

A guide to switching tech suppliers

Risk mitigation strategies
for changing your MPS supplier

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Is it worth the risk?

Brother recently carried out research examining the priorities businesses have when choosing a new managed print services (MPS) supplier. We spoke to over 400 IT and business decision makers to understand their experience with MPS and their reasons for switching. As a result, we've created this handy guide to help decision makers mitigate the risks of changing MPS supplier and make the transition to a new solution a success.

Businesses thrive on certainty, so it's understandable that change of any kind is treated with caution. Switching your technology provider is a big decision, one that can be helped with a clear understanding of all the facts. The IT professionals we spoke to had lots of different reasons for switching, whether based on costs or poor service. What's perhaps surprising is that many did not have an exact understanding of what managed print services are. It shows that even the most experienced IT specialists may benefit from having a supportive, expert technology provider at their side to help deliver a best-fit solution for their organisation.

However, I was encouraged to discover that very few businesses we spoke to actually had negative experiences with their MPS provider. Implementing a managed print service is generally seen as a positive process. What we've tried to do with this guide is ensure you have the information needed to facilitate as seamless a switch as possible. From starting with a thorough understanding of your requirements to providing adequate training and scheduling regular reviews, read on to see how to minimise risks and make your managed print service a success. And if you'd like to learn more about Brother's approach to MPS, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Mike Mulholland

Head of services and solutions, Brother UK





Risk 1: It's unknown

Our research showed that not everyone had a clear understanding of what MPS really is. So a definition is probably a good place to start. Unlike investing in hardware alone, managed print services incorporate an organisation's print, scan and copy requirements into a unified service delivered by the provider. This service typically includes setting up hardware, supplying ink and toner, reviewing performance, maintaining machines and providing strategic advice and technical support. The benefits of choosing a managed print service include greater cost efficiency and organisational productivity, as well as future-proofed security functionality.

How to mitigate the risk of uncertainty:

● Define your requirements thoroughly

It can really help to get your exact needs down on paper so providers can create the most suitable solution for you. Being as detailed as you can will benefit you in the long run.

● Get help with the sell-in

If you're not an expert yourself, it can be hard to get across the benefits of MPS to a wider business audience. Your provider should give you concrete evidence of the gains MPS will offer, so you can convince other stakeholders of the merits of managed print.

● Test things first

Add an element of certainty by ensuring your provider carries out user acceptance testing to prove your MPS solution will work out in the real world, not just on paper.

“I deal with a lot of suppliers and they are one of the most switched on, attentive and helpful.”

Risk 2: Escalating Costs

The process of switching might involve an increase in costs in the short term due to outlays on equipment and the introduction of monthly print payments. But rest assured that these initial increases will be outweighed by the decrease in operational expenses over the life of the contract. Many providers will also allow you to lease equipment, rather than paying outright, to fit into your budgets.

How to mitigate the risk of escalating costs:

Make use of reviews

One of the key benefits a managed print service gives you is better visibility over costs and usage. By building in regular reviews with your supplier, you can understand where cost efficiency opportunities exist and evolve your service as you go.

Create the right balance

By understanding the exact requirements of each area of the business you can put the right printers with the right functionality in the right places (something we call 'Balanced Deployment'). This helps to eliminate hidden efficiency problems such as people queuing for printers or those who only need mono documents printing in colour.

Think beyond print

A managed print service can contribute to wider business goals and efficiencies. Suppliers like Brother offer services such as free toner recycling to help you eliminate disposal costs and work towards your sustainability targets.



62%
ranked cost as a key
motivator to find a
new supplier



Risk 3: Disruption

Nearly half of the respondents in our survey cited the possibility of disruption as a key concern when switching. While disruption is likely to be minimal for smaller fleets, a larger rollout is where a good supplier really comes into their own. You should expect detailed, evidence-based plans, and partners who are willing to offer the reassurance you need.

How to mitigate the risk of disruption:

● Ensure staff are properly trained

With lots of printers offering simple 'plug and play' functionality, smaller rollouts often need little introduction. However, some larger, multifunction technology can be hard to get a handle on, so make sure your MPS comes with staff training to minimise disruption. Some suppliers will even write staff manuals or provide drop-in sessions.

● Choose a supplier that works around you

Options such as out-of-hours delivery can ensure the day-to-day running of your business isn't interrupted by the arrival of new technology.

