Office Printer Use

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Abstract

In September 2006, InfoTrends conducted a study (sponsored by Hewlett-Packard) to gain an understanding of general office workers' printing behaviors in the U.S. and Western Europe. This study was designed to garner information about the jobs that are printed in terms of frequency, number of pages, and application.

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Understanding Office Printer Use

While office printing is pervasive, the need to better understand current behavior is critical in terms of designing solutions that meet the needs of an evolving market. In late 2006, InfoTrends conducted a study (sponsored by Hewlett-Packard) to gain an understanding of general office workers' printing behaviors in the U.S. and Western Europe. This study was designed to garner information about the jobs that are printed in terms of frequency, number of pages, and the applications used. The data for this document was collected via a Web-based survey that was completed in September 2006. The respondents that participated in this survey all used print devices at work and also worked more than 30 hours per week. This study specifically excluded production printing.

A total of 1,305 respondents participated in this study. Of the total, 730 were from the U.S. and 575 were from Western Europe (221 in the U.K., 221 in France, and 133 in Germany). This sample size provides a high degree of statistical confidence (with the total sample size at a 95% confidence level, results are valid +/- 2.71%).

The Typical Office Print Job

Based on this extensive study, the "typical," "standard," or "most common" print job:

- Consists of 4 pages;

- Is printed from Microsoft Word;

- Is text printed on plain paper, 8.5"x11" or A4 size;

- Is one of 10 jobs printed over the course of the day;

- Would most likely be printed during general business hours between 8 AM and 6 PM;

- Would be printed from "sleep mode" on the printer.

Our conclusion is that for most users, a laser printer would be in "sleep mode" when they need to print a job. This assumption was based on overall data on the size of jobs, the timing of when jobs were printed, and the overall utilization of devices. Even on shared devices, given the overall use pattern, it is most likely that the printer would be in sleep mode when any particular user submitted a job for printing.

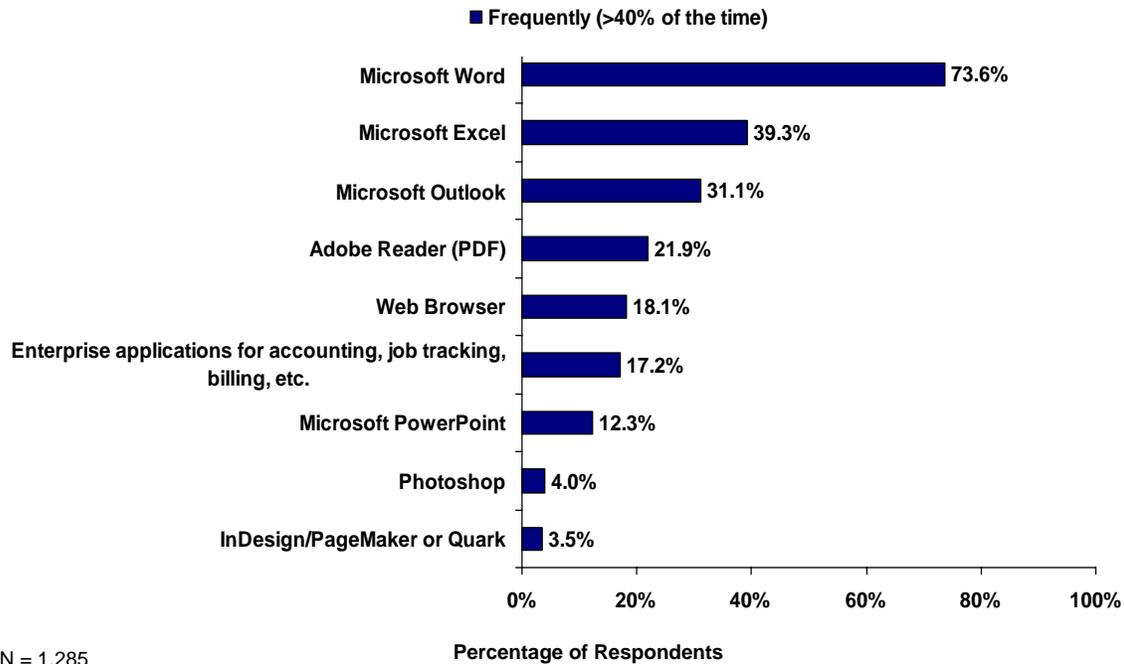### Details on the Typical Office Print Job

The median number of pages in a print job is four, and over 60% of users print an average of 5 pages or less per document. In addition, over 60% of business users reported printing these documents fewer than eleven times per day. As a result, the typical respondent prints about once an hour, but almost 40% print less than 6 times per day (or about once every two hours). Overall, most users reported printing at fairly evenly spaced intervals throughout the day.

