

Printing in the hybrid workplace

UK and US IT Decision Makers' plans for a secure converged digital and print environment



A snapshot survey of
UK and US IT Decision Makers

QUOCIRCA

Executive Summary

New research amongst UK and US IT Decision Makers (ITDMs) reveals a range of changes that are being made to support workers in the evolving hybrid workplace. Quocirca conducted a snapshot study amongst 303 ITDMs across the UK (103) and US (200) in July 2020. Respondents were from organisations with over 500 employees and across a range of vertical sectors (business/professional services, financial services, public sector, manufacturing, retail). With remote working set to increase as offices re-open, IT decision makers are putting measures in place to support productivity and ensure security across a distributed workforce. These include re-evaluating the deployment of MFPs, supporting cloud-based platforms and securing print and digital workflows.

Key findings

- **The acceleration of remote working is well under way.** Before COVID-19, almost 60% indicated that more than a quarter of the workforce worked remotely. This rises to 83% of respondents that indicate that more than a quarter of employees will work remotely once offices re-open.
- **US and UK differ widely on plans and perceptions.** Although e-signatures (60% already implemented overall) and digitisation (58% already implemented overall) come out as the highest priority for both countries, the UK is far more likely to have changed the layout of its print fleet (third highest priority against the US' eleventh) to meet social distancing requirements, while the US is far more likely to have provided approved printers for remote workers (third highest priority against the UK's tenth).
- **US is most positive about printing on return to the office.** UK and US vary considerably in the expected volumes of print on a return to work. 75% of US respondents expect print volumes to remain the same or increase compared to before the pandemic, against 66% in the UK. Such expectations may be due to more US offices already being back at work while the UK has more employees continuing to work from home.
- **Printing showing signs of recovery – but this could be short-lived.** Many statements about why there will be more printing at the office post-pandemic show that respondents are looking at what could be short-term issues, such as catching up with work. Those sectors expecting more remote workers are less positive (due to expecting fewer people in the office, etc). With offices operating at lower capacity even if individuals print more to catch up with work, the overall impact on volumes could be that they soon return to levels that are the same or lower as pre-pandemic.
- **Cloud will be an enabler for the new normal print environment.** The need for a platform that can more easily scale to meet the needs of a hybrid workplace and provide the levels of availability required for such a workforce is becoming more apparent. 49% of respondents state that they have already deployed cloud for print management, with a further 36% planning on doing so.
- **Security is high on the agenda.** Concerns are mounting around home printing. Overall, 83% of respondents state that their IT departments are either very or somewhat concerned over the security of information being printed on home devices. The US is more likely to provide approved devices to employees (59% against 36% in the UK) and to have implemented digital rights management (55% against 41%) in a bid to secure home print devices.
- **Print deployments are being re-evaluated.** Dedicated printers assigned to a single employee may become more common in the US (48% have already done so with 34% planning to do so), as reviews of existing printer fleet deployments continue, particularly around the replacement of centralised A3 printer/copiers with an A4 distributed model (37% overall have done this and 39% plan to do so). 44% of UK respondents and 50% of US respondents indicate that they have already implemented contactless printing.

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Note: throughout this report, the terms ‘pre-pandemic’ and ‘post-pandemic’ have been used. ‘Pre-pandemic’ is used to denote the time before any constraints on the workplace were apparent due to the current COVID-19 pandemic. ‘Post-pandemic’ is used to denote the time when the major constraints are effectively wound down, but certain longer-term issues still remain, such as a need for social distancing, enhanced cleanliness and the possible wearing of face coverings in both public and office environments. ‘Post-pandemic’ is not meant to denote the complete absence of any impact from the COVID-19 virus.