

Delivering exceptional service and simplicity to the European Patent Office



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Mr. P. Fischer, Administrator Operational Services Printing, Scanning, Fax, EPO

Background

The European Patent Office (EPO) manages the application procedure for individuals and companies seeking patent protection in up to 38 European countries. Around 3,000 of the 8,000 staff are examiners – specialist engineers – whose task is to read applications and compare them with prior inventions. If an examiner approves the application, the EPO grants and publishes the patent. From its six offices – in The Hague (head office), Vienna, Brussels, Munich, and two in Berlin – the EPO publishes well over 100,000 patents each year.

The Challenge

The EPO’s business processes are built around paper: when a patent application comes in, EPO staff scan it, print and distribute it to the appropriate EPO departments, and build a physical dossier around it. As the application proceeds, examiners print additional information and add it to the paper dossier. Pierre Fischer, Administrator Operational Services: Printing, Scanning, Fax, European Patent Office, says: “Printing is mission-critical.”

The EPO’s office printing runs to 200 million pages per year, mostly in black and white, on more than 600 printers spread across four countries. But it had on-site printer technicians only in The Hague and Munich, so users in other offices had to deal with printer problems themselves – an inefficient use of resources.

In 2006, the EPO issued an invitation to tender for a managed service to improve the efficiency of its black-and-white printing needs. The EPO had two key requirements – reliability and operational simplicity – to be delivered by:

- Immediate problem alerts, with rapid fault resolution and escalation processes
- An outsourced helpdesk
- Exacting service level agreements (SLAs), including 98 % availability per month per printer
- Regular management reporting
- Compatibility with Xerox FlowPort software already in use for scanning documents
- Compatibility with the custom print drivers within EPO’s specialist applications
- A simple pay-per-page managed service contract, enabled by remote reading of the printer counters

After a year spent testing the offerings from a number of vendors, the EPO chose Xerox because it offered the best combination of service offer, price and reliability.

The Solution

Xerox provided more than 600 new multifunctional units throughout the EPO's offices, providing print, scan and copying functions, plus 27 high-speed, high-volume or industrial-format devices for specialist document production.

The printers are networked and monitored remotely by Xerox Office Suite (XOS) applications. The reports go to a fully managed central helpdesk at the EPO's Rijswijk office that serves all nine sites. The EPO receives reports covering monthly print, copy and scan volumes and incident reports.

The Results

"Installation of the new printers was so smooth that there was not a single complaint during the rollout period," says Fischer. "We now have a state-of-the-art printer infrastructure that provides an extremely reliable service, something that is core to our business."

Printer availability now meets the target of 98% per month. The helpdesks deal with an average of 700 incidents per month generated automatically and referred from the EPO helpdesk, and 70% are resolved without users knowing about them.

"It is all proactively monitored and managed, with clear, accurate and timely management reports providing exactly the data that we need to check that the right level of service is being delivered to our internal customers," says Fischer. "We have clear communications with the Xerox helpdesk. Incidents and complaints are directed to the right place and normally solved without the user being aware or affected."

The management reports also highlight any structural issues, from paper quality to printers that are over- or under-used and would be more appropriate elsewhere in the organisation.

"Overall," says Fischer, "Xerox delivers exactly what we were looking for. By working together collaboratively we have improved the service for our users, and have seen continual improvements. With a service like this it comes down to the people. If the people are good then the service is good, and Xerox ensures all its people are highly trained and experienced."

The Future

The EPO is now looking to optimise all its printing facilities that are not currently provided by Xerox, and is considering appointing Xerox Global Services as the single point of contact for its entire printer and copier infrastructure. The organisation is also considering expanding the current black-and-white printing contract to include standalone scanners and colour printers.

In the longer term, the EPO is looking at new ways in which examiners can work with documents, including increasing the use of electronic documents and remote working. "We're looking to Xerox to take a proactive role in supporting our business as it changes over time," says Fischer. "And we're confident that they will do so."

Case Study Snapshot

The Challenge

- Paper based patent application process
- Annual office print of approximately 200 million pages per year on 600 printers across 4 countries
- Lack of on-site support at some locations
- Required a reliable and operationally simple service

The Solution

- 600 new networked multifunctional devices providing print, copy and scan functionality
- 27 high speed, high volume industrial format devices for specialist document production
- Continuous remote monitoring using Xerox office Services (XOS) toolset
- Fully managed on-site centralised helpdesk providing multinational support
- Detailed monthly management reports

The Results

- Smooth service rollout with no operational interruptions
- State-of-the-art printer infrastructure
- Extremely reliable service meeting SLA target of >98% device level availability
- Helpdesk deals with approx. 700 incidents / month with 70% of incidents solved without users even being aware of them thanks to proactive remote monitoring technology
- Clear, accurate and timely management reports ensuring ongoing service efficiency

About Xerox Global Services. Enterprise Document ServicesSM is our strategic approach to transform your documents to help reduce costs, achieve operational excellence and grow revenue. Through our unique combination of experience, resources and technology, we help integrate and optimize your office environment, high-volume print production and business processes. And it all begins by working with a proven partner.

For more information on how we help public sector organisations, visit www.xerox.co.uk