The Microsoft suite is by far the most popular application used to generate print jobs. The three applications that are most frequently printed from are Word, Excel, and Outlook. Letters and reports from Word were the most popular documents printed, followed by e-mail correspondence.

To put this use in context, respondents were 1.87 times more likely to print from Word than they were to print from Excel, 2.37 times more likely to print from Word than from Outlook, and 3.4 times more likely to print from Word than from Adobe Reader.

Figure 1 illustrates that over 73% of the respondents frequently print from Microsoft Word. Very few frequently print from professional applications like Adobe PhotoShop or professional graphics programs such as InDesign or Quark. Almost 22% frequently print from PDF, making it the most used non-Microsoft application.

Figure 1: From which of the following applications do your print frequently?

■ Frequently (>40% of the time)

Application	Percentage
Microsoft Word	73.6%
Microsoft Excel	39.3%
Microsoft Outlook	31.1%
Adobe Reader (PDF)	21.9%
Web Browser	18.1%
Enterprise applications for accounting, job tracking, billing, etc.	17.2%
Microsoft PowerPoint	12.3%
Photoshop	4.0%
InDesign/PageMaker or Quark	3.5%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

N = 1,285   **Percentage of Respondents**

Job Attributes

Most documents printed are text only, with over 72% of printed pages falling into this category. Mixed graphics and text account for close to 17% of pages printed. Documents containing photos and text account for 7.3% of pages, and those consisting primarily of photos represent only 3.8%. Users of personal devices were more likely to print text only, while those using shared devices were more likely to print documents with mixed graphics and text.

Plain paper was by far the most commonly used paper. Recycled paper was the second most popular selection, but fewer than half mentioned using it more frequently than bond or plain paper. The most common paper size was 8.5" x 11" (letter size in the U.S.; A4 size in Europe); with over 90% of respondents reporting that they frequently use this size.

The Importance of Energy Efficiency

We asked the 544 respondents who played a role in purchasing printers to indicate the key factors that influenced the purchase of a device. Over one-third of the respondents indicated that energy efficiency plays a role in their decision-making process. Of those, over one-third claimed that energy efficiency was an extremely important product attribute.

Users of Personal Devices

This study found some interesting attributes among the 355 individuals who had a personal printer:

- Those with personal devices were more likely to work longer hours. This is an interesting finding as it relates to factors such as overall productivity and intelligent use of time (e.g. not as much time spent walking to a device or waiting for output).

- Those in senior management and administrative support positions were more likely to have a personal device.

- Those with personal devices were more likely to play a role in the selection and purchase of output equipment.

Users of Shared Devices

Our study also found some interesting attributes among the 950 users of shared devices:

- Those with shared output devices were more likely to work in an office than at home.

- While single-function monochrome laser printers were the most popular, shared device users were more likely than personal device users to have a copier or multifunctional device as their default printer.

- Respondents in Europe were more likely to use a shared device, but shared devices in Europe were generally shared by fewer users than shared devices in the United States.

- Given the length of a common job and the number of times users printed during the day, it is very likely that a shared laser device would be in sleep mode when a given print job was assigned to it

Conclusion

For most users, printing small jobs is a common activity that is typically spread evenly over the course of a day. Most printing is driven from the Microsoft suite and is text-only. Most of the jobs are printed on plain paper that is either letter or A4 size. Given usage patterns and net equipment utilization rates, it is very likely that a laser printer would be in sleep mode when a job is submitted. This makes "instant on" functionality critical. There is also a growing requirement for energy efficiency. InfoTrends believes that this need will be fueled by the increasing cost of energy and growing awareness of the benefits of conservation.