

HP Launches JetAdvantage App Portal For Print

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IF YOU ARE a printer company and make money when users print and consume your ink and toner, it behooves you to:

- ▶ find as many ways as possible to enable and encourage your customers to print
- ▶ remove any barriers that could keep your customers from printing
- ▶ work with other companies in the industry to enable and foster more printing
- ▶ create environments and programs that foster new reasons to print or improve existing print applications
- ▶ empower your user base to customize their print capabilities to solve application-specific needs
- ▶ take a leadership role in these efforts to reinforce your market leadership and market leverage, control the evolution of the print ecosystem to your advantage, and possibly create new revenue and profit sources in the process

Surely you recall your Marketing 101 classes where the case study examined a market-leading company with a mature product line that developed a new idea or use for its existing product to increase or jump-start its sales? The guys at HP took those classes, and on September 8, HP introduced the JetAdvantage on Demand platform — the industry's first SaaS solution management platform that is both a marketplace and a portal to offer and manage

applications, users, and devices for printing. Think of it as the iOS or Google Android App store for printing.

Can you imagine owning your smartphone without having the access or ability to customize your phone with the apps of your choice to satisfy your personal needs? Doesn't sound very appealing or enabling, does it? Can anyone refute that a key driving force behind the incredible success in the adoption of smartphones (and our existing reliance on them) has been the ready availability of a vast array of apps enabling you to do almost anything you wanted to do with your phone — and a bunch of other things you never knew you wanted to do with it. But for the most part, the tools and applications for enabling printing have been made available only from the OEMs or as part of a larger third-party business software application which was designed to solve a general-purpose business need and not your specific printing problem.

The smartphone app store concept was also fantastically successful because it was entirely democratic — you didn't need to call your phone maker or carrier to get or use an app, you didn't need to be technically proficient or a geek, and the app store offered apps from a veritable universe of differentiated app developers. Oh,

and for the most part, the apps were either free or ultra-low cost.

Key Target: Solving Mid-Market Business Print Needs

Ed Wingate, head of JetAdvantage Solutions for HP, stated, "We're actually launching the [JetAdvantage on Demand platform] multi-tenant and multi-vendor cloud platform for use by customers and channel partners," to support printing, noting "through the customer portal, customers can view and try applications, they can launch and deploy applications on their devices, they can manage end users, as well as devices."

Wingate outlined some of the challenges IT staffs face. "IT is looking for tools to make their jobs easier. Tools to secure their networks, tools to track costs and manage them down, tools to manage their fleets and devices more effectively ... these trends are not just true for the world's largest enterprises. IT managers of mid-sized companies are now also turning to software solutions to better manage and secure, and integrate their printer and multi-function fleets."

The needs of that mid-market print user are often the same as F500 corporations — but they frequently lack the resources to address those needs, Wingate observes. "Whether it's deploying print rules, tracking print content, deploying secure bold print,

deploying some form of print tracking in analytics, most of these solutions have required the installation of on-premise servers and a fairly complex systems integration task,” which strain the abilities of mid-market firms. “What’s really impeded the adoption of these applications in the mid-market is the difficulty by which they’ve had to deploy them,” explains Wingate, though HP research indicates that “over 75 percent of mid-market customers are asking for print-related solutions.”

HP’s interest in satisfying mid-market customers is a key point: most enterprises have long implemented increasing tighter rules and restrictions related to

cloud ... nine out of 10 printing software ISVs have some SaaS offering the power of a cloud-based platform is [that] you can change the game once there’s awareness, there [is] a really steep adoption curve. Clearly cloud is mainstream, and it’s an opportunity for us.” Wingate sees the potential of the JetAdvantage on Demand platform. “We believe that this is really game changing, in ... the ability to deploy, manage, and trial solutions ... and it’s an essential component to driving adoption mid-market.”

Wingate describes the mid-market print application journey: “A large enterprise has a procurement organization ... an IT department that’s fairly robust, if they’re going

year, HP unveiled JetAdvantage Private Print, an app the company says now sports 12,000 accounts, and only a few months ago HP announced JetAdvantage Insights in the U.S., which the firm now claims has 14,000 users, though it says it was only 10,000 two weeks ago.

Another Target: Channel Engagement

Wingate talked about the role the channel plays in establishing the JetAdvantage on Demand platform. “Channel partners can view and sell applications to their customers. They can manage the license and entitlements of those licenses, and they can even remotely manage solutions on behalf of the customer,”

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printing – especially in color, as a cost saving measure and to meet the growing demand for data and info security. Paper is great – but it ain’t secure, folks. It is my guess that mid-market companies probably represent the most resilient buyer segment targetable for printing and copying, and one that has a long history of using HP LaserJets.

