



MPS Monitor

Printer Monitoring
in the Cloud

MPS Monitor

Features & Productivity

Usability

IT Admin & Security

Support & Training

Value

Product Snapshot

Product: MPS Monitor

Version: Not applicable
(SaaS solution which is updated continuously)

Software Developer:
MPS Monitor srl

Web: www.mpsmonitor.com

Phone: +39.2.84.800.612

For more information on MPS Monitor, see BLI's comprehensive coverage at www.buyerslab.com/bliq.

About BLI: Since 1961, BLI has been a leading test laboratory in the world of digital imaging equipment. BLI is completely independent in all of its testing processes and subsequent reporting. All of BLI's product evaluations are conducted by highly experienced employees in its on-site testing facilities in the United Kingdom and United States where hundreds of new copiers, printers, wide-format devices, scanners, faxes and multi-function (MFP) products are evaluated and reported on each year.

OVERVIEW

MPS Monitor is a cloud-based fleet assessment and management tool that lets equipment dealers and MPS providers remotely track device meters and the remaining capacity of consumables such as toner cartridges and drums, keep records of delivered consumables and execute a number of canned reports to view data. As it's cloud-based, MPS Monitor can be accessed and used on any device with a web browser. Data is collected by a discreet utility (loaded on a networked PC at the customer site) that detects the devices connected to clients' networks, collects data from those devices and sends it to MPS Monitor. The company also offers a data collection agent that resides on compatible Samsung eXtensible Open Architecture (XOA) devices and Raspberry Pi devices running Windows 10 Embedded; MPS Monitor srl is developing a software agent that will run on Lexmark, HP and KYOCERA devices. The PC utility collects data from devices' public and private management information bases (MIBs), which means it can also access additional information not normally shared with other devices or software.

Benefits



SAVES TIME AND INCREASES PRODUCTIVITY – Data is collected by software, so staff can be better employed on more productive tasks rather than costly site visits.



ACCESS ANYWHERE – MPS Monitor is cloud-based, so users can access and use the solution from any device with a web browser, whether it's a smartphone, tablet or PC.



REDUCES IT COSTS – The solution is hosted by MPS Monitor srl and not the user, so customers don't have to pay for costly servers or pay for staff to look after them.



ENABLES PROACTIVE CUSTOMER SERVICE – Automatic alerts help users send fresh consumables to customers exactly when they need them, increasing customer satisfaction and minimizing customer intervention.



MINIMAL CUSTOMER INTRUSION – data is collected automatically by discreet software that resides on customers' PCs or compatible printers, so users don't have to disturb customers with site visits.



CHECK CONSUMABLE CAPACITIES AND DEVICE COUNTERS AT A GLANCE – MPS Monitor Light lets you view the consumable capacities of all a customer's devices, and meter readings, on one page.



EXPORT DATA TO SPOT TRENDS AND PATTERNS – users can either export data to desktop programs for further analysis or export one of 19 canned reports in many different formats, including MS Excel and Adobe PDF.



EASES THE CREATION OF INVOICES – The Billbook feature sets invoicing reminders, while the reporting system can issue the amounts for which customers can be charged.

OUR TAKE

MPS Monitor is good for dealers who aren't particularly tech-savvy or who don't want the expense and hassle of buying and maintaining their own MPS servers. Dealers subscribe to MPS Monitor, and they can walk away from it at any time, taking their data with them. It's a cloud-based solution, so dealers can access MPS Monitor from any location where there's an internet connection and on any device with a web browser. Data is collected from customers' MFPs by a data collection agent that provides a pleasingly granular level of data about a printer, its use and its consumables levels. MPS Monitor can provide detailed meter readings and report on the level and life expectancy of all consumables, such as drums, waste boxes, fusers and so on. A neat feature is the ability to schedule billing alerts in a calendar, and these tell the dealer how much is owed by a customer. A breakdown of charges can be accessed in the reporting module. Users can access up to 19 canned reports but data can also be accessed and exported via powerful yet easy to use tools. MPS Monitor is a good solution that will fit the bill for dealers looking for an MPS platform with minimal setup time and up-front investment.

Strengths

- Easy to set up
- Can be accessed from anywhere on any device with a web browser
- Users can choose between a more administrative front-end or a more device-orientated front-end at any time, whichever better suits their needs
- Detailed device information includes operator panel messages
- Remote management means dealers don't have to send staff on costly site visits, which means they can be better employed elsewhere
- MPS Monitor's application programmer's interface (API) enables it to be integrated into other applications
- Data collection can be achieved discreetly via an embedded DCA for Samsung XOA and Raspberry Pi devices
- Data Extraction tool eases the process of exporting data to Microsoft Excel for further analysis and use

Weaknesses

- Users can't easily create their own custom reports within the application
- User permissions are not as granular as those of some other MPS solutions we've tested
- Organization of the user interface can be confusing

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Product Profile

Versions MPS Monitor is a single platform that offers two “interfaces”—Contract and Light—each with different pricing plans.

Pricing There are different prices and packages for the Contract interface and the Light interface. Both can be purchased on fixed-price plans or paid in arrears for exact usage. Prices for the Light interface and API range from €60 per month for 100 devices to €1,450 per month for a 10,000-device package. Prices for the Contract interface start from a €150 fixed monthly fee for the Mini Cloud package (100 devices) to €250 for the Small package (200 devices), €350 for the Standard package (400 devices) and €450 for the Professional package (600 devices).

Users Each MPS Monitor instance can support an unlimited number of users.

Server Not applicable (hosted solution).

Client For PC-resident data collection agent: Intel Pentium 4 processor, 1-GB RAM, 50-MB hard disk space, Microsoft Windows XP or later, Microsoft .NET Framework 4.0, network and Internet access.

Compatible Hardware MPS Monitor’s agent software can collect data from any output device with a standard printer MIB, and it supports collecting private MIB data from most leading brands of hardware. The agent can be embedded in Samsung XOA devices, as well as a Raspberry Pi device running Windows 10 Embedded. Meter and other reporting for wide-format printers is not supported.

Software Integration Users can export reports in many formats, including PDF, CSV and XLS. An optional module lets users integrate Microsoft Excel with their MPS Monitor service. Developers can use MPS Monitor’s application programmer’s interface (API) to integrate the MPS Monitor service into their own systems.

Mobile Compatibility There are no native apps, but users can access MPS Monitor from any device with a web browser.

Availability MPS Monitor is sold by MPS Monitor srl and select resellers. The solution is available throughout Europe and the rest of the world.

Languages English, French, German, Italian and Spanish.

Features & Productivity

MPS Monitor has many of the features expected of a managed print services (MPS) system, such as notifications alerting dealers to problem devices, automatic counter readings and supplies management functions, and its cloud-based nature means it can be accessed easily by anyone who has a web browser and an Internet connection.

REPORTING SYSTEM

AUTOMATIC DATA COLLECTION

SUPPLIES MANAGEMENT

METER READINGS

DEVICE INFORMATION

CONSUMABLE ALERTS

MAINTENANCE ALERTS

DATA EXPORT

BILLING REMINDERS

- Like the very best MPS solutions, MPS Monitor can pull data from printers' public and private management information bases (MIBs), which means dealers can view detailed information on meters and consumables levels for almost every printer and MFP, regardless of brand. It can even allow remote personnel to see the messages displayed on a device's operator panel (if supported by the device). This elevates MPS Monitor above most OEM MPS solutions, as these typically only report information from other brands' public MIBs, and only provide information from private MIBs for their own models.
- MPS Monitor has worked closely with printer brands including HP, Lexmark, Samsung, Ricoh, Canon, KYOCERA, Brother and Panasonic to provide information from private MIBs. For those companies who do not want to cooperate with MPS Monitor, the company says it has enough SNMP experience to reverse-engineer the private MIB information used by those brands, and display it in MPS Monitor. The company claims it can use any brand's public and private MIB data within MPS Monitor.
- MPS Monitor reports a wealth of granular data to dealers, from network information to meter readings and consumables levels. Dealers can view the toner levels for a device at a glance, check the latest meter reading, view the average monthly volume for the device and see the contracted volume for that particular device.
- Dealers are alerted to devices that need attention, such as devices with low consumables levels, and are alerted to new devices that have been detected on customers' networks. The dashboard helps dealers quickly resolve issues and assist their customers.

