

Integrated Solutions

Cementing relationships with your customers

by: Bill Flesch, Gordon Flesch Company Inc.

In today's office technology environment, it is now recognized that office technology dealers must do everything they can to give their customers the tools that will help them get their jobs done as easily and efficiently as possible. As it continues to rapidly bridge the gap between the digital and paper worlds, technology allows more efficient management of files along with the ability to better integrate the information they contain into the normal, but critical, everyday workflow.

Most organizations lack the resources to independently identify technology strategies for correcting inefficiencies and addressing opportunities for improving their business processes. Dealers can play a key role in updating and streamlining customers' technology. In doing so, dealers can provide the benefits of keeping their customers on the cutting edge, laying the groundwork for continuous improvement and further cementing the relationship between customer and dealer.

As part of the continued explosion in technology, dealerships need to provide more than a collection of traditional, off-the-shelf equipment and software. They should also offer more customized solutions that can link and tailor multifunction equipment and software to support very specific, individual functions within the context of a company's business processes. Customization offers new opportunities to increase a customer's productivity and reduce costs



by reducing the number of hours the customer's staff members typically spend performing document management and distribution operations and allowing them to focus on their core business.

The evolving trends in office technology are helping drive increased integration possibilities. The office copier that prints, faxes and scans now also has an embed-

ded programming platform that allows virtually limitless customizations. That is why dealerships should focus their developmental, partnering or purchasing efforts on equipment with turnkey software and connectors that are easy to install and use. As a result, client companies can immediately reap the benefits of their solutions and, when customizing is required to complete the workflow, the tools are there. Bottom line: office technology continues to provide more tools to better serve productivity.

The Paradigm Shift

That said, we are now in a time of total paradigm shift in the way dealerships must sell and market their products. Dealers must recognize that they should not be just selling copiers, printers or scanners anymore. They need to be business consultants — recommending and selling multifunction devices, application software system connectors and the customized programs to tie them all together. In addition, dealers should be selling professional services and ongoing customer support to keep the

total, integrated solution current and operating smoothly.

Like in many other industries, office technology dealers should be shifting from product selling to solutions selling. This could be a very difficult transition for many in the business. Dealers must commit to investing in the infrastructure and the technical personnel required to provide these solutions and services.

There are countless software packages being created, but the specialty software houses doing much of the development many times simply do not have the infrastructure to support the solutions. There are only a handful of these that are anywhere close to where they should be — and need to be — to provide not only the programming services but the long-term support.

The Market Continues to Expand

Document management is a business process found in any size organization in any industry. Some of the customized, vertical software solutions that have emerged very quickly include insurance, medical, legal, title and mortgage applications. These are industries in which companies handle large amounts of paperwork and spend a lot of “person hours” handling that paper. Also, there will be creative applications that dealers are going to be exposed to based on some emerging and very unique business process requirements of their customers, prospects and partners.

Within these high-volume document markets and others that are constantly emerging dealerships have the greatest opportunity to provide customized, integrated solutions. Larger dealerships, like the Gordon Flesch Company, have the infrastructure necessary to provide solution consulting, hardware, software and critical ongoing and long-term technical support onsite, remotely and by telephone.

Through an established organizational infrastructure, a dealership can offer the benefits of a fully supported solution. When implemented and supported properly, customized and integrated solutions can ensure continued, long-term commitments and relationships with all your valued customers. The reason? Because your dealership is the one that provides the unique solution; it is the only one the customer turns to.

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Focus on the Customer

Technology that enables customized, integrated solutions should be embraced by dealers everywhere. It provides limitless opportunities as we stay focused on the business needs of our customers’ and prospects’ unique needs. The payoff will be huge. Think about it. Through advancing technology, dealerships can help customers:

- Integrate document management smoothly with existing applications;
- Empower their staff to share information more effectively;
- Provide intelligent, fast document search, retrieval and distribution;
- Reduce paper-related costs;
- Enforce consistent records policies across the organization;
- Ensure long-term document accessibility and preservation;
- Adhere to and simplify compliance in multi-regulatory environments.

As time passes and we become more familiar with how to develop and sell these customized, integrated solutions, we will have a tool kit full of software and connectors that allow us to interface into many different products and networks in an office environment.

Likewise, as dealerships become more adept in creating software applications, whether they are vertical or horizontal, dealership sales professionals can put in a “custom tailored solution.” A sales professional can take those solutions to customers and say, “Here is a complete solution that we fully support. You don’t have to interface with computer hardware vendors. You don’t have to interface with a customer support phone number that takes you somewhere else. You know it’s a complete solution tailored for you by a trusted supplier who will provide long-term support.” ■

Bill Flesch is vice president of Gordon Flesch Company Inc., based in Madison, Wis. Founded in 1956, it has grown to become one of the largest independent dealerships in the United States and employs more than 800 people working from seven branch locations and 12 satellite offices. Visit www.gflesch.com.

