



Server-based vs. Workstation-based Print Tracking: Choosing the Right Solution for Your Business

Which approach is right for you?

Companies looking to promote green practices, keep information secure and reduce operating costs can take big steps toward each of these goals by better managing their printer fleets. A necessary component of effective print management is comprehensive print tracking. As with practically every business endeavor, print tracking can be accomplished in multiple ways: on the workstation, on the server or on the output device itself.

The right approach for you will depend on both your networking environment and your specific print tracking requirements and objectives. But it's important to know that your choice of a solution provider doesn't have to lock you into one approach or another — as long as your print tracking solution is provided by Equitrac. At Equitrac, our whole approach to print tracking, print management and cost recovery is to create solutions that fit your environment and your requirements.

Where is the industry headed?

The future of server-based printing is of course one consideration in your approach to print tracking. One indication of the future is that Microsoft, Novell and other operating system and networking technology companies are continuing to develop their products' print server functionality. They know that server-based printing can provide better management and a simplified end-user experience. Drivers are installed once on the server and automatically updated on each workstation; access control lists enable control of who can access each device and when.

On the other hand, some organizations prefer the direct IP model where each workstation prints directly to a networked output device using TCP/IP, without the use of a print server. This eliminates the need to deploy, maintain and support print servers. Network discovery tools let users identify and locate available devices.

Equitrac's Follow-You Printing® capability works in both server-based and workstation-based arrangements, in both cases negating the need for printer discovery. With a single virtual print queue on the server, a user can always print to that queue, and then retrieve printed documents at the most convenient and available device, without having to identify it in the list of print server queues or in the list of direct IP device discovery results. For organizations that prefer direct IP printing, the enhanced Equitrac Professional®, Equitrac Office® and Equitrac Express® workstation clients provide the same automatic discovery capability and the key benefits of server-based Follow-You Printing.

Regardless of your chosen network printing architecture, Equitrac print tracking software enables you to work with either an existing print server infrastructure or with direct IP printing. No single tool fits all environments, and only the Equitrac toolbox has a full set of options available to fit every network.

Do workstation installations really make more sense?

One supposed advantage of workstation-based print tracking is that "all valuable applications" are installed on workstations. That statement ignores key enterprise applications such as mail servers, databases, intranets and extranets, Web servers and thin client centralized computing environments.

Whereas workstation-based print tracking is compatible primarily with Windows and occasionally with Macintosh workstation clients, a server-based print tracking solution can support the full range of network printing clients deployed in today's enterprise, such as the increasingly popular Linux and UNIX desktops.

The truth is there are applications that should run on the desktop and other applications that should run on the server. Again, the right approach for your specific document accounting and print tracking solution depends on your specific environment. By offering both server- and workstation-based tracking capability, Equitrac Professional, Equitrac Office and Equitrac Express provide a solution for your network.

"Equitrac's strategic direction for the new 4.1 versions of Office and Express is to fit into the organization rather than force the customer into its paradigm. By offering both server- and workstation-based print tracking, the company can work with either direct IP printing or existing print-server infrastructures."

~ Buyers Laboratory Inc.



Equitrac Print Tracking Advantage

How accurate is workstation-based tracking?

Typical workstation-based print tracking solutions have significant limitations in the document information they can capture. This, in turn, could limit your ability to effectively manage use or accurately allocate costs. For example, workstation-based solutions cannot accurately track color output at the page level, simplistically assuming instead that each job is either all color or all monochrome.

Additionally, workstation-based solutions cannot determine whether a print job was ever actually printed, or whether it was canceled prior to output. Equitrac's server-based solutions can capture this kind of information by utilizing device feedback from networked printers and MFPs, and then combining it with the rich detail of server-based datastream analysis.

It might seem that the true panacea for the accuracy-of-tracking dilemma would be tracking on the printer or MFP, using an embedded solution, where the controller can determine exactly what was output. And, indeed, the controller can determine that with high precision. But few controllers are capable of authenticating the user of an incoming print job — something that is easily handled by a server-based solution.

However, once again, Equitrac's solutions offer the flexibility of choosing the right tracking method for any given network environment, whether it's based on workstations, servers or embedded device software.

Which approach offers easier installation?

Proponents of workstation-based solutions contend that server-based installations are difficult to install and intrusive on network operations. But consider this: while a server-based solution is typically installed on just a small number of print servers, a workstation-based solution must often be rolled out to hundreds or thousands of individual desktop and laptop systems. This major undertaking can require managing and updating multiple operating systems, whether Windows or Mac OS X, and configuring hardware and systems that may be disconnected or powered off.

Often it is actually the multitude of drivers and applications that intrudes on network operations and drives up IT support requirements. Equitrac's server-based print tracking, on the other hand, operates transparently to users with no discernable impact on network performance — but a measurable reduction in printer-related help desk calls. Where a workstation-based solution is required, however, Equitrac's products still provide fully automated MSI-based installers that can be leveraged by all major software distribution systems.

Are server-based options more expensive — or more cost-effective?

IT directors should be pleased to discover that server-based solutions are not inherently more expensive to operate than workstation-based solutions. And because Equitrac solutions build on the existing network and management infrastructure, whether server-workstation- or device-based, they are in fact among the most cost-effective to deploy. More importantly, Equitrac solutions can actually *reduce* operating costs with features such as Follow-You Printing®, color print quotas, enforced duplexing, least cost network print routing and intelligent device status alerts.

Based on all of this, who offers the most flexible solution?

Even more important than whether a print tracking solution is server- or workstation-based is whether it supports your needs and is fully configurable to your environment. Only Equitrac delivers a comprehensive all-in-one solution that includes not only accurate print job accounting — in both server- and workstation-based approaches — but also copy, scan and fax capture, standards-based security, simplified PIN or card-based authentication, Follow-You Printing® mobility, least cost network print routing, print strategy enforcement, enterprise IT architecture compliance, comprehensive reporting and device monitoring.

For more information on the advantages of Equitrac server- and workstation-based print tracking solutions, contact your Equitrac representative, write to sales@equitrac.com or visit equitrac.com.



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