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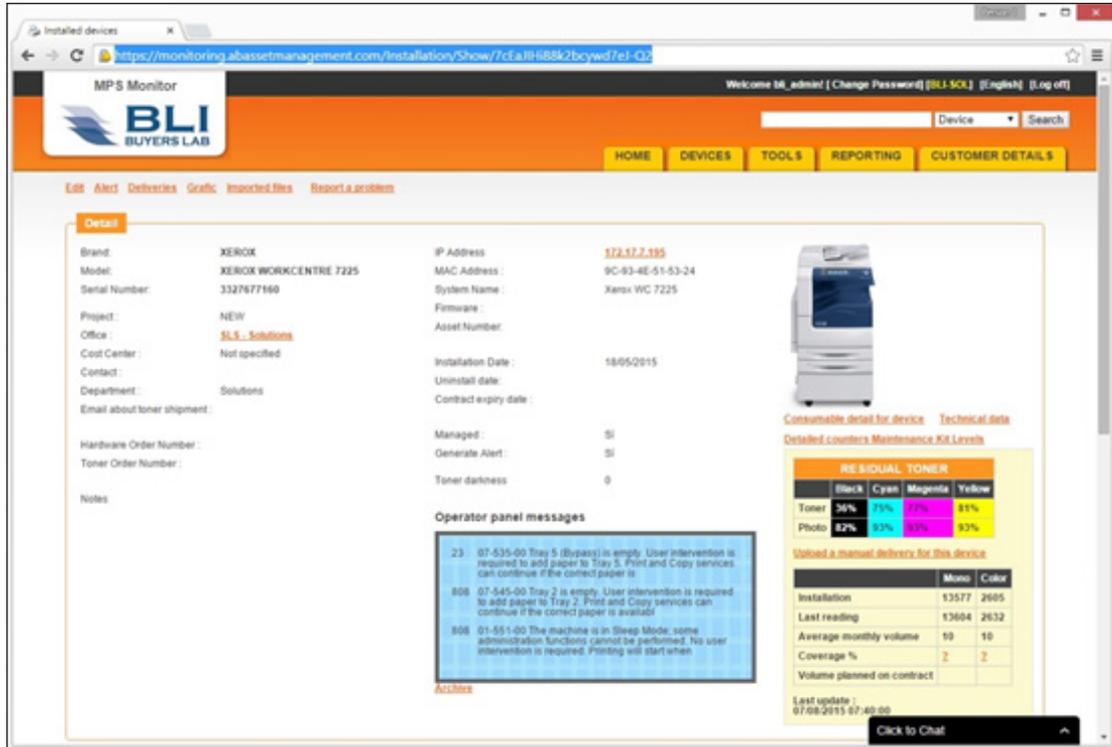
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MPS Monitor’s device management screen provides a wealth of data.

DEVICE MANAGEMENT

- Meter readings are broken down into colour and monochrome, and there’s a graph at the bottom of the device management screen that shows the number of impressions printed over time, with separate lines for colour and monochrome. MPS Monitor can even provide meter readings for scan and fax usage. Once a device has had its consumables changed and the system has calculated supply levels, MPS Monitor can calculate the average page coverage of a device. This wealth of information empowers dealers to provide proactive customer service and consumables management, and use the data to suggest devices and payment plans for customers based on their print volume history.
- As with all such solutions, the exact quality and amount of data reported by MPS Monitor is dependent on the features of a device and the quality and amount of information it records in its MIBs. For example, some devices provide detailed information on all consumable products such as fuser units, belts and drums, not just toner levels. Dealers are presented with the most important data on a device’s management screen, but can click through to this extra information if it’s available.
- MPS Monitor does not support wide-format printers, so while it will recognize the device it won’t provide meter reading or consumables level information. However, dealers can click through to a wide-format printer’s web interface from the device management screen.

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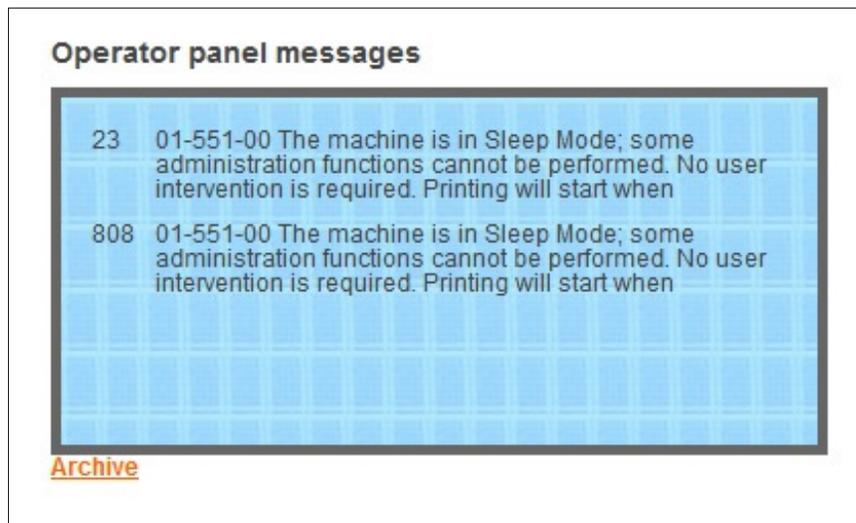
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- Dealers can also use the device management screen to view consumables shipped to customers and view archived alerts, both of which help dealers to monitor a device’s performance and reliability. MPS Monitor maintains the history of each device, and covers alerts, consumables ordering and date of consumables replacement among other things.
- The operator panel message display helps dealers to advise customers about misfeeds and other exceptional circumstances, and helps customers resolve these issues.



- MPS Monitor is sophisticated enough to recognize when customers have removed a toner cartridge and shaken it to extend its life, so it won't think customers have installed a new cartridge and create a duplicate alert when the shaken toner cartridge is exhausted. This helps to prevent dealers from sending more consumables to customers than they need.
- As one of the primary functions of MPS Monitor is consumables management, dealers can click a link on MPS Monitor’s dashboard to see a list of devices with consumables levels that have fallen below a certain percentage.
- Consumables aren't limited to toner cartridges and drums, either, as MPS Monitor will list devices with image transfer belts, waste toner bottles and fusers, among other items, that have passed their expected life.

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Consumable detail for device

Type	Color	PartNumber	Nominal Duration (Pages)	Managed Alerts	Installed Alerts	Average Duration (Pages)	Average Coverage	Remaining Duration(%)	Estimated Expiration Date
Toner	Black	Starter Kit	0	0	0	0		36	Not available
Toner	Cyan	Starter Kit	0	0	0	0		75	Not available
Toner	Magenta	Starter Kit	0	0	0	0		77	Not available
Toner	Yellow	Starter Kit	0	0	0	0		81	Not available
PhotoConductor	Black			0	0	0		82	Not available
PhotoConductor	Cyan			0	0	0		93	Not available
PhotoConductor	Magenta			0	0	0		93	Not available
PhotoConductor	Yellow			0	0	0		93	Not available

RESIDUAL TONER

	Black	Cyan	Magenta	Yellow
Toner	36%	75%	77%	81%
Photo	82%	93%	93%	93%

Upload a manual delivery for this device

	Mono	Color
Installation	13577	2605
Last reading	13604	2632
Average monthly volume	10	10
Coverage %	2	2
Volume planned on contract		

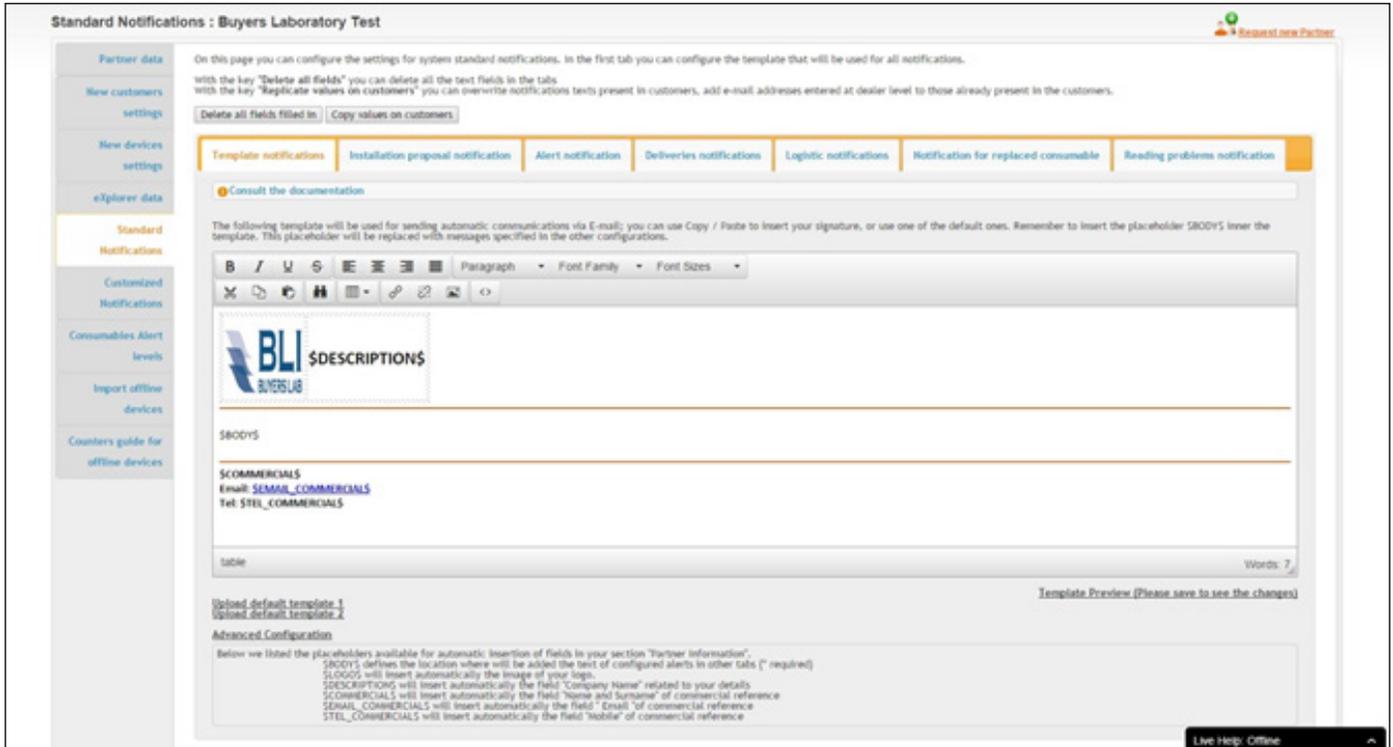
Last update : 07/08/2015 07:40:00
Live Help: Offline

MPS Monitor provides data on all consumables reported by a device, not just the toner.