Solving the cost and complexity challenges of the on-premise server application paradigm led to an obvious solution – using the combined capabilities of application SaaS and resident in the cloud makes solutions more accessible, usable, secure, and when offered under the umbrella of the world’s largest OEM printer maker, a catalyst for expanding printing into new areas. “Thankfully, cloud technologies promised to make deployment of solutions in the mid-market much easier,” comments Wingate, adding “we’re seeing ... engagement of the

to ... deploy a solution, they have an army of people to evaluate the options and pick the best one, and deploy it. In the mid-market there’s no army of people ... it had been difficult for them to embark on the journey of solutions. Not because the destination wasn’t attractive, but because the journey was fraught with issues.” Wingate ticks off some of the deployment landmines mid-market buyers could encounter including integrating an Active Directory or other form of user identification system, be able to deploy the solution sometimes device by device for access management, authentication, and the challenges of deploying multiple solutions such as resource and network or port conflicts on a device. He adds another common barrier “How can they make the right decision if the only way to experience a solution is to buy it?”

Two examples of printing apps have come from HP already – last

through a separate JetAdvantage on Demand channel portal. “Really, it’s a platform play as opposed to an application play ... [and an] integrated architecture ensures that the administrators, channel partners, and end users get one seamless experience across all their cloud applications.” Again, the focus on the mid-market as it relates to the channel, “Let’s start with the customer ... keep in mind the mid market is mostly covered by the channel,” and “The channel’s customer is typically the system administrator. This platform approach ... empowers resellers to do some things that they’ve never been able to do before,” Wingate points out, such as the ability to quickly deliver proof of concept to a customer at a low cost by reducing the labor and channel investment needed to offer a user an application trial, and answer simple buyer questions such as, “Can you prove it to me, can you put it onto my environment, and can I use it?”

The cloud architecture and SaaS reduce the costs, and thus the sales and trial friction for the user and the channel.

In the channel portal resellers can address issues such as serving customers in dispersed geographic locations with the ability to remotely deploy and support geographically distributed environments, offering perpetual or term licenses – which is a subscription model, keep track of the status of trials, the expiration dates for licenses, usage and adaptation rates. “Resellers are given a dashboard to manage and monitor their software and solution deployments,” with an account view Wingate explains, such as active trials, active licenses, and notifications. “They get the dashboard view of the status of everything in that account.... [and] they can get alerts when a customer seeks to convert that trial into a purchase.... Think of this [as] a little bit of a CRM capability, [and] ... in one portal a complete view of all the software deployments across the fleets of all their customers.”

To offer the apps, HP will create SKUs for distribution, the dealer or reseller buys it from HP, and then it deploys through the platform. HP gets the ability to monetize the process as it goes through the HP platform. Wingate says HP will charge a “very, very small uplift,” on the transaction.

Wingate says the app development platform is not a dead end, “We built this platform ... to be extensible, [creating] OXPW,” following HP’s OXPP open extensibility platform at the device, and through API’s, HP allow ISPs to leverage the cloud-based services in HP’s infrastructure, which “will allow for much easier and rapid ISP onboarding,” for development, again adding that “nine out of 10 ISP partners have a SaaS offering.” And it is not all about HP in-house apps, he explains. “There will be other ... brands ... the best innovation comes from the entrepreneurial spirit of ISPs working in their space, and knowing

their space particularly well.”

He comments, “Even though you see mostly [blue] HP applications on the dashboard today, the focus of the strategic attempts is ... the mostly non-blue applications such as Fenestrae’s Udocx.

The Cherry on the Top: Security


Wingate says some customers can be cautious or anxious about the cloud aspect of the system. “They ask ... is it secure, can I trust the apps that I’m deploying through the cloud and deploying on to my MFPs and printers there’s uncertainty around where is the data, how well is it protected, where does it reside this issue around the servers in which country, am I introducing potential threats because I’m talking to the cloud?” He notes that even on-premise solutions could have security issues. He says that the JetAdvantage on Demand platform adheres to HP’s development security practices and privacy policies, that in transit and at rest data is encrypted with 256-bit encryption and HP security authentication in the portal itself.

A Powerful Move

The concept of the JetAdvantage on Demand platform appears to be a quantum leap in how printing apps are developed, deployed, and distributed – just as downloading mobile apps to your phone represented a paradigm shift on the usability and functionality of smartphones. Using its leverage in the print industry, HP has invested in a platform which is likely to draw considerable interest by any ISV whose software offerings need to address print output, and by developers trying to customize an application for a specific user print need. It is a concept that is long overdue and kudos to HP for having the foresight and the courage to invest in the JetAdvantage on Demand platform during a period when internal cost cutting by printer OEMs has become the order of the day.

This move helps HP reassert some of the control it had over the industry when it was developing

successively more sophisticated versions of HP-PCL in each new LaserJet series launched – that competitors had to scramble to catch up with and emulate. As ISVs invest and establish apps in the JetAdvantage on Demand platform, that platform will become the de facto standard for print-related app development, and it will be controlled by HP, and HP printers will be the first to be supported by most apps – that will drive LaserJet sales and page volumes. HP will also get an “uplift” from app distribution and sales – sounds a bit like an annuity sales model, folks.

HP became the dominant force in the printer industry by being a leader in many aspects of its market approach – product design, technology, reliability and serviceability, compatibility, and more recently, CPP. The industry has changed – more PPM or DPI don’t cut it anymore. Real innovation is enabling users and resellers to solve printing problems so that everyone in the value chain benefits from more installed printers, each one printing more pages because it can serve more and more diverse applications. The JetAdvantage on Demand platform is a big deal, and it will be interesting to see how competitive OEMs respond to the challenge laid down by HP. 

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