

Equitrac Office 4.1



Overall	★★★★★
Value	★★★★☆
Ease of Use	★★★★★
Ease of Administration	★★★★☆
Data Analysis and Reporting	★★★★★
Compatibility	★★★★★
Upgrade Path	★★★★★
Integration	★★★★★
Security	★★★★★
Documentation	★★★★★
Dealer Support and Training	★★★★☆
Customer Support and Training	★★★★★
Global Business Readiness	★★★★★

OVERVIEW

Equitrac Office 4.1 is the latest version of the company's server-based print management and cost recovery solution for the commercial and general office markets. Though Equitrac has a long history of providing print management and cost recovery solutions to the legal industry and is a leader in this market, it has expanded its reach over the years. Currently, the solution is used by a number of government agencies, banks, and insurance and manufacturing companies, according to Equitrac.

Equitrac Office is primarily used to track every print, copy and scan job that occurs on any device in a document-output network, allowing for accurate cost allocation and accounting. Organizations can charge individual documents to a user, a department or billing code. The solution can also be used to manage workflow more efficiently and cost-effectively by routing documents to specific devices based on administrator-defined rules. For example, large print jobs can be re-routed to a low cost-per-page copier-based MFP rather than a high cost-per-page personal printer. Furthermore, the solution can be configured to force users to send print jobs to a secure queue, which helps to reduce waste, and can control total cost of ownership (TCO) by enabling customers to monitor usage and optimize their deployment of networked hardware.

New Features in Equitrac Office 4.1

- More rules-based routing
- Direct IP “serverless” printing
- Print jobs held in the Follow-You queue can be accessed from any Equitrac-managed output device across the enterprise, even if they’re held on a different Central Accounting System (CAS)
- SSL encryption with Follow-You Printing
- Total of 60 reports, up from 48 in the previous edition
- Equitrac System Dashboard provides thumbnail composite summaries on status and a wide range of activities
- Filtering capability provides more precise control for administrators in synchronizing Active Directory with Equitrac Office
- Cost center tracking and accounting capabilities extend to multi-tiered organizations and are automatically synched with Active Directory
- Device Control Engine caches login credentials, allowing users to sign on to devices running Equitrac Office when network connections and CAS servers aren’t available



What We Thought



BLI's evaluation of Equitrac Office 4.1, which was conducted in BLI's lab utilizing a Xerox MFP, reveals that this highly customizable solution has myriad strengths. Among them are compatibility with virtually all MFP brands, an array of authentication options and its scalability for any size organization. It offers flexible deployment options, with embedded versions available for control-panel operation from Xerox, Canon, Ricoh, HP and other manufacturers' MFPs, as well as versions that use an external terminal. Offering excellent ease of use and comprehensive reporting capabilities, the solution is an outstanding product from a vendor with a wealth of knowledge in the print management and cost accounting/recovery arenas, and has earned BLI's 5-Star rating.

What is Print Management?

Printing and copying are costly businesses expenses, but according to an IDC study, a print management solution can reduce a company's document costs between 5 and 15 percent. This type of software is designed to help organizations eliminate waste and improve productivity by tracking, managing, monitoring and recording imaging assets and costs.

There are various types of print management software, with some systems providing more than one of these capabilities: rapid print assessment solutions provide a quick snapshot of an organization's imaging assets and supplies basic print and copy information such as volumes; job routing automatically sends or routes jobs to the most suitable device based on specific administrator-defined rules such as document characteristics, output volume and/or cost; document and job accounting solutions track print and copy activity so that companies can monitor and analyze costs and control and charge back for output by individual users, departments, projects or clients, while working to eliminate excessive printing, personal printing and abuse of networked devices; and device management enables users to track, monitor and interact with networked devices from remote locations to install and troubleshoot devices, as well as automatically collect meter reads.