- Dealers can configure the email alerts that will be sent to customers in response to an event, such as a device reaching a specific counter level or a cartridge running out of toner. These email alerts can be sent to multiple recipients, and dealers can choose to have them sent to their own staff, to customers or both.
- Dealers can edit and craft the email alerts to their own preferences, and include their own branding, body text, images and links. MPS Monitor provides basic styling options and a small selection of fonts too.
- Even better, dealers can create custom notifications that include an Excel spreadsheet. For example, dealers may want to send customers or their staff a list of devices with black toner cartridges that are below a certain threshold. The dealer can choose the fields that will be displayed in the Excel spreadsheet, such as the customer code, device serial number, device name and so on. Dealers would do well to capitalize on this powerful feature. It takes a bit of initial effort and practice to learn how to use the email alert system, but email alerts are easy to maintain once they are set up

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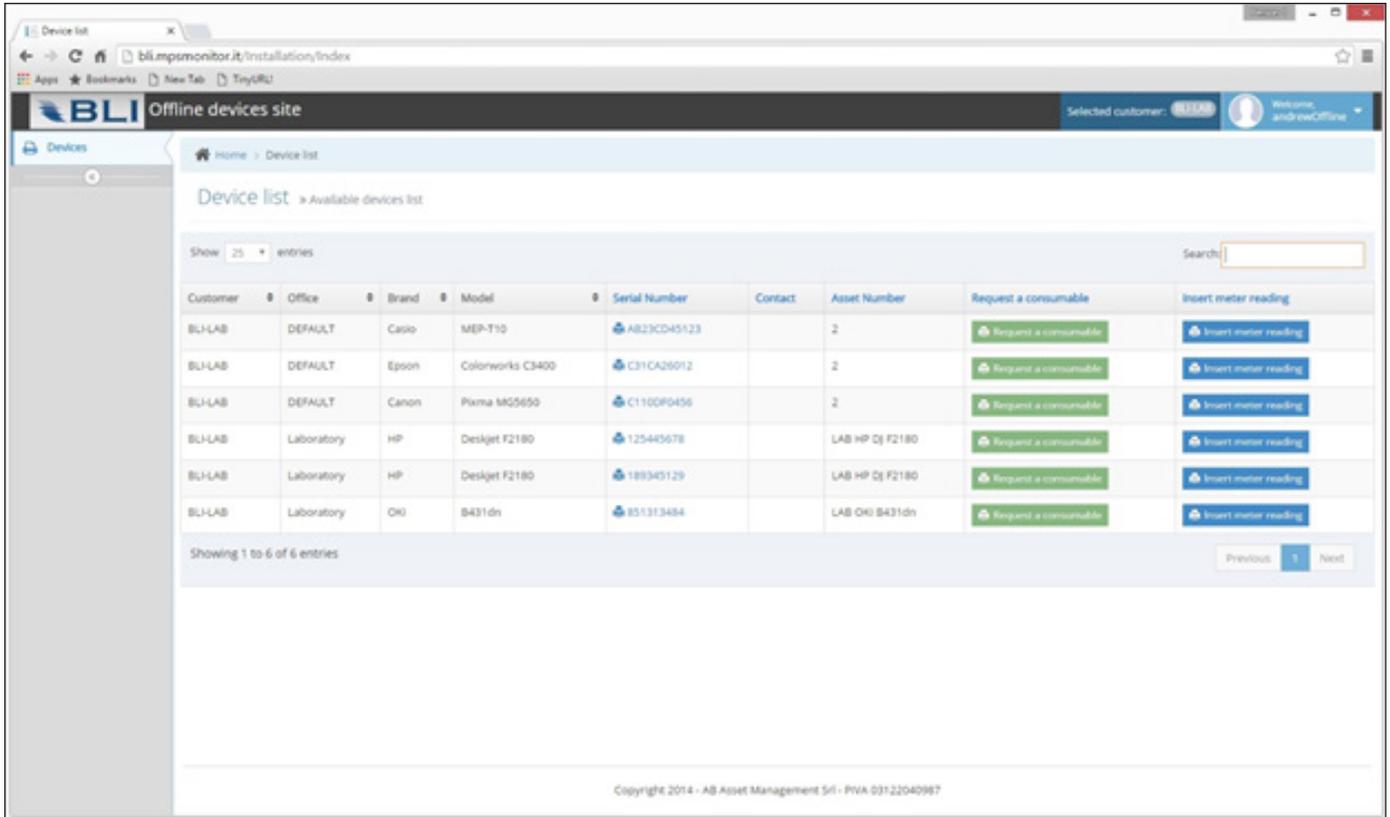


Dealers can craft their own email notifications and include their own branding.

- MPS Monitor conveniently keeps track of unmanaged devices, and stores data on alerts, counter data and average print volumes, among other things. There is no charge for this service. It is intended to be used as a sales tool for the dealer, who can use the information on unmanaged devices to propose a better deal to a customer.
- Dealers can keep track of devices not connected to a network by uploading an MS Excel spreadsheet to MPS Monitor that contains details of the devices to be managed, plus the customer and project to which the devices belong. The devices only have to be uploaded once, and are then connected with that customer and project.
- Once the details of the non-networked devices are uploaded, dealers can create a special user for a customer that allows the customer to access a special mini-site to which the customer can upload counter readings and request consumables.

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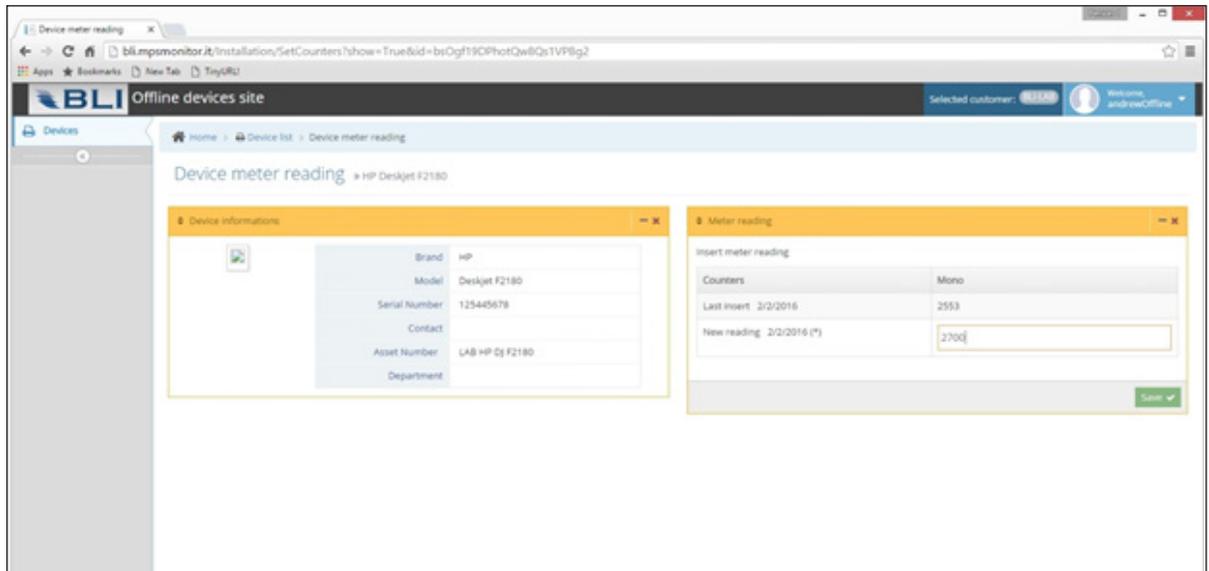
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A great feature of MPS Monitor is the ability to upload a customer’s non-networked devices for management. The customer can then easily upload counters and request consumables using a special mini-site (shown above).

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A customer simply has to enter the counter reading for a non-networked device in order to have it managed by a dealer.

