

Lexmark consolidates printers, adds unique tactical logistics capabilities and executes a global service and support model to help the U.S. Army reduce printing costs, solve output challenges and give military personnel timely access to critical logistics information.

U.S. Army improves military operations with Lexmark technology

The Organization

Headquartered in Fort Belvoir, Va., the Army's Program Executive Office Enterprise Information Systems (PEO EIS) department provides "infostructure and information management systems enabling the U.S. Army to achieve victory through information dominance."

PEO EIS, whose technology budget is the largest in the Army, makes sure information gets to nearly 50,000 warfighters where and when they need it. The department is responsible for the computer network, including PCs, laptops, networking equipment and printers, used by approximately 50,000 military personnel. To serve these soldiers effectively, PEO EIS must be able to move its people and IT equipment quickly and safely anywhere in the world.

Lexmark has worked closely with PEO EIS over many years to help solve a series of output-related technology challenges that have made a difference in the country's military efforts - all while saving taxpayer dollars.

The Challenge

Imagine all the communications and technology equipment required to keep a military operation up and running. Now imagine having to move it all safely from one country to another within days. This scenario isn't uncommon, especially as operations in the Middle East continue and as technology plays an even more critical role in the country's wartime strategy.

Printers serve many mission-critical purposes in these cases, including supply inventory management, reporting and more. One of the primary reports the department prints is a daily supply logistics report which provides an inventory of bullets, tanks, Humvee parts and all other Army equipment in a single, lengthy report.

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—Karen Ailstock
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But the main challenge for PEO EIS was improving printer adaptability to foreign environments and improving printer performance, particularly among high-volume printing applications.

With soldiers deploying around the world, printing equipment has to be compatible with a variety of voltage levels. One country may require 110-volt, another 220-volt. While most PCs and laptops have power adapters that can handle different voltages, up until recently,



printers were built specifically for 110- or 220-volt environments to accommodate sensitive fusing technologies.

Consequently, soldiers provisioned two types of printers when traveling overseas. This was a redundant, costly, time-consuming and space-taking proposition. In some cases, equipment was damaged or rendered unusable as a result of being connected at the wrong voltage.

Lexmark worked closely with the U.S. Army on each of these challenges and responded with specific recommendations on how Lexmark could solve them and make operational improvements along the way.

Secondly, PEO EIS sought ways to expedite the printing of large documents in Army offices where inventory reports were produced. ULLS and SAMS, two systems under the purview of PEO EIS, track massive supply inventories that keep all aspects of operations functioning.

Daily reports – detailed inventory lists – previously required hours of printing on loud and slow dot matrix printers. These devices were expensive to operate and were prone to breakdown, especially in high humidity areas such as the desert.

Third, PEO EIS oversees technology used in Army retail supply environments. To get barcodes on labels for products and inventory procedures, the Army relied on special dot matrix label printers in its stores and retail operations. The label printers were deployed in addition to other printers that were used for other store operations, adding extra equipment, cost and maintenance burdens.

Finally, encompassing all of the Army's IT initiatives, service and support were of paramount concern. Any printer vendor selected to provide equipment to the U.S. Army had to be able to service and replace the devices quickly and reliably from anywhere in the world.

The Solution

The unique requirements of the U.S. Army required unique solutions from Lexmark. Commercial, off-the-shelf devices just weren't sufficient. Lexmark worked closely with the U.S. Army on each of these challenges and responded with specific recommendations on how Lexmark could solve them and make operational improvements along the way.

When approached about the need for voltage-adaptable printers in hostile environments, Lexmark took a decidedly non-standard approach. It was clear that sending two nearly identical printers onto the battlefield was not an advisable option for the troops. As a result, Lexmark developed the first-ever dual power supply laser printer. The printer is capable of operating in both 110- or 220-volt environments.

"Weight, size, reliability and speed are important to our soldiers in the field," said Karen Ailstock, Senior Analyst, U.S. Army, PEO EIS, PM Logistics Information Systems. "Moving printers can be a cumbersome task. Many of Lexmark's competitors just didn't understand our requirements and weren't willing to make the necessary changes. Lexmark took the time to understand our mission and then made recommendations and, actually changes, to its devices to meet our needs," she said.

Lexmark's engineering team worked closely with the U.S. Army to understand its requirements and delivered a clever and unique solution to meet them. The printer is also capable of withstanding

PEO EIS supports a number of critical systems including:

- Standard Army Maintenance System (SAMS) which automates day-to-day weapons systems
- Standard Army Retail Supply System (SARSS) which provides supply management and stock control at the Army retail level
- Unit Level Logistics System (ULLS) which automates organizational level supply, maintenance, property accountability, readiness, and unit status reporting functions in tactical units
- Standard Property Book System-Redesign (SPBS-R) and Property Book Unit Supply Enhanced (PBUSE) which provide an interactive automated property accountability, asset visibility and management reporting system for unit/organizational property and equipment
- Integrated Logistics Analysis Program (ILAP) which provides a standard Army management tool that collects, integrates and displays logistics and financial data

severe climate conditions including extreme humidity, cold and sand. The printer itself is also smaller, so it can be transported easily.

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To speed inventory report print jobs, Lexmark replaced the dot matrix printers with new Lexmark laser printers. Lexmark also mapped PEO EIS’ legacy mainframe data to be able to be printed on a laser printer instead of on a dot matrix printer.

Previously, daily inventory reports took 20 minutes to produce. Now, with the new Lexmark printers, reports are completed in less than one minute. The 500% speed improvement has helped spur the deployment of these printers at U.S. National Guard offices in nearly all 50 states. In addition, reliability has increased, noise levels have decreased and readability of the reports has been improved.

Finally, to consolidate retail label printing to one laser printer, Lexmark installed barcode cards on the Army’s laser printers and added two additional paper drawers. Now, a single printer is used to print MRO labels, barcode labels and other standard documents or reports from each individual tray on a single printer.

This approach helped PEO EIS reduce printing hardware costs by nearly 66 percent, while simplifying the equipment required in each store. Additionally, the cost per page has been reduced significantly versus the previous dot matrix solution.

Underlying all of Lexmark’s solutions for the U.S. Army is a sophisticated service and support model that ensures equipment can be repaired or replaced to the Army’s specifications anywhere in the world.

The Results

Lexmark’s strategic approach to understanding the Army’s unique requirements has led to a long-term relationship with this important arm of the nation’s military operation. The partnership between Lexmark and the Army continues to help streamline military technology operations at home and overseas, in times of both war and peace.

Since its initial engagement in 2000, Lexmark has rolled out more than 20,000 printers to PEO EIS operations in the U.S. and abroad.