Strengths

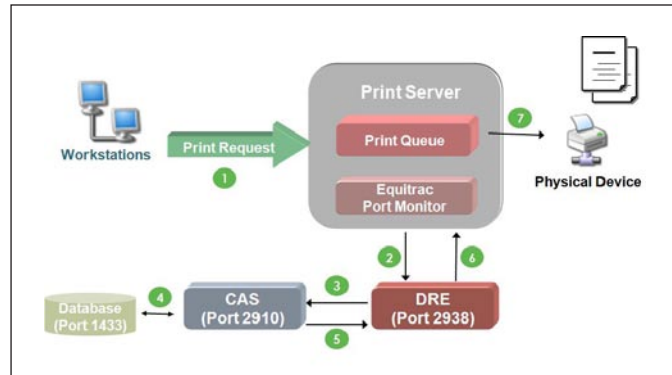
- Excellent overall ease of use
- Simple setup for rules and routing
- Software is nearly transparent to end users
- Supports multiple operating systems for network and client components
- Robust reporting capability includes 60 reports, plus Equitrac System Dashboard to view snapshots of activity
- Modular design allows customers to expand the system to coincide with growth
- Integrates with several authentication card readers and multifunctional products
- Tracking and chargeback support for wide-format devices
- Follow-You Printing enables secure printing of documents from any device across the organization
- Clearly written manuals with screenshots and diagrams
- Comprehensive training and support for resellers and organizations
- Sold globally by various types of resellers

Weaknesses

- Installation and implementation can be time-consuming

How It Works

The Central Accounting Server (CAS) is the heart of Equitrac Office. It gets installed on a server, aggregates all data in a Microsoft SQL or Oracle database (the Express version of the former is included) and handles authentication of users.



Overview of Print Transaction Handling

Along with the CAS software, the solution requires client software for every user's PC to enable association of cost recovery codes with each print job and to track local workstation printers (those not associated with a print server). The CAS calculates the cost of output determined by administrator-customizable pricing lists, which enable companies to set prices for printing, copying, scanning and faxing based on individual devices, groups of devices or document attributes—color or monochrome, number of pages, paper size, finishing options and so on.

Employees generally won't realize they're running Equitrac Office as it runs in the background as a service. The system can be set up so that when users print in any application, a pop-up window appears that requires them to choose the account to be charged from a predefined list before the job is sent. Users are authenticated and their jobs are tracked by their Windows login credentials. If the account to be charged can be determined automatically (for example, from a previous print job or by setting up a default account), this further reduces user involvement. Administrators can enable pop-ups on a per-printer basis. Walkup copy, scan and fax jobs are tracked by users entering the same information either at the control panel when an embedded version such as for Xerox EIP is being used, or at an optional Equitrac PageCounter.

Equitrac Office enables organizations to track TCO because it can record both the direct and indirect costs each device incurs over its lifetime via the secondary list, while helping businesses determine return on investment. Administrators simply set up a secondary pricing list that shows how each job contributes to device depreciation. For example, one price list could charge 10 cents for copies, while a secondary list could list a figure that represents the output's actual cost to the business.

The reporting function helps organizations increase efficiency and reduce costs by providing customized and detailed data on users, departments and devices—either on the fly or on a regular basis. Reports, of which there are 60 different types, can be exported in various formats or printed and help save employees time by instantly gathering information on cost-related items and device usage.

Product Profile

Product:	Equitrac Office
Software Developer:	Equitrac Corporation in Plantation, FL
Test Configuration:	Version 4.1, embedded on a Xerox MFP
Recommended System Requirements:	Windows 2003 Server (Service Pack 1 or later) or Windows Server 2008, Intel Pentium III or AMD Athlon CPU, 1 GB of system memory, 1 GB of disk space
Supported Devices:	Equitrac PageCounter (external terminal consisting of an optional alpha keyboard that enables users of copiers and MFPs to enter access codes to enable tracking and billing for their hardcopy output) and MFPs from virtually all manufacturers
Suggested Retail Price:	<p>Pricing depends on the fleet connected to the Equitrac server.</p> <p>Equitrac Office Suite Edition costs \$2,370 and supports an unlimited number of users and up to 100 output devices per print server. Organizations receive one print server license for free; additional licenses can be purchased for \$1,350 each or \$11,015 for a pack of 10. An embedded license or PageCounter terminal is required for each device where Follow-You Printing and device access are required; a single license of Equitrac Embedded costs \$550, except for Canon MEAP, at \$750 (packages of 10, 100 and 500 are available), while PageCounters cost \$850 to \$1,550 each (depending on keyboard and internal card readers). External card readers to complement embedded licenses are available from \$225 to \$475, depending on type. Optional Print Client licenses can be purchased in packages of 10 (\$505), 100 (\$2,370) and 1,000 (\$10,165). A cluster enabler for \$3,810 is required to support clustered servers.</p> <p>Equitrac Office Small Business Edition costs \$845, supports a single print server (included), 10 output devices and an unlimited number of users and Print Clients. Organizations must purchase either embedded licenses or PageCounters for each device at the above cost. Equitrac recommends that if an organization requires more than 100 Print Clients, it should consider stepping up to Suite Edition.</p> <p>Equitrac Office Enterprise Edition uses a pricing model based on number of users and supports an unlimited number of print servers and output devices. Pricing starts at \$9.30 per user for 1,000 and scales to \$4.25 for over 100,000 users. With the exception of Print Clients, embedded licenses and PageCounters, all extra licensed components such as print servers and cluster enablers are included at no charge. The Enhanced Enterprise Edition includes the Print Clients (\$15.25 per user for 1,000 and reduces to \$6.35 per user for 100,000).</p>
Programming Languages:	C++, C# and Window.NET