USER AND CUSTOMER MANAGEMENT

- As with many MPS solutions, dealers can separate devices into different groups (in MPS Monitor groups are referred to as “customers”).
- Customers can have sub-groups created for them so that different departments can be distinguished from each other. For example, a customer might choose to have a group called Main Office and assign one set of devices to it and create another group called Reprographics that contains a different set of devices. As with moving a device from one customer to another, it’s difficult to move a device from one group to another.
- Users can be created and have customers assigned to them. The solution allows for the designation of different types of users, each with different privileges and restrictions. Those with “superuser” access to MPS Monitor, for example, can limit a user’s access to certain functions by assigning a role to them, such as Installer, CustomerCare or CustomerAlertManager. The role assigned to the user dictates the type of reports that the user can see and use. A CustomerPowerUser, for instance, will have access to eight reports by default, while an Installer will have access to none. It is also possible to provide or restrict additional reports to any user at any time, so a user’s access to reports can change as they assume or relinquish responsibilities.
- The user type also dictates the screens to which a user has access. Users designated as Installer, for example, cannot access the Consumables Management screen, whereas CustomerPowerUsers can.
- Dealers can create their own user types too. The dealer must use one of the existing roles, such as CustomerCare, as a starting point but can then assign extra permissions to it. The new role can be given a specific and meaningful name and description, and can be edited at any time to assign or revoke permissions. Although there is a decent amount of permissions to assign, the list isn’t quite as extensive or granular as we’d like.

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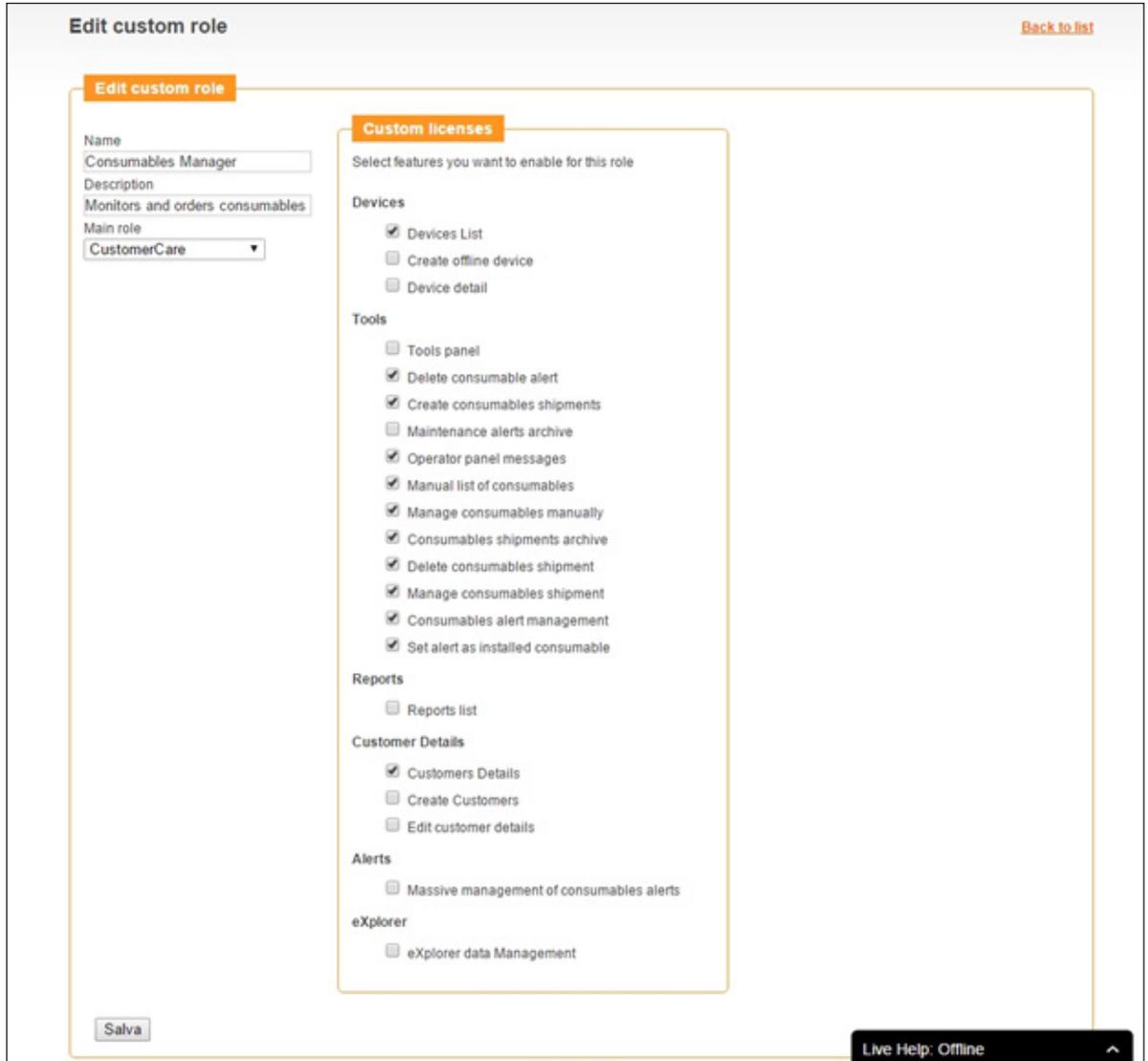
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MPS Monitor lets dealers create custom roles and define permissions.

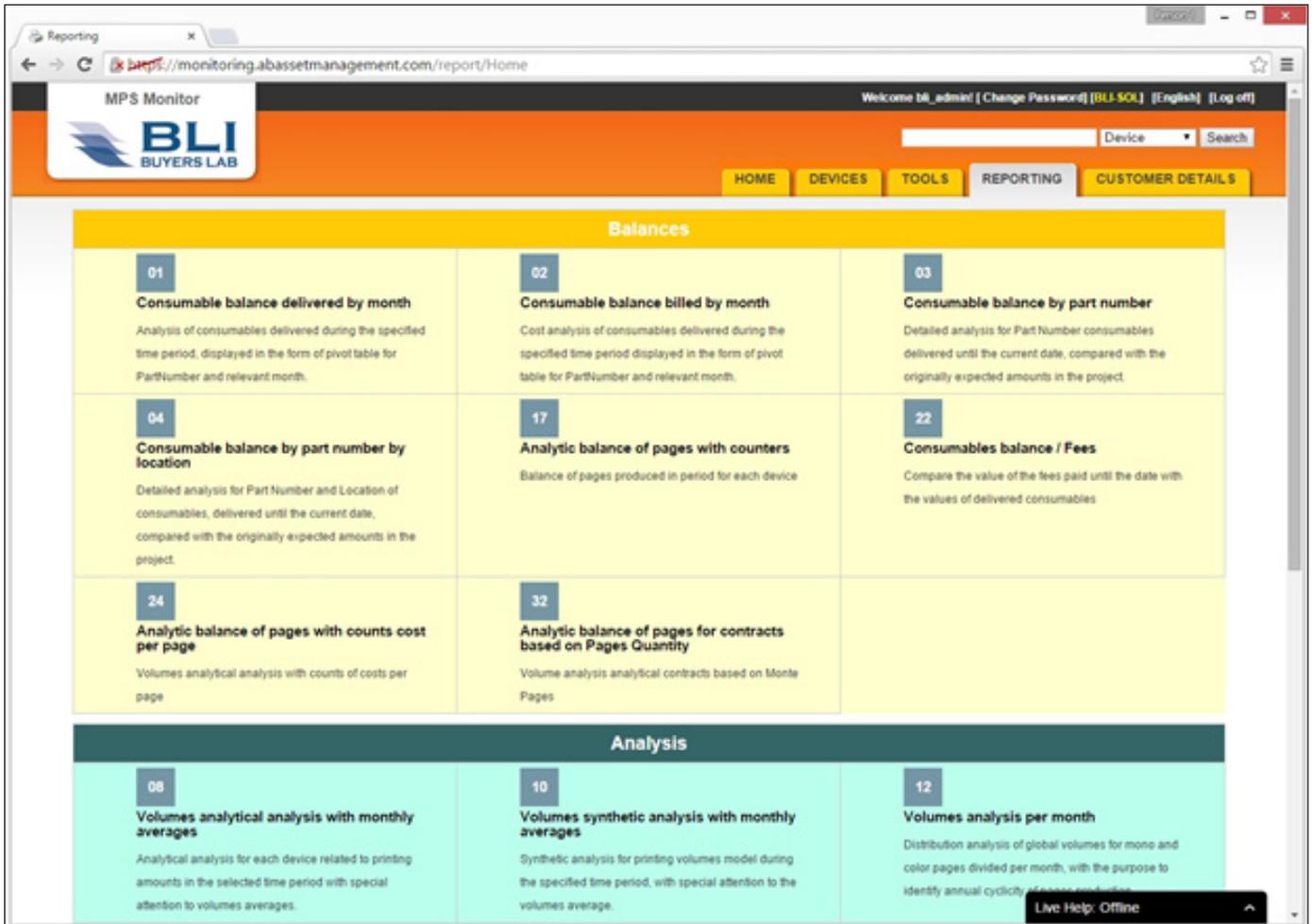
- Users will only see the customers that have been assigned to them, so there's no concern about some users, such as sales reps, having unauthorised access to other customers and their data. A dealership might give one technician access to a particular set of customers and another technician access to a different set of customers. The dealership might then give access to both sets of customers to a supervisor. The technicians would only be able to see data for their own customers, but the supervisor would be able to see data for both to make sure that the technicians are keeping on top of alerts and consumables management.

