



Time to be ‘tangle-free’

Tired of tripping, ripping cords from the wall? There is a better way

Cheryl Hentz

How often have you needed to plug in — or, worse yet, unplug a piece of office equipment — only to be shocked and confused by the vast array of wires and cords under your desk? (It’s happened to me more often than I care to admit!) But it doesn’t have to be that way. As advances in technology are made, so are ways to eliminate some of the cords that at one time existed for every device in the office.

There was a trend a few years ago, for example, for each employee to have his or her own printer; the thought process being that the printers were very inexpensive or even free with the purchase of a computer and that workers might be more productive because they wouldn’t be getting up and going to a printer all the time.

“But they were very expensive

to operate and maintain; plus there was also a clutter factor with them, and that involved a lot of cords ... So we’ve seen a wide adoption moving to the copier/printer multi-functional device because of those very reasons,” says Paul Giesen, manager of the Enterprise Consulting Service for Modern Business Machines, Appleton. “We’re also seeing people move away from scanners and those have always been heavily wired. You’d have to have about three cables or cords for one scanner. But now, instead of stand-alone scanners, people are using copiers because pretty much all of them nowadays have the ability to scan. People doing that kind of work are using the copier as their scan source, which is eliminating the need for specialty or individual scanners.”

Eliminating the need for sepa-

rate scanning devices not only eliminates a lot of excess wires and cords, it also frees up space in your office footprint.

"I deal with a lot of hospitals, for example, and in places like that space is at a premium," says Mike Erato, strategic account executive, IKON Office Solutions, Appleton and Milwaukee. "Plus when you've got multi-functional devices, it's less things your IT department has to manage, and your cost-per-page expenses are less. Not to mention the fact that scanning comes at zero cost. It's more efficient and cost-effective all the way around."

There are software programs available today that allow you to scan and save documents right to your computer without having to do more than touch a button on either a multifunctional device or a copier. That also eliminates the need for multiple scanning devices at a number of work stations or at every person's desk.

"You still need a hardware device to do the scanning but multiple devices can certainly be connected wirelessly," says Peter Porrey, solution engineer for Northeast Photocopy, Green Bay. "So a scanner could be parked in the middle of a room with no wires going to it other than the power cord."

A lot of companies are implementing network fax servers to eliminate faxes in the company. Faxes can come in electronically; they never have to be printed out at all.

"We're also working with companies to do electronic invoicing and generating purchase orders electronically and then having those things stored automatically, electronically. They never go on paper and are all digitally

stored. Not only do these things eliminate a lot of storage space, but they are able to eliminate, in some cases, a printer or a fax machine, and that helps to reduce some of the clutter of wires," says Giesen.

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IKON Office Solutions

Of course, one way to eliminate the most wires and cables is to be totally wireless. Not many businesses are going totally wireless at this time, however, says Erato.

"So many of them have so many network printers in place and they have so many network drops, that being wireless isn't really needed. They're eliminating a lot of the assets on the network and they're eliminating a lot of cabling, but they haven't had the need to look at wireless

yet," he says. "But for a new business that's going in, that doesn't have a lot of the network drops in place and that is probably going to be doing a lot of wireless anyway, that would be the way to go."

Fritz Merizon, president and general manager of Modern Business Machines, says his own office has a secured network that their employees use and it not only gets rid of a lot of wires, it gives employees the freedom to be productive anywhere in the building.

"So they can take their laptop from their office to a conference room, to a training room, to a display area where they can meet with a customer. They've got the same level of access and functionality, but wirelessly," Merizon says. "On the shared equipment side, however, we still keep all of that cable because it's more productive; it works at a higher transmission speed, especially if you're sending graphical images to be printed or that type of thing. You get much better performance because those are typically much bigger files and usually you're running at a higher speed on the wired side."

Wireless is growing faster in some businesses than in others, says Porrey.

"We see everything from wireless telephones with Internet access to some businesses that use wireless within the building to connect their PCs and servers, especially in areas where they can't get wire to different parts of a building," Porrey explains. "It's true that it's been a little bit slow to gain speed, but it certainly is available and I believe it's the next real step where networking is going." **MP**