● Keep integration in mind

Sit down with your supplier before delivery to discuss all of your existing systems. By listing out all the technology your new print service will need to integrate with at the start, you can eliminate problems down the line.

45%
businesses cite
disruption as the
primary concern
when switching

83%
Smaller
companies
switch every
1-3 years

60%
Larger
companies
switch every 3-5
or more years

Risk 4: Poor service

In our survey, easy access to support was seen as the most important factor for businesses implementing a new managed print service. However good technology is, poor service from a supplier can have a real impact on users' experience and add to an already extensive IT workload.

How to mitigate the risk of poor service:

Insist on the right types of support

Service can involve everything from training to the way your supplier disposes of old equipment. Discuss all these things upfront and make clear your expectations in each area.

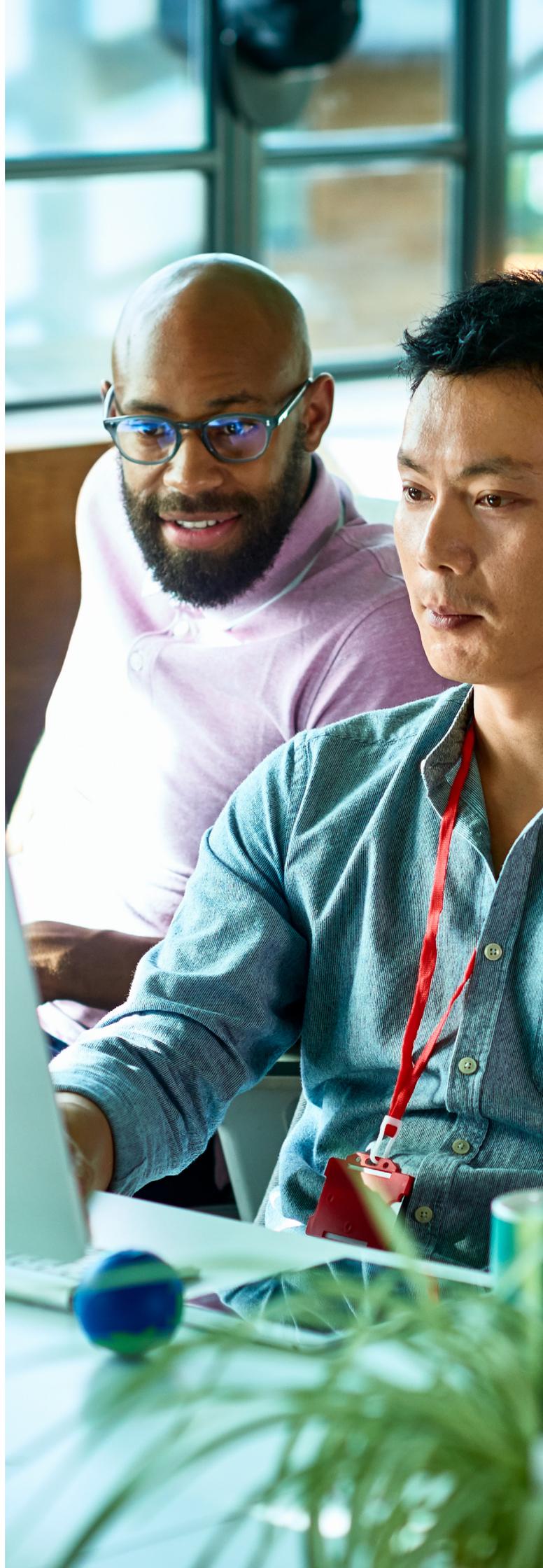
Tie down those SLAs

Your SLAs should be based on a thorough audit of the needs of your business, rather than off the shelf from your supplier. If things like out-of-hours helpdesk support are important, make sure it forms part of your SLA.

Expect the worst

It's a fact of life that technology goes wrong sometimes. What matters is how your supplier responds. Make sure you get a clear guarantee on how they will solve problems, so that if the worst happens, you get the support you need.

“The team are like gold dust to me; they are very useful. They fully engage with us and take everything on board.”



Risk 5: Security

Printers are often forgotten as high-risk targets for security breaches. Whether it's hackers accessing network files or confidential documents being left on in-trays, a good print service should cover you against a wide range of security problems.