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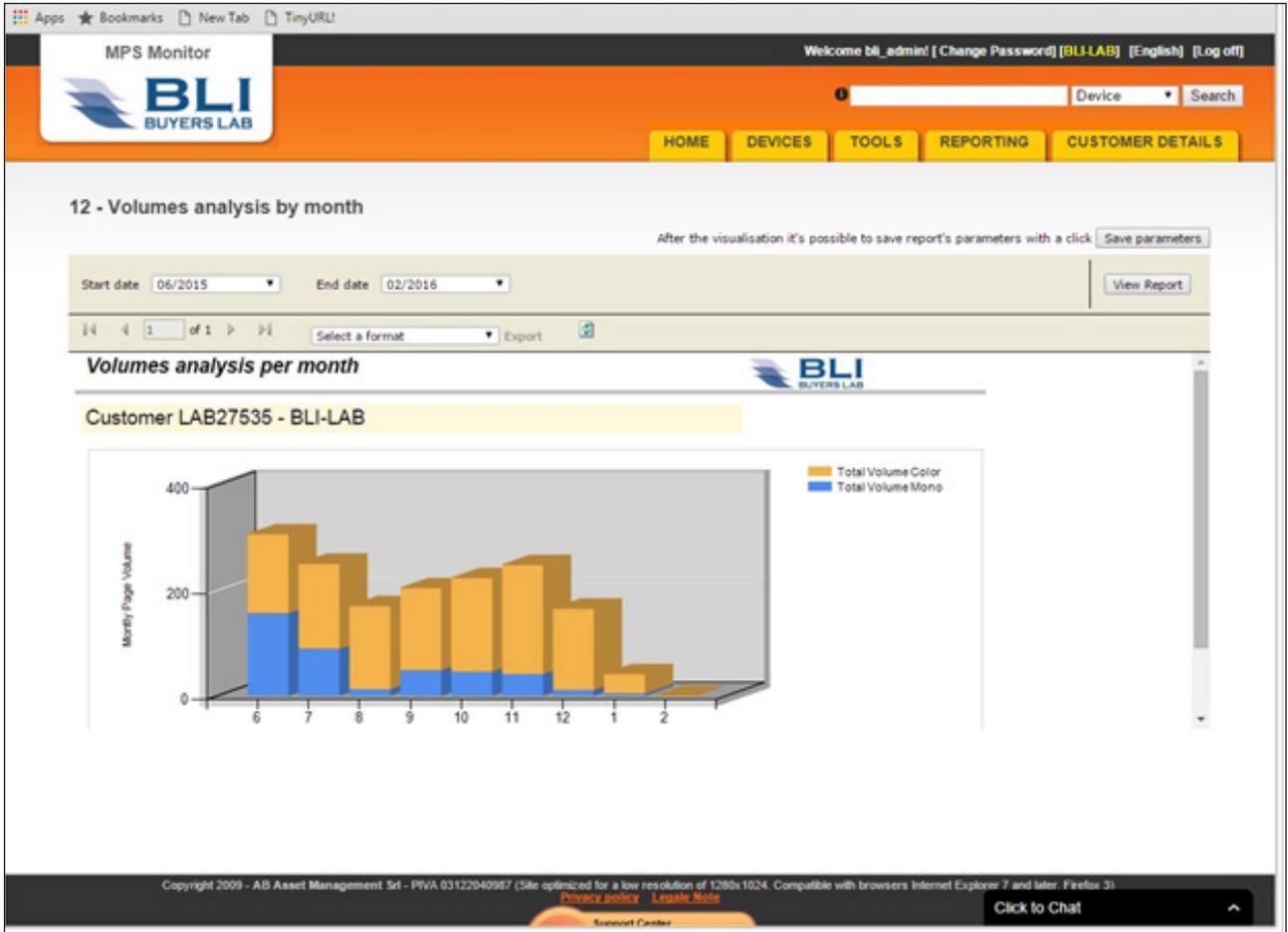
REPORTING

- Individual users can access up to 19 canned reports that provide information on billing, analysis and device management.



There are only 19 reports in MPS Monitor.

- Reports can be exported in a range of formats, including PDF, Excel and Word, among others, so reports can be distributed straight to colleagues or customers, augmented with extra information or subjected to extra analysis depending on the needs of the user.



Reports can be exported in a number of formats, including PDF, CSV and Microsoft Excel.

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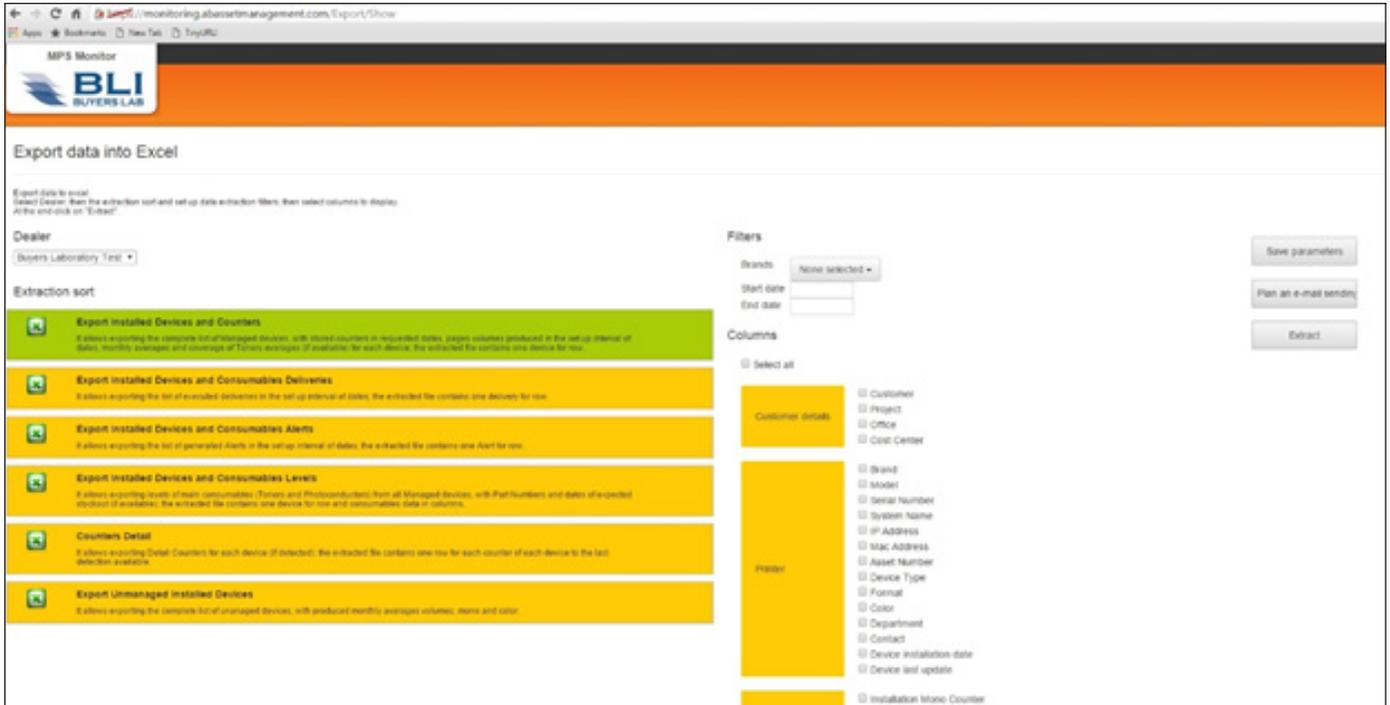
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- Although MPS Monitor lacks the ability to create custom queries directly within its user interface, it does allow dealers to export data to a Microsoft Excel file. Dealers can then analyze the data in this file using MS Excel, Access or another tool according to their needs.
- The dealer can only extract data that belongs to one of six pre-defined categories, with example categories being Export Installed Devices and Counters, or Export Installed Devices and Consumables Levels.
- Once a dealer has selected a category they can choose the specific data fields that will be extracted. The fields available are extensive, so there's great scope for creating detailed data extractions and small, precise data extractions. The types of fields available vary depending on the theme of the category chosen, but they're generally grouped into customer details, device brand and device details, among others. The fields chosen can be saved for future reuse.
- BLI would like to see a more user-friendly and comprehensive query system within MPS Monitor, but until that can be developed the data extraction tool will remain a handy feature that allows dealers extra flexibility over how their data is analyzed.



MPS Monitor’s Data Extraction tool allows dealers to export a wealth of data to a Microsoft Excel file. This data can then be analyzed according to dealers’ specific needs.

