

Professional Practices

Controlling the costs of documents, phone calls and internet use

Transaction management and on-charging

Today's clients expect their professional practices to justify fees and keep overheads down. Automated cost recovery and on-charging keeps control of document, telco and internet usage, and it's fair and transparent for the client.



Professional Practices

Automated charging of document, internet and call costs

Practices and clients find efficiencies in cost recovery technology

Professional practices are always under pressure to bring in more revenue and cut back on costs.

Automated cost recovery technology does both –

- it recoups all billable expenses as revenue
- it dramatically reduces paper, time and resource wastage

For today's firms, the administrative burden of serving clients remains high, whether they are in accounting, law, real estate or design. Yet hourly rates are being squeezed, as clients push for flat fees or price per job.

More than ever, firms are looking for transaction management systems that turn expenses into revenue, but without distracting staff from billable work. The key is technology that works behind the scenes, capturing all support activity and allocating it to client and matter codes with minimal effort from staff.

Monitor's professional practice solutions track and allocate document, phone and courier activity effortlessly, with prompts on the desktop, or at the multi function printer.

At the centre is the sophisticated Supervisor Net software, which manages all the new cost drivers – printing from the internet, scanning and emailing as well as copying, calls and faxes.

Monitor offers a comprehensive, yet inexpensive cost recovery system that answers a major cost problem, without adding a new one. The modular approach means big or small professional firms can buy the functions they need – print / copy, calls or internet tracking, and add others later.

Monitor's software, terminals and card readers works with the standard (and some non-standard) print and telecom hardware, so you can continue to use your investment.

Keeping tabs on digital information (and staff)

The rapid rise of digital information, as an email or downloaded from the internet, constitutes a whole range of document and personnel costs not accounted for by professional firms.

While most count photocopies for disbursements, staff members are now more likely to print multiple sets of documents from a PC or scan material from clients. Now everyone prints in colour, not just the marketing department.

There's also the cost of staff time spent on the internet.

The web is employees' number one time-waster. US research points to employees spending on average two hours in every eight hour day doing personal business on the web, with similar figures from Britain.

An expense management system in any professional practice now has to tackle the biggest inefficiency – inappropriate internet usage.

Managing staff's use of resources

Monitor's professional practice solution tracks a full range of document and office costs, helping with budgeting and the better deployment of resources. Supervisor Net automates tasks like on-charging client expenses and print management, improving office efficiencies and reducing costs.

The benefits include –

- Full on-line reporting for all transactions according to user, device or cost centre
- Tracking full range of office costs – scan, print, fax, copy, couriers, calls, internet
- Increased revenue through accurate on-charging of client expenses
- Dramatic cost savings through the elimination of waste and misuse
- ID or access card or employee number can be used to authenticate users and prompt charge codes
- Centralised site control and management of department / user codes
- User friendly technology, using simple touch screens and remote diagnostics
- Full practice management system integration for seamless transfer of client details
- Secure print release using staff card for confidentiality and less print duplication
- Expense charging reports improve accuracy of time sheets and billing
- Manages staff accounts for door access
- Staff can load personal card accounts to pay for vending, meals or parking

Adds no administration costs

Supervisor Net cleverly connects to existing practice management systems to import, export and update client details without any further effort or cost to the practice. It integrates seamlessly with preferred packages such as Lawbase, MYOB and Contacs amongst others. Supervisor Net can track and charge as many functions as is required, including door access and security, parking and catering.



Charging for telecommunications

Telecommunications is a major contributor to overheads in a professional practice, accounting for a third of office costs after salaries and rent. Monitor's solution offers a powerful telephone accounting system that works seamlessly behind PABX and VoIP telephone networks. It prompts staff to allocate call charges after a call has been made.

The system suggests client and matter numbers for recognised phone numbers, and call costs are directly disbursed to these. Courier and postage charges can be entered as well via a pop-up.

Staff can make decisions on calls based on real costs, opting for landline or internet calling, rather than cellphone. Managers have the information on usage and cost for budgeting and provider contracts. With the reduction in call costs, firms recoup the investment in the telephone calling module within months.

With compulsory allocation at each PC, there are no exception reports to be manually completed. The pop-up prompts on each PC allow for notes from the conversation. Staff can also look back at their records to allocate time for billing or search for a client name, number or conversation date.

"The software is extremely flexible and we have the parameters set to model the cost recovery to our business parameters. Users find the software intuitive and simple to use and the pop-up after each telephone call does not disrupt the user." (Sean Power, IT Manager, Ferrier Hodgson, Australia, 2009).

Photocopy control

Monitor solutions can utilise all existing photocopiers, if attached to standard or alpha numeric terminals. Supervisor Net can also connect with a number of industry standard embedded multi function printers.

