

Manufacturers Offer Advice for New Year

By Brent Hoskins, executive director of the Business Technology Association and editor of Office Technology Magazine

This issue of *Office Technology* features forecasts for 2009 from representatives of eleven manufacturers. Each was invited to share his or her expectations and advice for dealers as we enter the new year.

As I read through the forecasts, I see numerous bits of insight and guidance that are noteworthy. Of course the "take aways" for everyone who reads these forecasts will be something different. Following is a sampling of some of the content of the forecasts, highlighting a few of the comments I found of particular interest.

Canon: "Customers continue to ask for greater levels of integration at the time of their MFP procurement, dealers who can offer the combination of the latest software, professional services and technology innovation will be the ones who will shine in the coming year."

Konica Minolta: "It has been Konica Minolta's long-standing philosophy that the best growth strategy for dealers is through value-added services and not 'individual box sales.' The bottom line is that to prosper, dealers need to develop a holistic approach to the identifying and solving of customer business issues."

Kyocera Mita: "Generating growth based solely on hardware sales revenue will prove challenging in 2009 due to the reduced capital spending by end-users, but selling more value to existing customers will not."

Lexmark: "Studies indicate end-users have a broader acceptance of A4 MFPs into business over the traditional A3 device."

Muratec: "2009 can be a year of growth for independent office equipment dealers if they invest in their brand name, diversify product and service offerings with a focus on A4 MFP solutions and managed print services and continue to study emerging technologies and professional services opportunities."

OKI Data: "Hardware consolidation will continue to increase with the proliferation of workgroup MFPs as customers seek to reduce their total number of individual office devices."

Panasonic: "We will be challenged to persuade existing end-users who require product refreshes that delaying their reorder until 2010 or beyond is not the most cost-effective solution."

Samsung: "Business migration to color and to MFPs may slow in 2009 as replacement cycles are extended and costs are more tightly managed."

Sharp: "Dealers can help themselves by getting close to the customer, understanding their business 'inside and out' and demonstrating exactly where managers can save the most money via consolidation and workflow improvement."

Toshiba: "Dealers are facing the most difficult economic crisis of our time. The industry is consolidating, customer financing is scarce and market instability poses challenges to dealerships of all sizes."

Xerox: "We expect that within five years 23 percent of all pages printed on Xerox technology will be in color. Technology advances will continue to drive down costs of color devices making ... 'color everywhere' a reality."

I encourage you to take the time to read through the entire Industry Forecast for 2009. I am confident that the comments shared by these eleven manufacturers will be worthwhile as you, too, look to the year ahead.