- It’s possible to create custom reports too, but this requires the use of an OLAP cube, which is a multi-dimensional representation of data. The OLAP cube interfaces a spreadsheet program such as Microsoft Excel with a dealer’s MPS Monitor database. Once set up, users can select the type of information they want to include in a report and create their own spreadsheet based report. However, the system is unwieldy, and the creation of reports in this manner requires users to have expert knowledge of the process.
- Reports can be set up to run automatically, and for the results to be emailed to multiple recipients. Reports can be sent in PDF and MS Excel formats, and can be sent on any number days during the week or monthly. The schedule is pretty granular. This is a great feature.

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For this report all parameters have been saved. It's possible activate a subscription by e-mail. Close

Create / Modify report subscription

"Consumable balance delivered by month"

Opzioni recapito report

Specify recipient e-mail address for the report delivery. It's possible to specify more addresses separated by ;.

Report format: Pdf Excel

Planificazione

Use this planning to set up the receipt frequency of the report.

Weekly planning

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

Monthly planning

<input type="checkbox"/> January	<input type="checkbox"/> February	<input type="checkbox"/> March	<input type="checkbox"/> April	<input type="checkbox"/> May	<input type="checkbox"/> June
<input type="checkbox"/> July	<input type="checkbox"/> August	<input type="checkbox"/> September	<input type="checkbox"/> October	<input type="checkbox"/> November	<input type="checkbox"/> December

Monthly week: Before v

Day of the week:

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

Day/s of calendar:

Last day of the month

As defined in project billbook Default v

Time of email sending (hh)

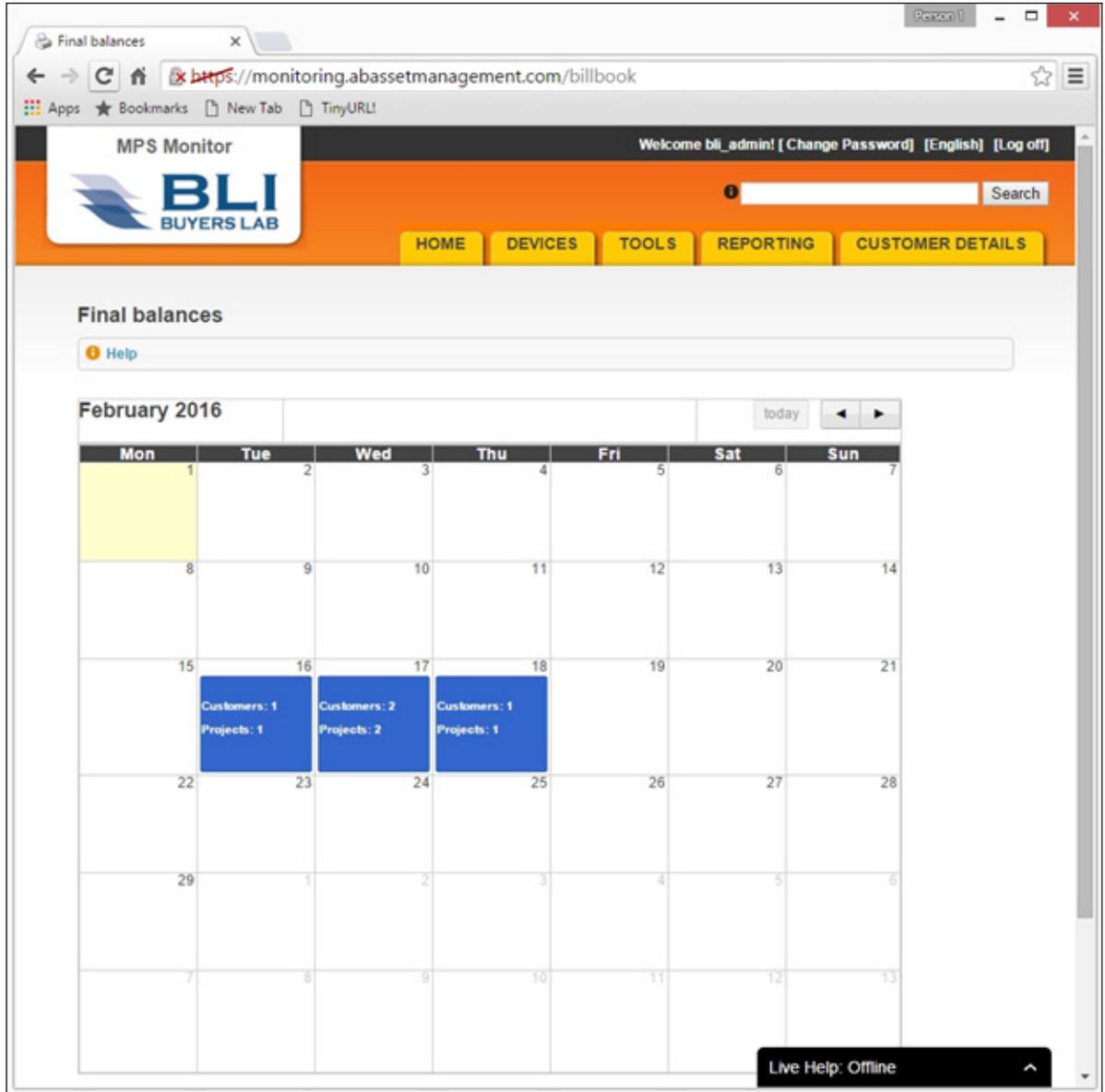
Save Close

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Reports can be set up to run automatically and send the results in PDF or MS Excel format to multiple recipients.

- A useful feature that isn't common in MPS solutions is a billing reminder. MPS Monitor lets dealers create reminders for specific dates and displays them in an Outlook-style monthly calendar which it terms a "BillBook." Dealers can't produce invoices from within MPS Monitor or keep track of financial accounting, but the combination of the BillBook and billing reports will be a big help to those tasked with these processes.



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The Billbook feature provides helpful reminders to issue invoices, and could be a boon for small dealerships that don't have access to sophisticated but expensive back-end systems.

VERTICAL MARKET SUITABILITY

MPS Monitor is a general-purpose MPS solution and is not especially suited to any specific vertical market.

SOFTWARE INTEGRATION

- MPS Monitor lets users export reports in a variety of formats, including CSV and XML. Unlike some MPS platforms, MPS Monitor doesn't interface directly with off-the-shelf applications or backend applications a dealer might already have in use. Dealers can request a special module that interfaces their MPS Monitor service with Microsoft Excel, but it requires considerable expertise to use.
- Something that really does set MPS Monitor apart from the crowd is the ability to access it via an application programming interface (API). This allows third-party developers to incorporate MPS Monitor's database and functionality within their own programs transparently.
- Developers pay a subscription to use the MPS Monitor API, and in return they get a 'token' that grants their apps access to MPS Monitor via API calls. All API calls must be made using Secure Socket Layer (SSL) technology, which creates an encrypted link between a developer's app and MPS Monitor, ensuring a secure connection.

USABILITY

Users interact with MPS Monitor exclusively through the web interface, so the methods of interaction will be familiar to everyone who's ever used the internet. Users move from page to page via hyperlinks and enter data using text fields. MPS Monitor's interface is uncomplicated, and this gives users the confidence to click and explore.

- Although it's a single system, MPS Monitor has two different web interfaces. Curiously, though, users must be created independently for each interface, even though the customers and devices all remain the same whichever interface is used.
- The most powerful interface is referred to as the "Contract" interface, which is where dealers can manage supplies and generate reports. The other interface is known as the "Light" interface, which is simpler and ideal for checking the consumables levels and counters of many printers at a glance.