Employees can key in a user code to validate themselves at the copier terminal or MFP, linking to Supervisor Net. Many practices use their existing staff or ID cards at our breakthrough card readers and terminals, as Monitor reads any industry standard proximity or magnetic stripe card.

Once authenticated, the user allocates the job to a client or matter code, before copying. This can be charged at varying rates for volume, colour, duplex and large format.

With customisable reports on what is being copied, where and by whom, practice managers can make fully informed decisions on copier deployment. Supervisor Net can also enforce copy policies, restricting the use of colour, for instance.



Printing from PC

Professional practices now have to move from counting copies to managing printing on multifunction printers (MFPs) from staff PCs, in order to recover client expenses. Industry experts believe the net savings by shifting to efficient multifunction printers is not enough to offset the loss of cost recovery revenue by the move to untracked documents.

With an estimated one third of US law firms recovering print costs, others face an ever-declining revenue as copying reduces. Staff now print multiple copies of a document from a PC, rather than print one and make copies. More expensive colour output has risen dramatically.

With a Monitor solution, employees assign a departmental or client and matter code on a PC pop-up before any printing, so all these costs can be recovered, either from clients or internal budgets. Supervisor Net also reports which users or printers are printing most, to establish rules and policies. By giving the bigger picture of document printing, managers can spot trends in usage and deployment.

Supervisor Net reports an audit trail of all print activity by -

- User name
- Originating workstation
- Cost
- Features such as colour and paper size
- Document name
- MFP
- Page count
- Client, matter or department code

Enforcement of print policies

It is not necessary to charge for printing to save money. By knowing what's being printed and where, a company can implement a print policy based on sensible restrictions.

Monitor can reduce print volumes by redirecting print output to appropriate high volume devices. It can also force users to confirm that what they request is really what they want by displaying a prompt with the page count and cost before a job is printed.

Secure Print for queue free release at any site

Firms may gain great efficiencies from networked printers but lose out when staff members have to queue or wait for documents.

With Monitor's follow-me print release, staff can find the least busy printer and swipe their card there to print their job. Staff can choose when and where they print and bypass printers out of action. The real benefits are two-fold. Releasing the job into the hands of the user reduces the number of duplicate sets uncollected. Employees can also cancel jobs on the MFP or control terminal, when they realise they don't need what they have just sent to the printer. The result will be less paper used, and less recycling or rubbish bins filled.

Secure print release also overcomes common arguments that staff members need their own printer for confidentiality and security.

Facsimile

While fax machines are gradually superseded by MFP devices, existing machines can be linked to Supervisor Net to manage all faxed transactions. Practices are able to charge differential rates, according to page numbers, destination and peak or off peak. Faxes can only be sent when there is a validated matter number or a client code entered.

Scan

Increasingly documents are demanded in electronic format for storage, signatures or to import into a presentation. Faxes and mailed copies are charged by time, postage and number of pages, but scanning documents has been largely overlooked as a source of revenue.

Scanning makes fax machines redundant as documents can be sent quickly and conveniently and an electronic record kept. Scan control and billing can be added at any time without losing your initial investment and it complements copy and print control applications.

The Monitor scan release software on staff PCs captures all scan activity, by requiring it be charged to a client/matter/department code, prompted by a pop-up.

The software can read documents in a range of formats, such as jpeg, tif and pdf, depending on the MFP capabilities and allows them to be previewed before release. The user can save the scan to email (using 'last used' address), USB drive or to a network folder. Supervisor Net communicates online with all scanners and release stations, allowing for reporting on all activity. It can charge for number of pages or by the file size of the scanned document, applying different rates, if required.

Internet usage tracking

Browsing the internet is by far the greatest time-waster by employees, with more than half of non-productive time spent on the net (52%), compared with chatting to work mates (25%). Personal internet surfing is widespread, especially on social networking sites, as it is so easy to disguise at the desk, by flicking from web pages. It is also hard to track, with the use of anonymous proxy websites to evade company blacklisted URL addresses. There's the direct cost of wage losses from non-productive time and the indirect burden on overhead costs.

Internet abuse also reduces network productivity and performance, with one UK study estimating that staff visits to social networking sites can take up 20 percent of company bandwidth. Many websites, even social networking sites, are the source of malware and viruses which can infect staff PCs and the network.

Monitor offers an internet management module as part of its professional practice solution. It emails reports on how much time is spent on the web, who the top users are and the most popular websites. It reports on how the web is being utilised as a business resource and or for personal use in work hours.

Courier, postage and sundry expenses

With courier and postage charges being the most common disbursement in professional practices, Monitor offers a standard or alphanumeric terminal into which the dispatcher keys the client and matter codes. Supervisor Net reports on all courier or other sundry activity.



The automation makes the system VERY easy to use and, the overall system is easy to manage. Alan Stevenson, Network Manager, Atanaskovich Hartnell, Australia, 2009

