

Mobile phone retailer cuts expenses, boosts reliability and enhances its corporate image with laser printers and MFPs from Lexmark.

## A-Link Wireless dials up a new corporate image with Lexmark color lasers and MFPs

### The Organization

A-Link Wireless LLC is a fast-growing reseller of mobile phones and services. As an Exclusive Premier Agent for AT&T Wireless™ (formerly Cingular), the Michigan-based company is expanding into new territories, including Arizona, California and Nevada.

### The Challenge

Though mobile phones are all about talk, ringtones and text messaging, it is paper, in the form of customer contracts and sales materials that forms the foundation of the industry. Growing to 50 locations from 30 in little more than a year, all through acquisition, A-Link found itself generating lots of paper on a fleet of aging printers from several different manufacturers. Each time A-Link signs up a new customer in its storefront or mall kiosk locations, the sales associate prints three copies of a five-page contract and sales receipt.

“We inherited printers barely two years old that were already failing and in need of frequent repair, especially those using solid-ink technology,” said Matt Rogers, A-Link’s Computer & Network Systems Administrator. Other printers often jammed, creating even more problems when store personnel attempting to clear the problem broke off parts from the fuser. “We needed our staff concentrating on sales and customer service, not dealing with troublesome printers,” he said.

As A-Link began a project to replace its entire printer fleet, a key requirement was the ability to print in high-quality yet affordable color. “We wanted to print on plain paper to control our expenses, but we also believed it was important to print our logo in color and to provide our customers with paperwork that makes a professional and sophisticated impression. We couldn’t do that in just black and white,” said Rogers. To save additional money while providing a consistent experience throughout its stores, A-Link wanted the ability to print flyers, banners and price cards

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—Matt Rogers  
Computer & Network Systems Administrator  
A-Link Wireless  
Detroit, Michigan

in full color on location from files created by designers at its Michigan headquarters.

In its mall kiosk locations where every square inch counts, combining print, copy, fax and scan capabilities into a single, space-saving solution was the overriding requirement. Typically less than 100 square feet in size, the kiosk locations have just enough space for two staffers to work and display its products. Losing valuable space to separate pieces of equipment was out of the question.



### The Solution

To meet its requirements for in-store color, reliability and affordability, A-Link Wireless chose mid-size color laser printers from Lexmark. After conducting an analysis against competing offerings, A-Link determined that Lexmark's total cost of ownership was the most favorable.

Perfect for businesses with modest color printing requirements, Lexmark's desktop color lasers deliver rich, high-quality color output at up to 22 pages per minute. With built-in color cost-saving features and an intuitive operator panel, Lexmark color lasers integrate seamlessly into any existing network environment. Toner cartridges yielding up to 7,000 color and 8,000 monochrome pages make replacement very infrequent so that sales associates can focus on customer service.

"A key benefit is the easy network setup that only required setting the correct IP address," said Rogers. "The intuitive operator panel and keypad eliminated the need for in-store training."

For its mall kiosk locations, A-Link selected a space-saving, desktop-size MFP from Lexmark. With a high-quality business-class monochrome laser printer at their core, Lexmark MFPs include a printer, document scanner, copier and fax in a single, space-saving unit. In the cramped kiosks, switching to an MFP from having several devices gave sales associates more room to work.

All of A-Link's Lexmark devices are covered by one blanket maintenance plan that reduces expenses through an economy of scale and assures same-day response in the event that a technician is needed.

### The Results

With more than two dozen color printers already deployed, A-Link says the devices have performed flawlessly. "When we open the stores each morning, these devices are ready to work and require virtually no warm-up time," said Rogers. Instant readiness eliminated the waiting time the company's older solid-ink printers required as the ink was heated to the melting point each morning.

Customers are benefitting from faster print times, crisp text and full-color documents that enhance readability and comprehension. "Color is critical when dealing with the public," Rogers said. "With our Lexmark color lasers, we generate a professional image at an affordable cost."

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A-Link is benefitting from lower costs, higher reliability and an enhanced corporate image.

In its mall kiosks, where space is at a premium, the Lexmark desktop MFPs have allowed A-Link to reclaim valuable square footage once used by standalone fax machines. Even more compact than MFPs of just a few years ago, the Lexmark devices feature a front-loading toner cartridge and need almost no side clearance, helping A-Link further maximize the space used for holding product inventory.

As A-Link opens new locations, color printers or MFPs are shipped directly to the store or kiosk and are placed under the existing maintenance agreement. "Lexmark personnel have been there to support us and answer questions every step of the way, both before and long after the sale," said Rogers. "We could have purchased printers from a half dozen different manufacturers, but Lexmark has become much more of a valuable partner to us. They are a partner making sure we are satisfied," he said.

For A-Link Wireless, placing a call to Lexmark was the right number.