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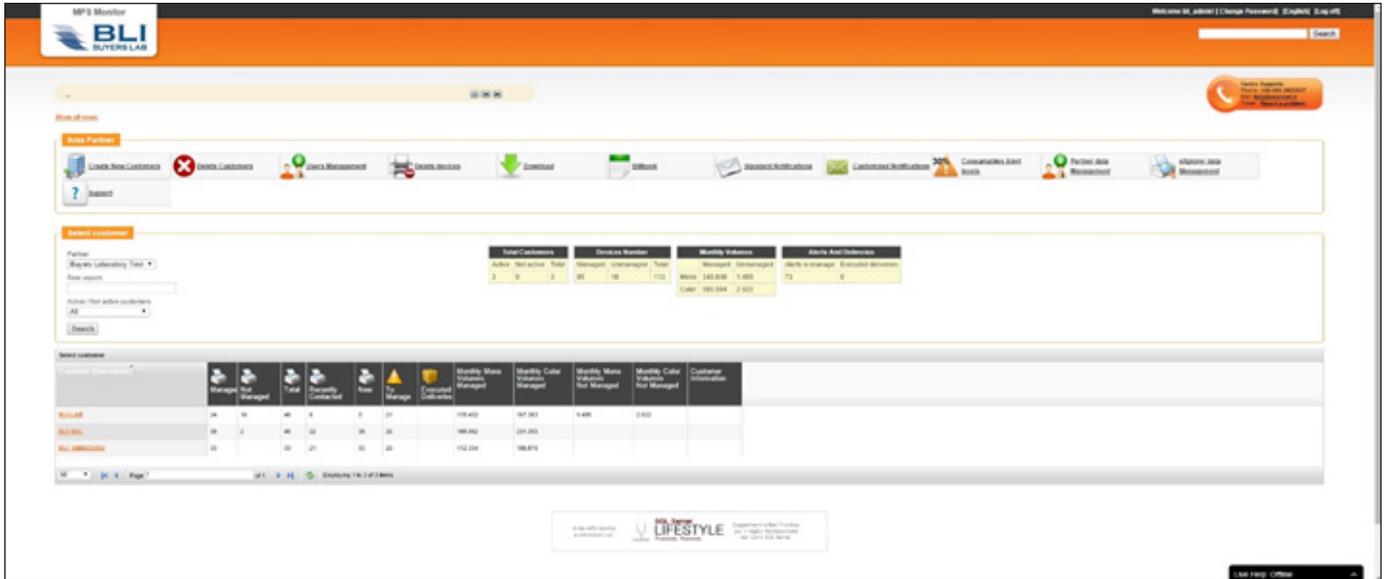
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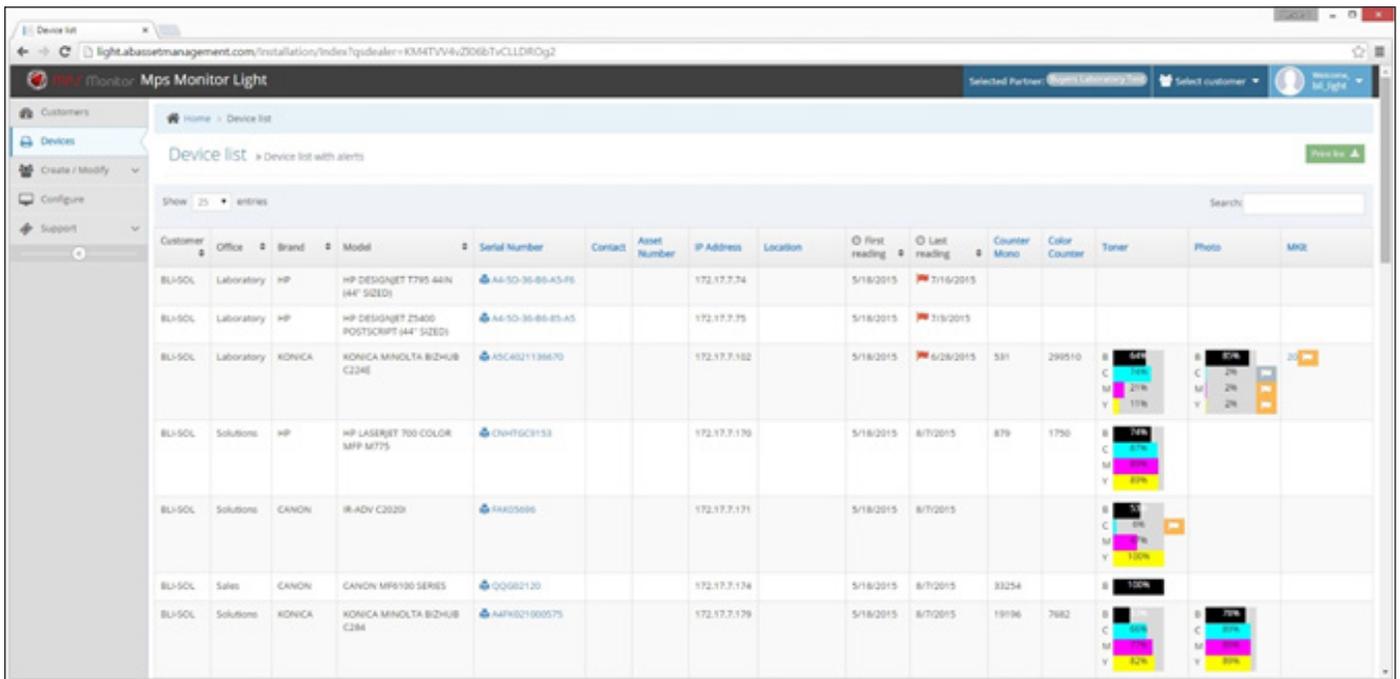
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The Contract interface is ideal for managing customers and users, printing reports and tracking consumable shipments.



MPS Monitor's Light interface is ideal for monitoring devices and their consumables at a glance.

- The Light interface lets users view a table of devices, and a colourful bar chart on each row lets users see soon-to-expire consumables at a glance. Clicking a device on the table takes users to a screen that shows even more detailed information for a device, including operator panel messages, drum and maintenance kit life expectancy, and network information, among other things. The data on screen is arranged in panels, and users can even rearrange the items on screen, although this feature is of limited value because the changes cannot be saved and it reverts back to the default layout when the user leaves the screen. The Light interface is perfect for those users whose primary concern is just monitoring consumables levels.
- The Contract portal, meanwhile, is best suited to dealers and those in charge of managing the supply of consumables to customers. This interface looks a bit cluttered, and it'll take a while to get used to the various screens. Although interacting with MPS Monitor is straightforward due to its web-based nature, the organization of the various screens and functions isn't. As an example, if a dealer is looking at a customer's devices they must first click a small link in the top-right of the screen that's located next to the Change Password and Log Off options to switch to a different customer. There isn't any intuition behind the placement of the link, and we'd prefer to use a drop-down menu in a more prominent position to change customer, or perhaps a list in a panel at the side of the screen.
- At the top level the Contract portal is split into five tabs, with each tab representing a feature stream, such as Reporting, Devices and Customer Details. The user can perform tasks related to the tab chosen, such as selecting a report and filtering the data presented in it to suit each user's needs.
- Data is primarily presented to the user in the form of a table that can be filtered by entering words in text fields that appear above the table. Some of the data in the tables is hyperlinked, and clicking it will either perform some function, such as deleting a consumable alert, or take the user to the management screen for a specific device. The Contract interface's device management screen looks similar to that of the Light interface, but items cannot be rearranged, and counter and consumables levels are not as easy to comprehend.
- It's odd that some dealer data can't be edited once entered. For example, BLI's analysts could modify some of BLI's address but not all of it.
- The Contract interface doesn't respond well to being resized, and the various onscreen elements can obscure each other if the web browser is sized too small. This happened in Google Chrome and Internet Explorer.

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The onscreen elements clash when the web browser is resized to make the interface smaller.

- In the Contract interface, the column for each toner is displayed in that colour, so the column for yellow toner has a yellow background, the cyan column has a cyan background and so on. This is a helpful capability, but the colour columns are displayed even for monochrome devices, which is initially confusing, especially if you're not familiar with the printer and don't know that it's monochrome. We'd like the toner table to change dynamically so that only relevant columns are listed, as is the case with the Light interface.

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RESIDUAL TONER				
	Black	Cyan	Magenta	Yellow
Toner	60%			
Photo	91%			

[Upload a manual delivery for this device](#)

	Mono	Color
Installation	2572	
Last reading	2583	
Average monthly volume	4	
Coverage %	?	?
Volume planned on contract		

Last update :
05/08/2015 07:45:00

The Cyan, Magenta and Yellow columns aren't removed from the Residual Toner table when viewing a monochrome printer, which can be confusing.

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- BLI found that MPS Monitor works better in Internet Explorer than Chrome. For example, if a user clicks on a link to go to a screen to which they don't have access, they're taken to a screen that tells them they're not permitted to see the screen. There's a link on this screen that takes the user back to the previous screen, but this link worked only in Internet Explorer, not Chrome.
- MPS Monitor has a comprehensive user manual that provides detailed information for powerusers, but will prove accessible to users new to the solution too
- There is some inline help available for certain page elements in the form of an icon that when pressed opens a Google Doc that contains a brief description of that function. The inline help can be downloaded in PDF and MS Word 97's DOC formats.

- Although MS Word is very popular, and other applications such as LibreOffice can open DOC files, we still think the RTF format would have been a better choice than DOC for the widest compatibility with word-processing systems.
- The inline help is great if the user needs a detailed overview of a feature or function, but a shorter, more succinct version would be helpful too. BLI would like to see tooltips used to provide a brief inline explanation of a feature.
- When the inline help is downloaded as a PDF, some of the text is cut off on the right-hand side. With the DOC version, all the text is present, but some of the images flow off-page. This problem is solved by switching to a landscape orientation.
- The help pages give practical examples of why and how a particular feature is used. This is helpful, especially for those new to the solution.

IT ADMINISTRATION & SECURITY

INSTALLATION / CONFIGURATION

- If dealers opt for a typical installation all data will reside in cloud storage and installation will be a simple affair. Hybrid setups involve the installation and configuration of a local server, which adds complexity. MPS Monitor or its resellers will assist dealers with the installation of a hybrid setup.
- Once installed and configured, a dealer can create customers and users, and use the eXplorer agent software to discover printers at users' sites.
- Dealers can have multiple instances of the eXplorer agent on a single PC. This can be helpful if a location is split into sub-groups. eXplorer instances can be tasked with detecting printers within a specific IP range, so one eXplorer can look for devices within a specific device range that defines them as being located in a sales office, while another eXplorer can detect devices within a different IP address range that's associated with a separate group, such as an accounts office.

