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A Time of Opportunity and Uncertainty: What a New OEM Dealer Agreement Means for Hiring

By Scott Cullen

With expansion opportunities tied to technician availability, the hiring crunch just got more complex.

A newly announced dealer agreement from a major OEM is causing quite a stir in the office technology channel. Though the full implications remain unclear, one detail in particular is turning heads and prompting action. Under this agreement, dealers can expand their sales territory based on ZIP codes, counties, states, and regions if they employ a certified technician in that new area. That detail alone should drive increased demand for qualified technicians as some dealers scramble to position themselves for growth.

Although the agreement has yet to be widely adopted or publicly tested, its potential impact is already being felt across the industry. “Several of our clients have approached us and said, can you find technicians in these territories so we can take advantage of new opportunities?” reported Paul Schwartz, president of Copier Careers. “I’ll be very clear that no one has shared a dealer agreement with us. We don’t know any details, but we’ve heard the same speculations as everyone else.”

These won’t just be typical backfills. They are strategic hires designed to claim new territories. As Schwartz explains: “Some of our more aggressive clients are looking and saying, ‘How can I grow my business?’ Well, that seems like a logical way to expand.”

A New Path to Expansion?

What makes this dealer agreement unusual is that it flips a familiar playbook. Usually, a dealer gets a national account in another region and then figures out how to staff it, sometimes with help from another dealer. But in this case, the approach to selling in a new area reportedly starts with hiring a technician who lives there.

I don’t recall ever seeing a situation where having a technician allows you to sell in that area, as Schwartz explained. “Some of the mega dealers do it. If they’re based in the southwest United States and have a major national account they’re servicing in the upper Midwest or the Central United States, but not through another dealer, they will call us requesting a technician. In my experience, that account has already been sold. This is the reverse.”

For some dealers, this presents a calculated opportunity. If they can find and hire a certified tech in a neighboring market, they might be able to expand their footprint without opening a new location or acquiring a local dealer. It’s a shift that could benefit growth-minded dealers, but only those willing to invest in the workforce first.

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Under this scenario, a dealer probably wouldn't need a brick-and-mortar presence in that market. But there is a price of entry into that additional territory. They have to hire a technician who's certified on that OEM's equipment. "That's not inexpensive," said Schwartz. "That weaves back into how hard it is to find people, and especially the more specific you get, the more difficult it is."

Indeed, hiring qualified technicians is as challenging as ever. Adding geographic requirements only compounds the difficulty.

Even dealers who are excited about the potential to grow are finding themselves grappling with how to find the right people to make it happen. Copier Careers helps clients evaluate candidates, confirm whether non-compete agreements may be a factor, and determine whether hiring in a given market is even feasible.

A Widening Competitive Landscape

Of course, this new dealer agreement is just one part of the story and the uncertainty across the office technology dealer landscape. Xerox's recent acquisition of Lexmark has added another layer of uncertainty. As Schwartz noted, "What ultimately happens to that Lexmark MIF? So overall, as always, we have an interesting situation within the industry about what's going to happen and who will figure out how to be on the right side of what to grow their business."

In situations like these, there's always commentary supporting both sides of the equation with the primary concern, "You're telling me that another dealer can come into my backyard as long as they employ a technician?" Based on some of the communications Copier Careers has had with dealers, Schwartz noted, "Well, yeah, they could. It's the same issue with Xerox and Lexmark now."

That's another situation worth monitoring and is especially interesting since other OEMs are selling Lexmark products. Will they still be able to sell Lexmark in a specific market if Xerox is operating there?

Dealers are understandably worried about who can sell where, especially when OEMs have the power to change the map at any time. With rumors spreading and few details confirmed, speculation is filling the gap. Many fear that new actions by OEMs could allow other dealers to enter their market by hiring technicians. "If I were a dealer with this OEM and my contract with the OEM is now 90 days and out, I'd be concerned," said Schwartz.

Proceeding with Caution

No one knows exactly how this situation will unfold. A lot of uncertainty remains, including in social, political, and economic areas. "Typically, this industry has managed economic uncertainty well," said Schwartz. "As for the political uncertainty, it looks like from the outside that most of the dealers and the OEMs have figured out their supply chain, and they don't seem to be that worried about tariffs. It ultimately comes down to the workforce supply chain, and that's another uncertainty. And now you mix all this other stuff with OEMs and where they're headed. However, I can tell you it has caused a lot of headaches and concern for many dealers about what to do moving forward."

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Opportunity Knocks While Uncertainty Rules

From a recruiting perspective, this situation offers an opportunity for dealers and service technicians. “If I were a dealer, knowing what I know about the workforce supply chain, I want to consider every possible candidate—every technical candidate and every sales candidate—available to me,” observed Schwartz. “Now, all of a sudden, there seems to be an extra incentive: if the candidate lives in a certain ZIP code, it could benefit their business.”

Ultimately, one thing is clear: the rules are changing. And that means the most forward-thinking dealers are adapting. They’re asking tough questions. They’re scouting new markets. And they’re turning to hiring as a tool for both defense and growth.

“Although we’re not consultants,” Schwartz emphasized. “I don’t do the bottom lines on numbers. However, it appears to me that it’s an opportunity for dealers to grow, if they’re willing to take the risk of hiring a certified technician as the cost of entry to expand their footprint and grow their business. What concerns me is that it may be at the expense of other dealers. We’re all in favor of competition but it cuts both ways.”

Copier Careers has long seen how workforce trends can signal bigger changes in the industry. This is one of those moments. Whether this model becomes the new norm or fizzles out due to its complexity remains to be seen. But for now, the demand for technicians, especially in targeted expansion territories, is real.