Using color access controls to maximize value

Controlling access to color doesn't just mean limiting access. It also means monitoring how color is used and tracking its usage.

Organizations that are incorporating color into their printing and imaging environments would like to be able to control access to color printing in order to maximize the return on their investments in color. This doesn't simply mean limiting access to color, or placing controls on who uses color and who does not, although there is certainly value for some organizations in being able to do just that. But controlling access to color also means being able to monitor how color is used and to track usage by a variety of criteria, in order to make informed decisions that affect operational efficiency. And for some organizations, controlling access to color may also mean accurately determining color usage in order to bill clients or internal users for their usage. Applying color access controls in any or all of these ways enables organizations to use color as effectively and cost-efficiently as possible.

Three categories of color access control

HP has identified three key categories of color access control and developed its color access control suite of features to address these areas:

1. **Monitoring and awareness**
2. **Managing access to color**
3. **Job tracking and billing**

1. Monitoring and awareness

Many organizations will benefit from the ability to track, rather than strictly limit, the use of color. Monitoring color usage makes it possible to definitively identify poor use or abuse of color printing and then take corrective action. Conversely, it makes it possible to see where color may be underused based on expectations for certain departments, and to make the appropriate adjustments in those situations. More importantly for most organizations, though, monitoring color usage enables them to get ongoing trending and analysis information for smart decision-making about a variety of operational concerns—everything from where to optimally locate color printers to when to order supplies.

The following reviews some of the more common issues around the use of color usage monitoring and awareness and briefly describes how HP's color access control suite of features addresses these circumstances.

Issue: Who is using color printing, and how are they using it?

There are many ways that people can use color inappropriately—printing things in color that could just as easily be printed in black-and-white, excessively printing personal documents in color, and even not taking advantage of color when its use would add to the effectiveness of a job, to name just a few. The idea behind monitoring and awareness is that if you can see who is using too much color, or not enough color, you will have the information you need to devise ways to achieve more efficient and effective use. Proper monitoring and awareness can also equip you with the knowledge and understanding to reduce your reliance on color outsourcing.

- **Tracking color usage by user or job.** You'll need HP Web Jetadmin software to control aspects of color usage on certain HP printers. Technology such as the HP Web Jetadmin can be used with HP color access control capabilities to enable organizations to track color usage and detect patterns that suggest overuse, underuse or misuse of color. In addition, HP's Universal Printer Driver (UPD) allows you to set printer policies based on such business and user needs as duplex printing. Furthermore, IT managers can control costs by assigning color access by user, application, or time of day on HP Color LaserJet printers and MFPs. They can even limit it to special projects.
- **Getting proactive trend reports.** You'll need HP Web Jetadmin software to control aspects of color usage on certain HP printers. The HP Web Jetadmin can provide proactive threshold reporting that will allow administrators to see when users are printing more than they should as determined by pre-established organization policy. Third-party solutions are also available to define the number of color pages a user can print and to report when the user has exceeded that quota.

Issue: Where is color adding the most value in the organization?

Tracking color usage can provide organizations with the information they need to determine the highest and best use of color based on where it adds the most value. For example, if a particular group of users is using less color than anticipated, but another group needs color more than expected, decisions can be made to increase color capabilities available to the former while lessening access to color for the latter.

- **Reporting color usage by device.** You'll need HP Web Jetadmin software to control aspects of color usage on certain HP printers. The HP Web Jetadmin that tracks who's using color can also report on patterns of use for specific color devices or a group of devices.

Issue: How can you anticipate device and supply needs?

If you can tell how much printing has been done on a color device, you can begin to know how close the device is to the end of its useful life and plan accordingly. Similarly, if you can tell how much a device is using in the way of supplies, you can do supply planning more efficiently.

- **Reporting device usage.** The same information about patterns of use for specific color devices can also help organizations see how much usage certain devices are getting, so they can begin to plan for their eventual replacement.
- **Getting supply alerts.** Printers that include the technology to alert administrators to low toner or other device issues can help immeasurably with efficient purchase planning.
- **Understanding trends.** HP's color access control suite of features includes reporting of basic use trends for a group or fleet of printers, through HP Web Jetadmin.* HP Web Jetadmin reports include customizable tracking by application, page count, media and other criteria.

*Additional software may be required.

Quick Quiz
Monitoring and awareness: Right for you?

Answer these simple questions to determine whether your need for color access control falls primarily in the category of monitoring and awareness. The more "yes" answers you give, the better a candidate you are for color access controls that provide monitoring and awareness of the use of color.

- Do you feel that you're not fully informed about who's using color in the organization?
- Do you wonder how much material is being printed in color?
- Do you want to know if a particular user or department is abusing or misusing color?
- Do you find value in the idea of a controlled rollout of color based on reports of use patterns and trends?
- Do you need a way to anticipate device replacement and supplies purchasing needs?