Value



Due to its modular nature, putting a definitive price tag on Equitrac Office is difficult. However, a typical installation with three print servers supporting 50 devices and any number of users ranges from \$20,000 to \$40,000, according to the company. Larger organizations can spend upwards of \$200,000 for the Enterprise Edition, while the company also offers the less-expensive Small Business Edition, which costs \$845 and offers all the functionality of the solution on a reduced scale. Businesses can lower their overhead for implementing the solution by selecting the individual embedded licenses instead of PageCounter terminals in their fleets. Based on its entry-level cost of \$845 and outstanding showing in all areas of evaluation and the significant savings it can help achieve, BLI believes that Equitrac Office offers very good value.

Ease of Use



Because deploying Equitrac Office can be time-consuming and requires cost recovery expertise to maximize the investment, the company advises organizations to have a technician from either Equitrac, the dealer, direct sales operation or reseller perform the installation (see “Ease of Administration”).

However, once installation is complete, the solution is self-managing and is transparent to end users. Once users are logged in to a PC they are authenticated against the network, including all of their administrator-defined rules and routing permissions. If users don’t authenticate themselves against the network, the optional Print Client can prompt them to enter authentication credentials. The Print Client can also display a list of other devices and allow for jobs to be re-routed to the lowest cost device or the most convenient. Users send a job to the Follow-You queue, which is secure, and release their jobs via authentication at the control panel or by swiping their identification card. The same process is employed for walkup jobs, where users can access all the typical features for copy, scan and fax jobs, as well as jobs in the Follow-You queue, at the device.

Entering billing account information in the Print Client is easy and requires one-time training. Users simply enter information so the job can be allocated to the proper account. Searching for the right billing code is easy as Equitrac provides several methods of data retrieval, including searching by recently used codes.



Equitrac Embedded—Print Release (Xerox)

Although the solution offers a host of features, some of which are new to version 4.1, it doesn't take long to learn. BLI found that working on the embedded application running at the device is simple, as was navigating and using Equitrac System Manager.

Ease of Administration

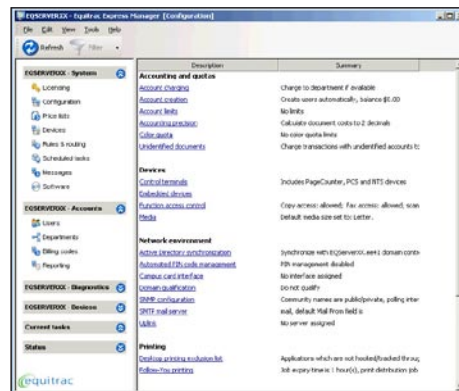


Because the system may include various components—servers, output devices, external terminals—and, in some cases, multiple locations, setup and installation are generally performed by either Equitrac or the reseller.

