



Today's Talent

Three trends that are shaping industry employment

by: Jessica R. Crowley, Copier Careers

For nearly 25 years, Copier Careers has been recruiting employees for independent copier dealerships. It has built its proprietary database the old-school way — one person at a time. Currently, Copier Careers has profiles on file for more than 59,000 imaging professionals nationwide. These profiles track everything from technicians' certifications, to sales reps' territories and quotas, to managers' benchmark achievements.



Copier Careers' job is to connect qualified candidates with copier industry employers, and its employees spend their days talking with everyone from entry-level candidates to dealership principals and gathering data for its annual industry salary surveys. From this vantage point, Copier Careers is able to spot patterns and identify trends as they are emerging. Here are three current trends we see at Copier Careers that are the most likely to impact office technology industry careers:

Opportunities Abound

Every few years, usually in response to some form of industry consolidation, someone predicts the death of the independent dealership. It happened in the 1990s when IKON and Danka began acquiring dealerships. It happened again a few years later when the OEMs caught the acquisition bug. It is probably happening somewhere right now. But, as history has shown us, it is simply unjustified. If anything, independent dealers are more relevant than ever and new dealerships are being established all the time.

In addition to an uptick in the number of new dealerships, Copier Careers is finding that managed print and managed network service contracts have been very profitable for independent dealers who have embraced the new model. Many independent dealers have found their niche in consultative, solutions-based sales, and they are growing swiftly and creating jobs in their communities.

A Shortage of Professionals

Unlike some sectors of the economy, the document imaging industry was not dramatically affected by the recession. For the most part, people in the office technology industry retained their jobs and employers continued to hire replacements for staff members who quit, retired or were let go. What they did not do was hire for bench strength. For several

years, dealerships made do with a minimum number of employees and avoided making entry-level hires.

Though necessary at the time, these conservative hiring practices have created a shortage of qualified candidates. Now that the economic outlook has improved, dealerships are eager to hire proven managed print services (MPS) sales reps and service techs with three to

five years of experience. Unfortunately, they cannot find what they are looking for. The pool of qualified, MPS-ready sales and service professionals is inadequate to address current demand. It will take a few years before the situation corrects itself. In the meantime, the small number of people who do have the right qualifications are finding themselves in high demand.

Effective Recruitment

Do you want a shot at recruiting one of those rare individuals who have the right mix of experience, talent and technical know-how? Then you should ensure you have the right people managing your sales and service departments. The fact of the matter is, the best talent goes where the opportunity is — and the opportunity now is in managing networks and selling professional services.

Sales reps who are used to selling a full range of solutions are understandably wary of working for a sales manager who has a "pushing boxes" mentality, because they can see they would be leaving money on the table with every sale. Likewise, the best hybrid techs — people with both break/fix and networking skills — do not want to work for a service manager who is reluctant to embrace the new model.

It is a sad truth that the dealerships that most desperately need an influx of young talent are unable to attract it because of old-fashioned thinking in the managerial ranks. To stay relevant and competitive, dealerships need to ensure that the people in charge are actively engaged in their jobs and are willing to accept and embrace the abundance of new opportunities our industry has to offer. ■

Jessica R. Crowley is director of recruiting for Copier Careers, a recruiting firm dedicated exclusively to helping independent copier dealers find experienced service techs, copier sales reps, managers, controllers, back-office staff, MPS experts and more. Visit www.copiercareers.com.

