

The New Identity Crisis

Don't sell new services with old messaging

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For decades, office technology dealers have built successful businesses around print. Multifunction devices, managed print services, supplies and service contracts have formed the foundation of the industry. Customers knew exactly who you were, what you sold and why you mattered.

Today, the industry is looking very different. Across the country, dealers have expanded beyond print into managed IT services, cybersecurity, digital document management, workflow automation, cloud solutions, AI readiness consulting, communications platforms and other recurring-revenue offerings. As print volumes decline and customer technology needs continue to evolve, you and your fellow dealership leaders recognize these services as critical growth opportunities.

However, with this evolution comes an unexpected challenge that you may have overlooked. While your service portfolios have changed, your market perception has not. And that is a major problem.

Customers may see new capabilities listed on your website or hear them mentioned during a sales conversation, but many still associate you with one thing: copiers. This disconnect is creating what may be the industry's newest growth challenge: an identity crisis.

The Industry Evolved Faster Than Its Messaging

You have done the difficult part already. You invested in talent, acquired companies, developed new service lines and expanded your technology expertise. But like many organizations, you may have never fully updated the story you tell the market.

Your website still leads with equipment. Your messaging still focuses on products rather than business outcomes. Your marketing materials often position managed IT and other new services as secondary offerings rather than strategic solutions. As a result, prospects frequently struggle to understand the full value your dealership can provide.

The challenge is not your lack of capabilities. It is that



buyers do not yet connect those capabilities with your brand. Adding a service line does not automatically change customer perception.

Why This Hurts Growth

When you are known primarily for print, every new service sale starts with a steep uphill battle. Prospects may wonder: "Why is a copier dealership offering cybersecurity?

What expertise does it have in managed IT? Can it really support our advancing technology environment? How long has it been providing these services?"

These questions create friction. Trust takes longer to build. Sales cycles become more complicated. Cross-selling opportunities are missed. Marketing campaigns generate awareness, but fail to generate confidence.

Meanwhile, competitors that are already perceived as IT providers or workflow specialists enter the conversation with established credibility. The issue is not service quality; it is your positioning.

Four Ways You Can Modernize Your Messaging

(1) Lead With Business Outcomes, Not Service Categories — Many dealership websites list services like managed IT, cybersecurity, cloud solutions and workflow automation. While accurate, these descriptions focus on what you do rather than why customers should care. Messaging should focus on outcomes:

- Reducing downtime
- Improving security
- Eliminating technology bottlenecks
- Increasing employee productivity
- Simplifying operations

Business leaders do not buy services. They buy outcomes. Put yourself in your clients' shoes. Would you rather hear a list of workflow automation features, or learn how your team can eliminate bottlenecks, reduce frustration and get hours back every week?

Your customers care less about what your solution does and more about what it does for them.

(2) Create Content That Demonstrates Expertise — Customers need evidence before they change their perception of your company. Thought leadership can help close that gap. You should consistently educate your audience about topics such as:

- Cybersecurity threats
- AI adoption
- Digital transformation
- Compliance requirements
- Workflow optimization
- Holistic technology strategies

The objective is not promotion — it is becoming a trusted advisor. And to do that, it is imperative to also show social proof, such as customer reviews, testimonials and case studies to demonstrate your authority and experience in the industry. When prospects repeatedly encounter valuable insights and social proof from you, they begin to view your business in a new light.

(3) Define What You Want to Be Known For — One of the biggest mistakes you can make is trying to market every service equally. The result is often a confusing and overwhelming message. Instead, you should ask, “What do we want customers to immediately think of when they hear our name in three years?” The answer is not “everything,” but it could be:

- Workplace technology optimization
- Secure digital workflows
- Managed technology services
- Business process automation
- IT and print convergence

A focused position is easier for the market — and search engines — to understand and remember. To do this, you need to have a strong and specific unique selling proposition (USP), which is a detailed statement that shares how your business helps clients in a unique way. This is the statement that sets you apart from competitors.

Try writing your USP using this formula: “We help [industry/company size] reduce [specific technology frustration] by [unique way you deliver service], so they can [business outcome they care about].”

Here is an example of a strong and specific USP statement: “We help midsize commercial businesses eliminate downtime and unexpected IT costs by combining managed print and IT support into a single service model so your team can focus on work, not workarounds.”

(4) Align Sales & Marketing Around the Same Story —

Dealerships that successfully evolve their messaging achieve something much more valuable than awareness. They change how the market sees them.

Many diversification efforts fail because your departments tell different stories. Marketing promotes innovation. Sales conversations revolve around devices. Customer service talks about support tickets. Leadership discusses strategic transformation. The result is a fragmented brand experience.

Every customer-facing team should be able to clearly explain:

- Why the company expanded
 - What problems it now resolves
 - How its expertise has evolved
 - Why customers should trust those new capabilities
- Consistency is what ultimately changes perception.

The Payoff: Becoming a Technology Advisor

Dealerships that successfully evolve their messaging achieve something much more valuable than awareness. They change how the market sees them. Instead of being viewed as equipment providers, they become strategic technology partners. Conversations about managed IT, cybersecurity, workflow automation, cloud solutions and AI become more natural because customers already expect those services to be part of the discussion. Marketing becomes more efficient. Cross-selling becomes easier. Recurring revenue services gain traction faster. And, perhaps most importantly, your business becomes less dependent on print volume and hardware margins alone.

The Identity Gap

The challenge facing today’s office technology dealerships is not finding new services to sell — most have already done that. The real challenge is helping customers understand what they have become.

The dealerships that thrive during the next phase of industry transformation will not simply diversify their service offerings. They will deliberately reshape their identities, ensuring that their market perception matches their business reality. Diversification does not truly begin when a new service is added. It begins when customers believe you are the right company to deliver it. ■

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