

REFLECTIONS ON 25 YEARS OF CHANGE

Copier Careers® White Paper

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Our recruiting firm, Copier Careers®, recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. It's a big milestone for any business, and achieving it has prompted us to reflect on the copier channel and our place in it. The changes we've experienced over the past quarter century have been fascinating.

We founded Copier Careers® back in the days of black-and-white analog copiers. The first candidates we recruited were OEM-trained technicians. As our clients' needs expanded, we added service managers, sales reps, and sales managers to our proprietary database and became the go-to recruiter for the independent dealer community. In recent years, we've also begun recruiting heavily for back office positions like operations managers and controllers, which have become indispensable in the era of managed print and managed network services. With every technological change—from the introduction of color boxes to the conversion to digital equipment to the introduction of MPS—we have changed as well, increasing in sophistication right along with our clients and our candidates.

One of the most incredible things we've witnessed is the staying power of the independent dealership. How many times have we heard so-called industry experts proclaim the death of the independents? And yet, with every setback, independent dealers remain adaptable and ultimately come back stronger than ever. Many of our clients have seen double- and triple-digit growth over the past few years, and we couldn't be happier for their success. In a world where technology has become increasingly commoditized, service truly is what sets our clients apart. It's also why it has never been more important for independent dealers to invest in recruiting, training, and retaining the best staff the industry has to offer.

Over the past decade, every position in this industry has evolved significantly. Where technicians once needed to know how to fix a few select models, today they need to be able to troubleshoot hardware, software, and connectivity problems on a dizzying array of devices. Sales reps and sales managers face a similar challenge: as they navigate and analyze their clients' increasingly complex operating environments, they must be familiar with a huge range of potential hardware and software solutions. For service managers, understanding the economics of the dealership and the operations side of the business has

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become key. Where specific technical knowledge was once essential for service managers, today it pales in comparison to the ability to communicate effectively and facilitate change.

A recent analysis of our client roster revealed that 80 percent of the dealerships we work with have been our clients for more than 13 years. As I consider the ways our services have evolved over time, one thing is perfectly clear: the way independent dealerships do business has completely shaped the way we run our recruiting operations.

Not long ago, many of our clients approached their relationships with customers in a fairly reactive way: a customer needed something fixed, replaced, or added to a fleet, and the dealership took care of the request. Now, however, our clients are approaching business more proactively: they've evolved to offer solutions in an integrated way, so that once they've developed an understanding of the customer's business they can anticipate future needs and suggest solutions that will help the customer improve processes and meet long-term business goals.

This is exactly how Copier Careers® operates—except that instead of providing the right software and hardware solutions, we provide the right people. While we're always available to fill an immediate staffing need (just as dealers will always be available to repair a malfunctioning machine), these days we provide the most value when we work proactively to find strategic placements. By conscientiously recruiting people with specific talents and areas of expertise, we're able to help our clients achieve their medium- and long-term business goals.

What will the future bring? I can't begin to guess. But if the next 25 years are anything like the last 25, we can be sure that independent dealerships will remain competitive by devising new ways to bring value to their customers. And Copier Careers® will be here for our clients just like we've always been, helping them find the extraordinary people they need to write the next chapter. -CC

Copier Careers® is a recruiting firm dedicated exclusively to helping independent copier dealers find experienced service techs, copier sales reps, managers, controllers, back office staff, and MPS experts. Learn more at www.CopierCareers.com