To begin, organizations must have ASP.net 2.0, as well as Oracle or Microsoft SQL Server or SQL Server Express software loaded (the install disc contains .net and SQL Server Express); customers that anticipate having more than 1,000 users and 10 million impressions per year should use the more robust Oracle or SQL Server database engines. Once the Equitrac server is up, embedded applications are loaded onto devices, any PageCounters being employed are set up and then licenses are registered so that output can be tracked and billed accordingly. Optional Print Clients can be pushed out to all workstations using standard MSI files. Users and validation codes can be synced from Active Directory or Novell databases, an NDS tree or a flat file; administrators can choose to input information manually too. From there, administrators can create their pricing lists, rules and routing, and other items utilizing Equitrac System Manager (ESM), which is the chief administrative utility.

ESM provides a wealth of resources and is very easy to work with. It has a toolbar at the top, with the rest of the screen divided between a navigation bar on the left and a details box. Administrators will spend most of their time working under the System header, where licenses can be registered; devices can be managed; primary and secondary price lists for printing, copying, scanning and faxing can be maintained; and rules and routing for user behavior can be set. For pricing, costs

can be associated for specific attributes such as finishing (hole punching, binding, stapling and folding); page attributes (color, page size, duplexing and media type); and additional charges such as for peak usage periods (specific months, days or hours). Furthermore, pricing can be configured for wide-format printing by square inch, linear measurements or “plottable” area, which refers to the actual paper—not the color on the page.



The interface of Equitrac System Manager, which has a clean design, includes a tool bar on top, a navigation bar to the left and a details box where results are displayed.

Rules and routing can be established so that, for example, jobs can be sent to the most economical devices. Administrators can also route jobs depending on user, number of pages, document title, day of week and time of day, size of job and whether the job is color or monochrome. Administrators can also enforce duplexing to reduce costs and be more environmentally responsible. An additional cost-reducing capability is the ability to restrict color usage and limit or eliminate printing of pages from Web sites. BLI found the process of setting up rules to be very simple, requiring minimal training.

The other two headers in the ESM navigation bar are for Current Tasks and Status, the latter of which has a list of devices, users and accounts currently attached to the system. And adding new users is a straightforward procedure, aided by integration with Active Directory. More headers can be added for Accounts, Diagnostics and Devices.

Equitrac Print Conversion Wizard is another handy function that administrators can take advantage of. It queries all devices on all servers, auto-discovers them and then converts those devices not attached to the system using their IP addresses to “Equitrac-trackable” devices. PageCounters show up in ESM as unassigned terminals, but by drag-and-drop functionality they can be associated to the corresponding device.

Another feature of Equitrac Office is the Device Monitoring Engine. Intended primarily for administrators and help-desk personnel, this utility displays a list of all devices

connected to the Equitrac server. Administrators can then click on the IP address of a device, which will open a message that contains information on configuration, errors and the meter reading. Additionally, consumables status information in percentages is listed for remaining paper and toner. Fully customizable alerts can be set up so that appropriate individuals in the organization can be notified of specified conditions such as an offline device, and can be triggered based on the duration or frequency of a condition.

Data Analysis and Reporting



Administrators and users can generate 60 different types of reports using Reports Manager. There are three categories of reports: detailed, summary and total activity. Each report under these broad types presents information from a different point of view—about devices, users, accounts, billing codes and departments, jobs sent to queues and more. By clicking on a specific report, a pop-up appears that allows administrators to set the timeframe of results. Although there are many different types of reports, which may make setting them up seem complicated, BLI found the system of inputting information in the pop-ups intuitive.