2. Managing access to color

Some organizations or departments have a specific need to carefully regulate access to color printing. Perhaps there are users whose printing requirements are limited to documents that only need to be in black-and-white—copies of e-mails, for example. And perhaps other users' printing almost always needs to be in color—such as a graphics specialist responsible for creating marketing materials. How do you ensure the former isn't using color unnecessarily, while the latter has access to color capabilities almost exclusively? That's just one example of a situation in which the ability to control access is critical to maximizing the investment in color.

The following reviews some of the more common issues around managing access to color and briefly describes HP color access control capabilities that are available to address these circumstances.

Issue: Who can print and copy in color?
There are several approaches you can take to the issue of enabling only certain users or groups—such as marketing, graphics and publishing teams, for example—to print or copy in color.
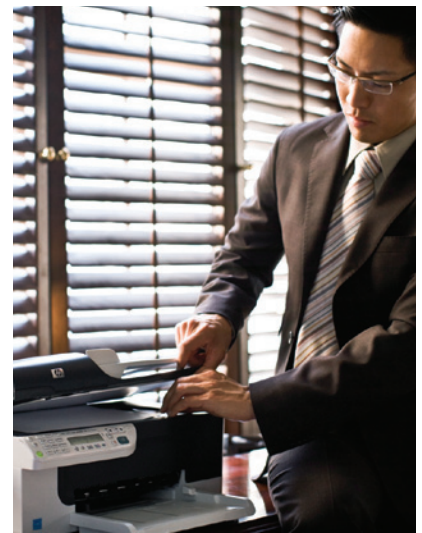
- **Configurable user lists.** Organizations with relatively small printing requirements may want to consider a device-specific approach to enabling color selectively. HP color access control capabilities include selected printers with embedded lists of up to 50 users who can print in color.
- **Color copy lockout.** For some users or groups with access to color multifunction products (MFPs), it's rarely necessary to make copies in color. The most straightforward approach in such cases is to completely lock out color, so that it's accessible only by PIN or other electronic means.
- **Driver configuration.** Configuring printer drivers to allow color printing by only selected users on certain printers is a simple, straightforward way to limit color printing to areas of specific need. HP Web Jetadmin, makes it possible to centrally configure drivers to allow or disallow color printing, and then distribute the drivers to multiple systems.

Issue: What can be printed in color?
Just as you can enable only specific people to print in color, you can also enable only specific applications—graphics-intensive documents, or marketing materials, for example—to be printed in color.

- **Configurable application lists.** The same approach that assigns the ability to print in color to lists of users can also be used to assign the same ability to lists of applications. Selected HP color printers that are equipped in this way can accommodate embedded lists of up to 10 applications that can print in color.
- **Device print authorization.** HP offers monochrome-only print driver solutions for customers who need them. This can be done through a universal print driver, a device-specific monochrome driver or a preconfigured driver.

Quick Quiz
Managing access to color:
Right for you?

Answer these simple questions to determine whether your need for color access control falls primarily in the category of managing access to color. The more "yes" answers you give, the better a candidate you are for color access controls that restrict and limit the use of color.
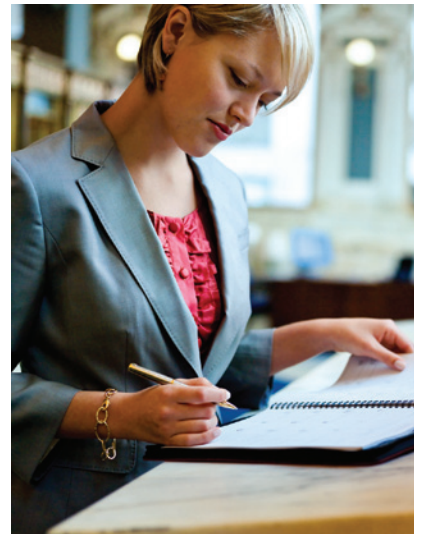
- Do you need for some users to be able to print primarily in color, but not others?
- Do you find that some users are printing jobs in color that should be printed in black-and-white?
- Does it appear that everybody is printing everything in color all the time, regardless of the document type or audience?
- Do you ever have problems with people using color to print personal photos, invitations and other items unrelated to the workplace?
- Do you think you would benefit from being able to limit how much users can print and copy in color? By user? By application? By time?

3. Job tracking and billing

For some organizations, being able to allocate the cost of color to a specific client, workgroup or user and then bill it back accordingly represents a tremendous benefit for operational cost control. It is also a valuable tool for increasing awareness of color costs for departments that might otherwise not realize the extent of their usage. Finally, the ability to tie the cost of color back to a specific job can greatly simplify calculations of overall job profitability and facilitate improvements.

A number of third-party tools along with HP's Access Control Job Accounting are available for use with select HP printers to help organizations with job tracking and billing requirements. These tools include software to:

- Generate detailed reports of print activity for cost allocation
- Charge for network-based color printing
- Monitor and measure costs associated with color printing
- Set customizable quotas for print traffic

Quick Quiz

Job tracking and billing:
Right for you?

Answer these simple questions to determine whether your need for color access control falls primarily in the category of job tracking and billing.

- How can I charge department or workgroup accounts for color usage?
- How can I charge clients accurately for color printing and copying?
- How can I allocate costs for color printing within the context of overall job costs?