

## Partnership Case Study

London & Country Mortgages Ltd & 1st Office Equipment Ltd

# Multifunctionality is the key to workflow success

**London & Country Mortgages Ltd, based in Bath, is one of the country's leading mortgage brokers and its mission is to find the best mortgages for its clients, in the shortest possible time; and when you consider that it has grown from humble beginnings in 2000, to its current award-winning status, this mission statement can be easily believed.**

There are so many reasons why London & Country has been so successful, but by taking a closer look at a specific area, it is possible to get a feel for the overall picture. Technology, including telephony, plays a key role in the delivery of service to customers, as London & Country do not operate a face to face business model. Without the department's support for the mortgage processing system, keeping staff PCs running smoothly and ensuring that company's telecoms and computer networks are efficient and productive, London and Country would be hard-pressed to function.

Remo Del Greco is London & Country's Head of IT. He has been working at the company since it was established in 2000 and he explains how one aspect of the IT department's responsibilities, its document output support, has developed over the years and made a real difference to the whole company;

"When I first started at London & Country there were about 35 people in the company using a couple of Hewlett Packard printers. We have an in-house developed CRM system which generates many different documents based on complicated templates set up in Word, but they needed to be printed on different types of paper. There were always queues of people waiting to collect their prints and the paper had to be changed often in the limited capacity trays. It was really unproductive and totally inefficient".

It was soon apparent that something needed to be done to improve the conditions and the speed with which documents were printed. Remo takes up the story.

"We took advice from many of the big manufacturers, including Xerox, Canon, HP and even PC suppliers. We had various machines on trial, but none of them worked because the template output information was embedded in the print settings for the original printer and couldn't be transposed to another printer. We wanted to add to our printer stock rather than replace it, and it was beginning to look as if we would need to create different document templates for different printers which would have been a huge task.

A timely conversation on a train from London led me to an office equipment supplier in Bath, called Clark Business Products (now 1st Office Equipment). I had nothing to lose so I decided to call them, explained our predicament and Andrew Jones, Managing Director of Clarks, came to see me."

By chance, one of their suppliers was in the process of developing a solution to transpose printer settings to alleviate this very problem. It was able to convert the output settings from each of the original documents, allowing their printer drivers to manage the printer output correctly so the correct drawers for each print and copy job were selected automatically. What is more the machines were multifunctional, allowing London & Country staff to copy, print and scan on the same machine. It proved to be a god-send, though the full impact of the additional features was not appreciated at the outset.

Soon after 1st Office Equipment installed the first machine, London & Country started to expand its operation and its staff, and with more work being generated, and a highly productive system in place, the copy and print



“London & Country has refined the process to integrate business workflow and the handling of electronic files through its office equipment’s scanning capabilities”

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**1st Office Equipment's Sales & Marketing Director, Andrew Jones (left) with Remo del Greco, London & Country Mortgage's IT Manager (right) at 1st Office Equipment's Bath Showroom.**

volumes increased rapidly, so another machine was added. Our office layout led to one printer being assigned to 32 people, and this ratio has worked well as numbers have increased.

Andrew Jones of 1st Office Equipment also helped to work out the best way for London & Country to save money on their print costs and explains how this was achieved.

"We carried out an intensive analysis and calculated that London & Country staff were generating about 1/3rd of a million prints per year, then they had their maintenance contract on top of that and also the consumables, such as the toners and cartridges. We have now put in place an all-in-deal which covers all of these aspects under one contract".

1st Office also pointed out that the machines could be used for network faxing. Any inbound faxes that come through on the machines can be sent directly to the appropriate individual, saving users time and effort. Outbound faxes can also be sent directly from a user's PC via the multi-functional machine. What is more, individuals have their own personal mailbox on the machines allowing jobs to be saved and collected or printed later, using a personal PIN number. These mailboxes can be accessed from any of the machines in the building.

Together, London & Country and 1st Office have refined the process to integrate the business workflow and handling of electronic files by using the machines'

scanning capabilities. Lender documents are also scanned into the machine and then stored or archived in folders for each mortgage application. Documents such as letters, application forms, bank and passport details can all be scanned in and kept on file for instant access by staff. Emails can be sent back to lenders and internally to staff so processes can be speeded up and actions taken quickly which increases the conversion rate of mortgages.

Recently London & Country made a conscious decision to reduce paper usage. With over 2 million paper documents stored in-house, the space needed was vast. Previously a document was printed and placed into an envelope which was stored within the offices or archived offsite until needed, now they are stored online in folders that can be accessed and amended quickly and efficiently with fewer opportunities for documents to be damaged or lost. By scanning a document, its file size can be compressed down for efficient storage, and it can be effectively shared across the whole organisation.

The mailbox system has been successful in reducing paper waste, but when a particular printer failed all of the print jobs had to be re-sent as there was no facility to redirect the stored jobs to an alternative printer. To improve the situation, 1st Office has recently implemented a server based print management system called Equitrac. Using the same 4 digit code as before, users can now go to any printer at any office and either print all of their stored

jobs, or select individual jobs for printing. This means that when device failures do occur, a user can simply choose a different printer to continue their work. Paper waste has been virtually eliminated but flexibility has been increased.

Summing up Remo says: "It's been a case of the solution finding us, really. When we originally took on the machines, we had a very specific need, but as we have found out what the machines can do, we have made use of their facilities and have found it has helped our operations tremendously in areas we didn't know we needed help. We have built an excellent relationship with 1st Office and they know our business really well.

The bottom line is that we now have an excellent printer stock which is upgraded at regular intervals, it's simple to manage as we pay a fixed fully inclusive price based on page count, and we save a lot of money whilst getting access to host of additional features which have added to our business efficiency. It doesn't get better than that, and with printer output estimated to be well over 6 million pages for 2007, we have a scaleable model that works for us."

London & Country now have 330 staff who use 11 Olivetti d-Copia 500 and d-Copia 500MF models, which copy and print at 50 pages per minute and a full colour multi-functional copier, printer, scanner, the Olivetti d-Color MF25, which offers a speed of 25 prints per minute, in full colour and black and white. This colour model is situated in the Marketing Department but can be used by everyone in the building for printing out reports, documentation and presentations and training and marketing materials in full colour. Remo and Andrew already have plans underway to accommodate further expansion of the business.