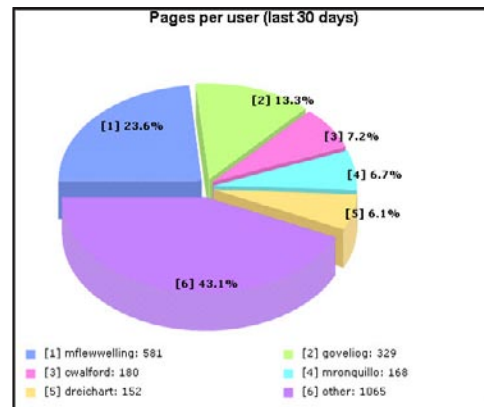
Name	Description
Accounts	
Analysis	
Detailed activity	
Detailed activity by billing code account	Standard report for detailed activity by billing code account
Detailed activity by department account	Standard report for detailed activity by department account
Detailed activity by department membership	Standard report for detailed activity by department membership
Detailed activity by device	Standard report for detailed activity by device
Detailed activity by network user	Standard report for detailed activity by network user
Detailed activity by print queue	Standard report for detailed activity by print queue
Detailed activity by user account	Standard report for detailed activity by user account
Detailed activity for routed documents by device	Standard report for detailed activity for routed documents
Detailed activity for queued documents by user account	Standard report for detailed activity for queued documents
Detailed activity for queued documents by device	Standard report for detailed activity for queued documents
Detailed activity for queued documents by user account	Standard report for detailed activity for queued documents
Summary activity	
Summary activity for routed documents by device	Standard report for summary activity for routed documents
Summary activity for routed documents by user account	Standard report for summary activity for routed documents
Summary activity for queued documents by device	Standard report for summary activity for queued documents
Summary activity for queued documents by user account	Standard report for summary activity for queued documents
Summary activity by billing code account	Standard report for activity summary by billing code account
Summary activity by department account	Standard report for activity summary by department account
Summary activity by department membership	Standard report for activity summary by department membership
Summary activity by device	Standard report for activity summary by device
Summary activity by device and date	Standard report for activity summary by device and date
Summary activity by network user	Standard report for activity summary by network user
Summary activity by network user and device	Standard report for activity summary by network user and device
Summary activity by organization account	Standard report for activity summary by organization account
Summary activity by organization membership	Standard report for activity summary by organization membership
Summary activity by print queue	Standard report for activity summary by print queue
Summary activity by user account	Standard report for activity summary by user account
Total activity	
Total activity by account type	Standard report for total activity by account type

Equitrac Office has a total of 60 reports to choose from, and administrators can customize the look and feel of all.

Organizations can add their own logo to the reports and change the format of the standard reports to suit their own needs. Using a series of filters, users can customize the look and feel of a report, which information should be displayed or left out altogether, and the order in which information is presented, as well as column width. Once administrators have set up templates, reports can be run on the fly or on a scheduled basis; they can be saved to a file server (with read-only access if desired) or sent by e-mail to one or more addresses and then can be edited in Microsoft Excel

or as an HTML file. Reports enable administrators to see exactly how devices are being used and help them match deployment to workflow requirements. Administrators can also limit the number or types of reports that users can run by setting up permissions. In addition to being customizable, reports can be exported in several formats.

Equitrac System Dashboard is another new feature of Equitrac Office 4.1, enabling administrators and selected users to view snapshots of activity. Activity is represented in pie charts that include the top results in categories broken down by 7-, 30- and 365-day activity; pages; cost; and color and simplex, among others. For example, a user can click on the link for top users over a seven-day period or the devices that have output the most color pages, which could then drive an administrator to introduce rules to redirect jobs to more economical devices or force duplexing. System Dashboard is accessed through a typical Web browser and requires a username and password to be entered.



Equitrac System Dashboard displays a snapshot of activity in pie charts, with the top results for each category represented.

Compatibility



Equitrac Office can track output from virtually any printer language and networked imaging device, as well as standalone copiers and non-networked printers that are supported under the Windows print infrastructure. The company offers the solution as an embedded application for most recent Xerox, Canon, Ricoh, Sharp, HP and Kyocera MFPs.

Although Equitrac Office can run on a shared server, the company recommends a dedicated server (physical or virtual) save for the Small Business Edition. The print

solution can run on Windows 2000, 2003 and 2008, Novell NetWare and various Linux and UNIX server operating systems. Client software is compatible with Windows 2000, XP and Vista (32- and 64-bit), Macintosh OS X and several Linux desktop operating systems.

Upgrade Path



Equitrac Office is very scalable. Three editions are offered to suit the needs of various-size organizations, two of which can be easily upgraded to coincide with growth. Small Business Edition, which supports one server and up to 10 devices, can have an unlimited number of users for basic print and copy tracking. Suite Edition supports an unlimited number of users and is licensed based on servers (one server license is included) and devices. Enterprise Edition, which supports an unlimited number of servers and devices, requires licenses for all users and embedded devices. Equitrac's pricing structure is such that as volume increases, cost decreases. The company offers "point-release" upgrades about every six to nine months for those with maintenance contracts, and tends to release a new version of the solution, which can be installed right on top of an older one, annually. Equitrac Office 4.1 has many improvements over its predecessor, and the company says it'll continue refining the solution with more features, options and plug-ins. Equitrac also states that many enhancements stem from suggestions by users, indicating openness to listening to customers and a willingness to adapt to the changing needs of the market.

