, Vermont, and New Hampshire. Horizon aimed to cost-effectively ensure printer uptime, quality, and optimization while simultaneously freeing IT staff for high-value initiatives. By working with HP Partner HUB Technical Services, LLC (HUB), Horizon engaged HP Managed Print Services (MPS) to cut print costs, streamline maintenance and supplies management, and deploy a print infrastructure that establishes an on-ramp to digital technologies of the future.

As a broker and distributor, Horizon links beverage suppliers with beverage retailers including liquor stores, restaurants, and bars. Horizon suppliers and customers have grown more technologically savvy in recent years. They expect, for example, to be able to receive information and transact business online. Yet being nearly a century old, with established ways of doing business, the beverage supply industry can also be slow to change. Horizon's salesforce and warehouse staff includes veterans who have been with the company for more than 20 years.

As ambitious as the company might be about "going paperless," many Horizon employees like paper. When salespeople visit customers, they like to bring glossy printouts of that week's special promotions. As expected, some printing is mandatory. By state law, Horizon must leave printed invoices at customer sites.

When Lew Pollock, vice president of technology, started at Horizon 14 years ago, the company had 75 printers for 140 users—more than one device for every two employees. . This ratio did not reflect good business practices as Horizon expanded across multiple New England states. Over the years Horizon consolidated devices and standardized mainly on HP LaserJet multifunction devices. Eventually as devices began to age, service response time and supplies management became pain points. Reliability and high-quality output were essential to employee productivity, but Horizon's IT staff needed to devote its attention to modernization initiatives, not printer management.

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In addition, the company sought better insight into its true print costs, to guide ongoing optimization. Horizon wanted a cost-efficient, future-ready, seamlessly managed print infrastructure that enabled employees to do their jobs effectively—including employees who resist change as well as those who embrace it. "Our initiatives try to make sure our sales people are as productive as possible," Pollock says.

HUB recommends HP MPS to meet Horizon SLAs

For many years, Horizon has looked to HP for purpose-driven technology solutions ranging from servers, storage, and networking to tablets, PCs, and printers. Working with its trusted partner HUB, Horizon has undertaken virtualization and technology upgrade initiatives to transform its IT environment. "HUB has been integral to our IT transformation," Pollock says. "When we virtualized two of our environments, when we opened a new Massachusetts office in 2012, HUB did all of the work with us on that, all HP SANs, servers, switches, everything. They were key people in that installation."

"HP MPS was a natural transition. With assistance from HP, we determined their current print usage and decided that to meet Horizon's SLAs, HP MPS was the right fit."

– Paul Shiff, vice president and principal, HUB Technical Services

For prompt and cost-efficient management of Horizon's print infrastructure, HUB Technical Services recommended HP MPS. "The key challenge was that Horizon had multiple sites in multiple states and needed fast service to all of them, recalls Paul Shiff, a HUB vice president and principal. "HP MPS was a natural transition. With assistance from HP, we determined their current print usage and decided that in order to meet Horizon's service needs, HP MPS was the right fit."

When Pollock compared the price per page cited by HP MPS to what Horizon had been paying for printer supplies and support, he estimated the company would save thousands of dollars each month with HP MPS. At the same time, the company was realizing faster service response, more timely supplies delivery, and insights into usage data. With HP MPS, Horizon currently experiences reliable printer uptime and a 92% first-time fix rate.

HP LaserJet MFPs meet individual location demands

Horizon worked with HUB and HP MPS to refresh its printers, matching device models to the particular needs of each regional office. In its Norton, Mass., facility, Horizon prints some 2,000 pages of invoices per night. In the past, the company produced multi-page, impact-printed invoices; now the invoices are laser printed on perforated 11 x 17 paper with half sent to the customer and half kept in-house, reducing overall paper consumption.

The Rhode Island office plans to migrate to laser-printed invoices as well. It also prints sales reports, as do the offices in Maine and Vermont. In New Hampshire, printing is mostly producing marketing material—glossy, color handouts used by salespeople.

"Each individual location has different needs," Pollock says. "The beauty of HP LaserJet MFPs, is that there's a printer model to match each volume and speed requirement—and yet all share a common user interface," he says. While HP MPS stands ready with services and education materials to support management of change, the consistent, easy-to-navigate HP MFP interface minimizes the learning curve for even the most change-averse employee. Horizon gains the best of both worlds: future-ready technologies with easy adoption.

"All the HP MFPs function the same way, which is nice because it makes it easy for users, especially those who are not technically inclined," Pollock says. "At the same time, the HP LaserJet MFPs bring advanced features ready to support our gradual migration to digital workflows. Scanning records to store on the network, emailing from the printer—those things were unheard of years ago. We're introducing change little by little, and the HP LaserJet MFPs work perfectly for this approach." HP MPS also helps Horizon identify printers that are reaching end of life and will need to be replaced. Pollock says his relationships with HP and HUB help minimize acquisition costs.

PaperCut software delivers accurate reporting

To help Horizon gain control over its print, copy, scan, and fax activities, HP MPS recommended PaperCut MF (PaperCut), a simple, cost-efficient application that reports and manages user activity on print devices.

"PaperCut allows us to do lots of things, Pollock says. "It allows us to control printing costs by having employees scan their ID badges to release their print jobs. We increase security and save paper with pull printing. In the old days, people used to print thousands of pages and forget they had done so; the paper would sit there for weeks and then be thrown away."

Users who don't have their ID badges handy can log in with their user names and passwords, since PaperCut ties into Horizon's Microsoft® Active Directory system.

Customer at a glance

Application
Printing of invoices, office documents, sales reports, and marketing material

Hardware
• HP LaserJet MFPs
• HP Color LaserJet MFPs

Software
• PaperCut MF

HP services
• HP Managed Print Services
• HUB Technical Services

In addition, Horizon has set up drivers so that printers are grouped together, with print jobs directed to the most cost-effective available device for that particular job's output requirements and number of pages. Usage visibility has enabled Horizon to educate employees about excessive printing. Reams of sales reports were printed every week in preparation for regular meetings, until everyone realized how much it cost. Horizon also leverages usage data to redistribute printers to locations that provide the best value. "If a fast printer was in an area where people were printing a few pages at a time, we moved it to an area where it was needed more and moved a different printer to that area," Pollock says. "Both user groups were happy and we got better value from our printer investments."

A roadmap for ongoing innovation

Horizon has streamlined from an inefficient 2:1 radio (employees to printers) to a 25:1 ratio today. That means 140 employees who were using 75 printers 14 years ago transformed to 800 employees using 31 printers. HP MPS has removed the worry about maintaining a geographically distributed infrastructure. Employees now have the right tools to do their jobs effectively, without draining company budgets or IT staff time.

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"Our users are getting better service. We pick up a phone and HP MPS is here quickly," Pollock says. "Original HP Supplies are proactively ordered, so our people don't have to worry about managing inventory." All of that lets Horizon's IT staff focus on innovation— sales force automation tools, social media, storing and presenting information digitally. "Eventually printing itself becomes more about imaging," Pollock says. "As we evolve our use of technology, HP and HUB are right there with us with solutions and services that help keep us competitive."

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