

## Maintenance of high-tech copy machines has gone automatic

BY LEIGH ANN ROMAN

Copiers are not just for copying anymore.

Today's copiers are really multifunction devices (MFDs) that can copy, print, fax and scan. The sophisticated technology means more efficiency for customers but much more dependence on machine dealers for education and maintenance.

"20 years ago when I started, I would walk in with a copier that would go from one to 99 and that was it," says Shane Berry, vice president of sales for Memphis Communications Corp. "Today I could spend three hours with you showing you all of the flexibility and functionality of the product."

With one machine providing so many functions, it is imperative that problems or breakdowns are minimal and quickly resolved. And the newest tool in the technician's toolkit is remote diagnostics — determining the problem and sometimes providing a temporary fix from the office before driving to the customer's site.

NovaCopy was the beta-testing partner for Panasonic's remote diagnostics technology, and the program is working well, says NovaCopy president Darren Metz. NovaCopy has been providing remote diagnostics nationwide to First Tennessee Bank for about six months, Metz says.

Joe Stamps, strategic procurement manager for First Tennessee, says the relationship is a good fit.

"We haven't had a culture in the past of being afraid to look ahead or be on the cutting edge and that drew us to this potential setup," Stamps says. "We're happy to recommend it to anyone."

Here is how remote diagnostics work for NovaCopy: When the machine needs maintenance or repairs, it emails NovaCopy's help desk describing the problem. The technician is then dispatched to repair the machine without waiting for a call.

Remote diagnostics also allows NovaCopy to make temporary fixes on a machine that is showing a warning light indicating a need to replace consumables such as drums, developer or rollers. If necessary, the technician can

connect to the machine using a fax board or the Internet and unlock it so that it will continue to function until a technician can arrive with the needed parts, Metz says.

In addition, the technician can determine which parts are needed for replacement by connecting to the MFD and reviewing its technical data to determine the condition of consumables.

Remote diagnostics also can be used to provide a temporary repair such as changing the toner density to darken the print copy or changing optional settings, Metz says. And the MFD can send its own meter readings to the company so that billing, which is charged per "click," can be determined, Metz says.

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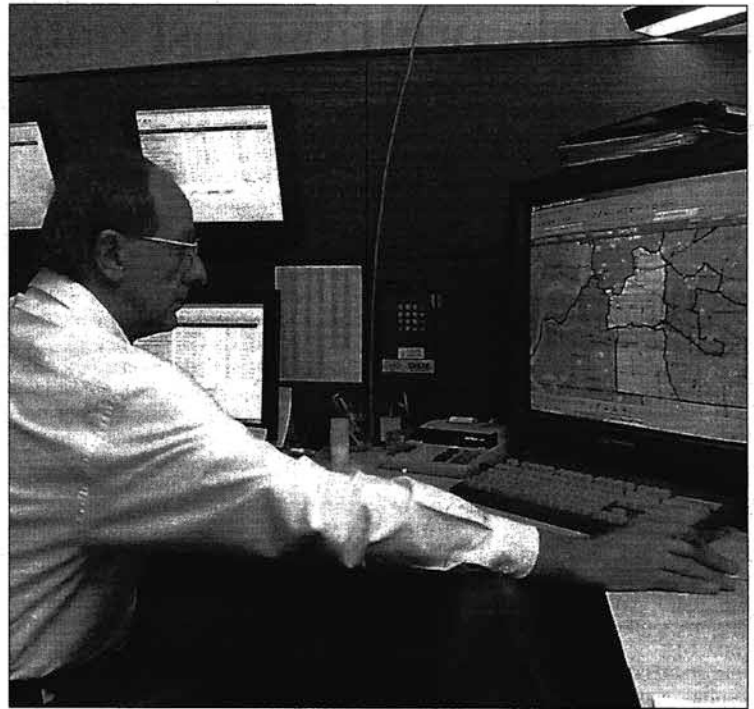
**Shane Berry**

Vice president of sales  
Memphis Communications Corp.

The office product industry has completely changed in the last seven years, says David Belluomini, sales manager for the Business Equipment Center. He has worked for that company for 22 years — 20 of those years in service.

Copiers became digital around 1998 and became MFDs around 2000, he says. Most machines have remote diagnostic capabilities, but not all companies allow complete access to their MFDs because of security issues associated with the MFD being part of the computer network, he says.

Many of Belluomini's clients prefer to have the machine email the information to techs at the Business Equipment Center rather than allowing the tech to connect to the MFD via the Internet, Belluomini says. Or the machine emails the



ALAN HOWELL / MBJ

NovaCopy dispatcher Ron Matthews tracks techs with GPS technology.

## Behind the Scenes

key user, who then calls the technician.

"The codes break it down to a section of the machine that is giving us a problem or to an electrical function," he says. The tech can then respond to the call with the right equipment.

Response time is key to happy customers in the office equipment industry, Belluomini says. One hour is a good emergency response time while four hours is the industry standard for non-emergency calls, he says.

"Productivity and up-time are the most important things," Belluomini says.

NovaCopy also emphasizes technician response time, Metz says. Each of the technicians carries a global positioning system transponder so that the dispatcher can monitor their locations. In addition, the technicians use a Sprint PCS wireless laptop to troubleshoot the machines so they are online all of the

time.

By coordinating these technologies, the dispatcher is able to determine when technicians arrive at a call and how long they have been there while the technician can see the work order entries on his laptop as he works on the current client, Metz says.

NovaCopy recently won the Memphis Chamber of Commerce Quality Cup Award because of improvements achieved by implementing the GPS and remote diagnostics technologies.

Combining technology and efficiency with old-fashioned courtesy has been a winning recipe for Memphis Communication Corp., which is celebrating 32 years in the city, Berry says.

In addition to remote diagnostics, the technicians for his company also make quarterly courtesy calls for service and cleaning of MFDs, he says.

"Our goal every day is to send our technicians on more courtesy calls than on calls where the system is down," Berry says. "If I can check on the system and clean it you're never down are you?"

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