Integration



Equitrac Office integrates with several business and administrative solutions such as eCopy ShareScan OP, EFI SendMe, IKON DocSend, Captaris, NSI and Ricoh GlobalScan. Equitrac states that it's always looking to partner with additional developers, further extending its capabilities.

Security



By the very nature of its core function, Equitrac provides a high level of security. Because users can be required to authenticate themselves for copying, scanning and faxing (authentication for printing is achieved by logging in to the network, but it can be done through the Print Client), administrators can trace every job back to its owner, eliminating unauthorized printing and copying, elevating overall document security and providing an audit trail for compliance purposes such as HIPAA and Sarbanes-Oxley.

The solution has a very flexible authentication scheme, allowing users to have a single login for the various components—the same login could provide access to devices running Equitrac Office, LDAP and the local network. The solution can be configured to authenticate users via Windows, Novell NetWare, LDAP and Active Directory.

Follow-You Printing protects sensitive documents from being output into an exit tray, where they could be seen by unauthorized individuals. It requires users to authenticate themselves at the control panel before their jobs, which are held securely in the Follow-You queue, are printed, increasing security and reducing waste. Additionally, an optional third-party card reader can be employed to let users authenticate themselves by simply swiping their identification card, including magnetic stripe, HID, Legic and Mifare. Support for other card types is under development and will be available shortly, according to Equitrac. A convenience feature of Follow-You Printing is that users can select any device running the solution to output the job: if one printer is busy or out of commission, they can find another and print it there instead, but only if that one has a driver common to the device where the job was originally sent.

Documentation



Documentation for Equitrac Office, which is available in English, Spanish, French, German, Italian and Portuguese, is comprehensive, well-written, assumes no prior knowledge of the solution and features screenshots and diagrams that are easy to follow. Designed to help administrators and end users understand the system quickly in order to handle most of the troubleshooting internally, it consists of searchable PDFs, including an 81-page installation and configuration guide, and a 336-page administrator's guide. Given that there are several components to Equitrac Office, the company's decision to divide the manuals up into separate ones, all of which follow the same format, is logical and well-executed. Users can quickly find the solution's key features, obtain an overview of what's new and see what each component does.

Additionally, there's a 55-page planning guide that helps customers understand how to install it on the network—if they choose to do it themselves. Equitrac also offers print server guides that show administrators how to integrate the solution with common architectures, including NetWare and Linux, as well as a guide dedicated to cluster deployment and for each of the embedded versions. Private sites for dealers and service engineers further add to the documentation package.

Product Support

When many businesses are migrating clients to less-costly Web-based support options, Equitrac continues to offer unlimited toll-free telephone support to dealers, direct sales operations, resellers and customers under a maintenance contract, which the company estimates at being 18 percent of the total purchase price of the configuration being installed, though the figure varies by whomever sells the solution. Equitrac's call center operates between 2:30 am and 8 pm EST, Monday to Friday, allowing for full European and North American business hour coverage. The company's partners usually handle the lower two levels of support: the first is for general how-to questions, the second deals with advanced features or problems; the third tier, which involves Equitrac, generally requires research and investigation, sometimes including members of the company's development team. BLI called Equitrac's support number three times—morning, afternoon and evening—and obtained a representative within one minute each time, after pressing just two buttons to move through the automated portion. Additionally, with the permission of the client, the company can remotely access systems around the world to troubleshoot or rectify problems.

Dealer Support and Training




Dealers, direct sales operations and resellers must pass a mandatory online certification test on Equitrac's partner Web site before they're permitted to sell and install the solution. The company has four levels of certification: one is for installing Small Business and Suite Editions; the second qualifies the vendor to provide Tier 1 support for those two; another is for installing Enterprise Edition; and an all-encompassing certification allows dealers to provide an even deeper level of support.