How to mitigate the risk of security problems:

Start on a secure footing

A good supplier will carry out an organisation-wide assessment to identify the print and IP security risks your organisation faces. That way any MPS plan they create can take these into account and protect you from the start.

Make the most of hardware

Many modern printers come with excellent security features built in. Look for devices with options such as secure function lock, automatic intrusion detection and PIN-protected printing.

Wreck yourself to check yourself

If you really want to understand how secure your system is, ask your supplier to arrange for an ethical hacker to stress test it. The results could enable you to make improvements to your network security.

54%
of IT decision
makers switch
because of reduced
security in design



Conclusion

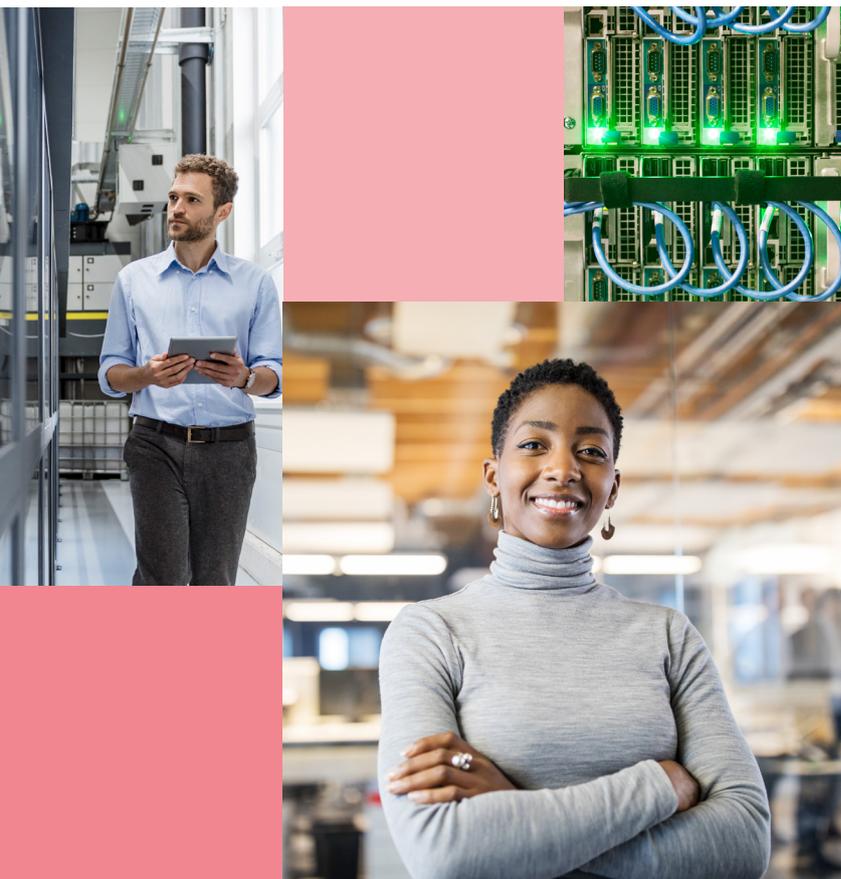
As we've explored in this guide, switching MPS supplier doesn't have to be risky. It's clear that the better a supplier knows your business, the better they will be at responding to the challenges it faces. Your initial audits and discussions offer a great chance to air your own concerns and ideas to ensure your final service fits your needs exactly. Anything that hasn't been built around the unique nature of your business risks failing, so don't accept an off-the-shelf solution.

One of the great advantages of managed print is the extra visibility it gives your business. It makes sense to use this to your advantage and shape the service to your needs. Sit down with your supplier every quarter or so to take stock of your usage and how it's working for you.

There is a key thread running through all of the best managed print services, and that is a supportive supplier. Choose a provider who truly listens to your concerns and flexes to accommodate them. While you can never completely remove that feeling of uncertainty, finding a supplier who is the right fit for you as a decision maker will ensure you have a managed print service that's the right fit for your business.

Looking for a stress-free way to switch suppliers?

We've created **this helpful blog post detailing ways you can make your transition as smooth as possible**. From building the right service to getting staff on-board, it'll help you have a positive experience from the start to the end of the process. And if you'd like to learn more about how Brother can help your business with an effective and efficient managed print service, **take a look at our website or get in touch with our team**.



“ Switching MPS supplier doesn't have to be risky. ”

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at your side

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