There are two different ways that resellers can obtain their training. The first entails watching a self-paced, six-hour series of eight separate online training sessions that


cover topics such as installation, terminology, information about external terminals and embedded applications, the Equitrac Office value proposition, and troubleshooting, administration and support. For a fee (\$2,995, plus travel and lodging), resellers can opt for three days of training at a desired location. Additionally, a vendor can schedule a free four-hour refresher session with a representative from Equitrac, at the conclusion of which all slides and a voice recording are given to the participants. According to Equitrac, these programs equip dealers to handle almost every customer inquiry and, as a result, few users call the helpline. Dealers must also have trained network engineers on staff and demonstrate the ability to install, set up and support solutions. Finally, periodic classroom training at Equitrac satellite offices is offered, primarily when major releases are announced.

Customer Support and Training



Users have a choice of telephone, onsite and Web-based support options. According to Equitrac, the customer hotline receives a modest number of calls, but many users first contact the party who did the installation as that person has greater knowledge of the organization's particular setup. In-house training is generally conducted during installation, which typically takes two to eight hours and covers key tasks such as operation, client software deployment, administration, configuration and reporting. Training is normally delivered to a core group of one to four individuals, who are then responsible for any broader training within the organization.

Global Business Readiness



Equitrac Office, which varies by region, is sold globally by value-added resellers, as well as dealers and direct sales operations of those manufacturers that offer the solution as an embedded application on their devices, including Xerox, Canon and Ricoh, among others. The company has branch offices in the United States, Canada, United Kingdom and Netherlands to support its channel partners, and documentation is available in English, Spanish, French, German, Italian and Portuguese. With more than 30 years of software sales experience, Equitrac has a wealth of knowledge via interactions with customers, manufacturers and developers. While BLI didn't evaluate the company's international support, the fact that it offers Equitrac Office around the world and is a major player in the solutions market leads us to believe that it has the ability to support this product on a global scale.

Company Profile

Software Developer:	Equitrac Corporation in Plantation, FL
Status:	Private
Founded:	1977
2005 Revenues:	Not disclosed
Employees:	More than 275
Availability:	Equitrac Office is available around the world and varies by region.
Distribution:	Sold globally through value-added resellers, as well as dealers and direct sales operations of those manufacturers that offer the solution as an embedded application on their devices.
Service:	Equitrac advises that customers purchase a maintenance agreement so that all support is free. The price of a contract, sold on an annual basis, is typically around 18 percent of the total cost of the solution, but as pricing is set by the sales channel, it varies.
Support:	Equitrac offers telephone technical support between 2:30 am and 8 pm EST, Monday to Friday. For calls within North America: (877) 378-4872, option 1, option 2; for calls outside of North America: (519) 885-2417. Support is free provided a maintenance agreement is in place, billable if not. Questions can also be e-mailed to support@equitrac.com .

“AAA” Model Nets Success for Equitrac-Xerox Partnership

Because Equitrac is one of four worldwide Xerox Platinum Partners, as well as a charter member of the Xerox EIP Consortium (created in 2006 to lay the foundation for Xerox’s open architecture technology), it’s no wonder that these two companies have enjoyed a successful partnership. Furthermore, Equitrac developed Secure Access specifically for Xerox so that organizations could have an entry-level security and convenience solution and then, over time, migrate to a more robust system that includes print management and cost accounting: Equitrac Office. “The ‘AAA’ approach—Access, Authenticate and Accounting—provides a natural progression for businesses in the commercial and general office markets,” said Nora Pasono, solutions marketing manager for Xerox. “One leads to the next. Approximately 90 percent of Xerox sales of Equitrac Office have originated from the Secure Access gateway in the past three years.”

Barry Lower, regional partner sales director and director of sales and marketing for Equitrac Europe, expanded on Pasono’s thoughts. “The ‘cost-down’ method starts with delivering an easy to use solution that allows for a personalized experience at an MFP control panel,” he commented. “Once organizations have grown and see that this improves productivity and document security, they tend to come back to complete the package. Xerox has had a dramatic impact in the spike of Equitrac Office sales in Europe.”

At its core, the solution accurately tracks document output and charges it accordingly. Of course, there’s much more. “The value proposition of Equitrac Office is tremendous, and I believe that all of its features and functions play a part in why it’s such a well-received, industry-leading solution,” Lower said. “Follow-You Printing is a big plus because it reduces not only the expense for printing but waste too. Administrators can manage their fleet by analyzing various types of usage reports and establishing rules permissions that route jobs to lower-cost devices, enforce duplexing or eliminate color printing of Web pages altogether. The system can be configured with a card reader, which can unlock complicated and time-consuming workflows with a single swipe of an identification card—this makes working seamless, just walk up to the MFP and your personal profile is already set. Equitrac Office is a technology tool designed to solve business problems—and all businesses have problems.”

As Europe is Lower’s home base, he’s very familiar with the fact that organizations must adhere to strict regulatory stipulations. Also, “most have a sustainability agenda that’s far more detailed than what’s typically seen in the United States,” he explained. “It’s an excellent selling point because organizations that maintain a certain level of environmental friendliness are able to get additional money from the government, like in the UK. From what I’ve seen, European users have a greater interest in making a contribution if the information provided to them contains some sort of ‘green’ messaging, so we stress to our partners to make it a highlight when selling the solution.

“The bottom line, though, is that cost is king,” he continued. “Organizations aren’t going to purchase something that they think won’t have a solid return on investment, which is what we quickly try to show them. Wherever the solution is being sold, be it in North America and Europe where the market is more mature, or in emerging markets like South America, India and South Africa, for example, the number one question we get most often is: ‘how will Equitrac Office help us recoup the costs of document output?’ The solution has proved its worth over the years. The success Xerox has helped us achieve, as well as what the company has done in terms of reducing costs, is remarkable.”

Telford & Wrekin Council Achieves a Multitude of Results with Equitrac Office

The Telford & Wrekin Council, a West Midlands, England, borough that has more than 6,000 employees in 180+ different locations, including schools, recently implemented Equitrac Office. The decision was made after evaluating several solutions; the Council came to the conclusion that Equitrac Office was the best tool for helping streamline administration functions, reducing office operating costs and being more environmentally responsible. “Of greatest importance was finding a solution that could potentially be used by everyone,” said the borough’s cabinet member for resources. “In our ideal world, employees could walk up to any device, authenticate themselves and immediately print documents—even if they weren’t in their usual building.”

“Telford & Wrekin Council needed an accounting solution to centralize and control its office document printing costs,” said Katie Sarson, Equitrac Office account executive for Xerox UK. “They saw that Equitrac Office’s bill-back capabilities were exactly what they were looking for in order to stay within their printing budget.

“We always stress how easy the solution is to use, though selling that point to end users is sometimes tough because they’re used to having a personal printer attached to their workstation rather than sharing a multifunction device,” she continued. “End users, though, ultimately don’t care that there’s a new accounting solution and quickly adapt to using it on their shared devices following some basic training.”

Sarson mentioned that the Council was very interested in Follow-You Printing. “In its simplest form this technology provides for extensive print management and job tracking, allowing employees to walk up to any convenient Xerox device in an implemented location, authenticate themselves and use the functionality to print documents,” she said. “The mobility benefit of Follow-You Printing was especially important given the huge number of Council offices involved. Environmental concerns are particularly strong in Europe, and Follow-You Printing was certainly a ‘green’ benefit to the Council.”

The Council selected to work with Xerox because that company helped with not only the install of the Equitrac software but also with the installation of the new hardware. Out went hundreds of desktop printers, copiers, scanners and fax machines, and in came new Xerox WorkCentre multifunction devices—a virtual complete fleet refresh and install in one week. “Xerox was a confident choice,” said the Council’s project sponsor. “From the beginning they acted as a natural partner that renewed our print infrastructure, made our administration easier to manage and helped reduce our waste and carbon footprint.”

All of these things and more contributed to a positive snapshot of results comparing the before and after effects. According to the Council, it experienced immediate improvements and new control over printing operations, with estimated cost savings of 15 percent in the first three years and 25 percent after four. “Another big change we’ve seen is in employee awareness about the impact of their individual actions,” said a senior technician of the Council’s Information and Communications Technology department. “After every print and copy job, employees can see how much each job actually costs.”