ONGOING ADMINISTRATION

- User and customer management is straightforward and user privileges can be granted or revoked easily via tick-boxes on the user management screen. It's equally straightforward for users to add new customers.

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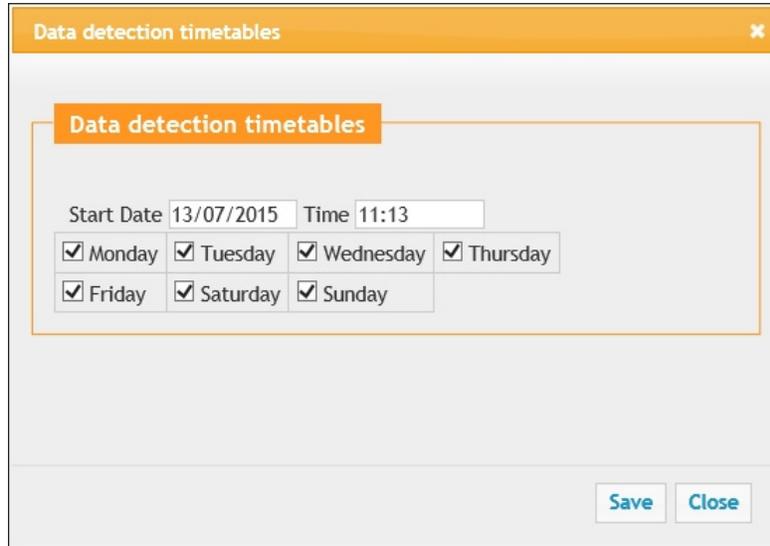
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- Data is collected by the eXplorer software module, which resides on a computer, a Samsung XOA-compatible device or a Raspberry Pi running Windows 10 Embedded at the customer’s site. Users can create schedules for the eXplorer software to follow, so that it can find networked printers and report information on them at a time and date that suits the dealer. Dealers can tick boxes to choose the days on which the eXplorer can run, so dealers can choose to scan a customer’s managed devices on weekdays but not Saturdays and Sundays, for instance.

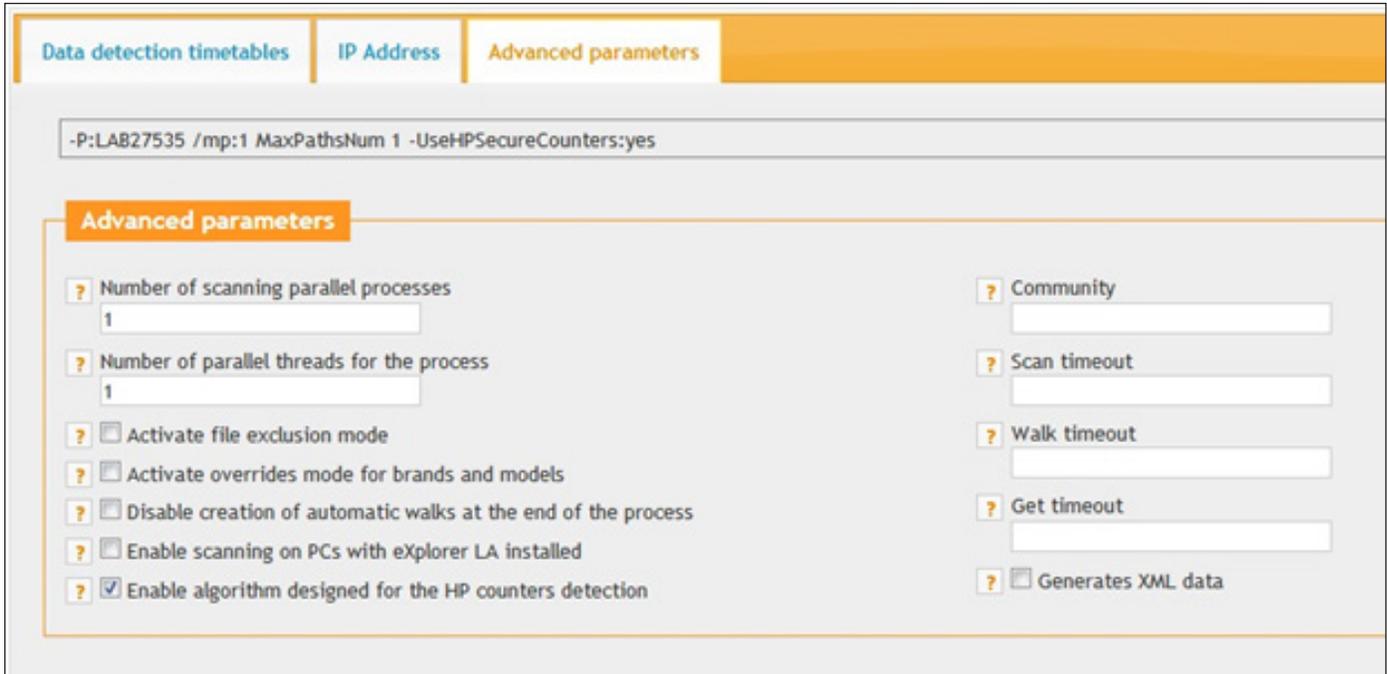


Dealers can specify the days on which data is to be collected.

- BLI tested the Samsung XOA-embedded eXplorer agent, and found that it was easy to install and worked brilliantly. The XOA-embedded eXplorer agent is limited to collecting data from up to 20 devices only, however.
- Although BLI didn’t get the opportunity to test the eXplorer DCA with a Raspberry Pi, it does like the idea, as a customer could plug it into a spare USB port on an MFP for power and leave it running discreetly in the background.
- The eXplorer data collection agent can also be configured using advanced options, as shown in the screenshot below. Dealers can dictate the number of parallel processes the utility can use to get data from devices and send it to MPS Monitor’s databases, for instance, or set the timeout setting so that the eXplorer agent doesn’t waste too long trying to detect a printer that isn’t there anymore.

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Dealers can set advanced options for the eXplorer data collection agent.

- Dealers can send an automatic notification to their customers that asks them to install or reinstall the eXplorer agent, along with instructions for doing so. The dealer can create a batch of notifications that are tailored to individual customers by the system.
- Users can receive email notifications from an email address with the dealer’s domain name rather than the typical noreply@mpsmonitor.com. Not only does this further personalize the system to the dealer’s brand, it also minimizes the chances of a customer mistaking an important notification for spam.
- As MPS Monitor is cloud-based, the dealers simply log on to the MPS Monitor website and create users and customers from there. The eXplorer software is easy to install, but it can be installed remotely if users have difficulty doing so.
- Something to bear in mind is that use of MPS Monitor is entirely reliant on an internet connection. While all remote print management solutions use the internet to collect data from remote clients, solutions that are installed on a local server will still be accessible to dealership personnel if their internet connection is lost.

SECURITY

- MPS Monitor is ordinarily hosted completely on Microsoft Azure servers where it runs as a cloud service to which dealers connect via a secure connection with 128-bit encryption and TLS 1.0. Microsoft reports that its Azure servers are well guarded against Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks, and

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undergo regular penetration testing. Data stored on the Microsoft Azure servers is encrypted with AES-256 encryption.

- Dealers who aren't happy with an entirely cloud-based solution can implement a hybrid cloud solution where the most sensitive data is stored on a local server and the rest is uploaded to cloud storage. All private data, such as customer names, contact numbers, contractual information and pricing is kept on a local server while only anonymous data such as device serial numbers, counter information and such like will be kept on the cloud server.
- Access to the service is password-protected and dealers have the ability to revoke or permit access to certain screens and functions. Although the level of security is similar to other MPS solutions BLI has evaluated, we'd still prefer to see more granular user security options, and the ability to enforce good password discipline by forcing users to change their passwords regularly according to a schedule.
- Dealers connect to the solution through a secure connection with 128-bit TLS 1.0 encryption. MPS Monitor allows dealers to dictate the number and type of reports to which users have access, but the degree to which dealers can dictate the screens and features to which users have access is far from granular, which is disappointing compared to other solutions that BLI has tested.
- MPS Monitor claims that the eXplorer data collection software is used in high-security environments such as airports, banks and so on. MPS Monitor says these organizations have performed an internal certification process and authorized the eXplorer software for use on their production networks. MPS Monitor aims to have the eXplorer software ISO 27001 certified by the end of May 2016, ISO 27001 being a standard that relates to the security of information.

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SUPPORT & TRAINING

- Dealers can get help from MPS Monitor srl in a variety of ways, including by telephone, Skype and email. Most support queries will be dealt with via a ticketing system. MPS Monitor srl provides telephone and email support between 09:00 and 18:00 Central European Time, and although users must pay for phone calls, the cost of support is included in users' subscriptions. Users can also email MPS Monitor srl for help and support, although most requests for help will be made through a ticketing system and initiated within MPS Monitor. Top-level users can access a special support screen that shows

a list of outstanding and closed tickets, which the user can filter according to customer name, support category (such as “Problems with a customer”) and ticket ID.

- A neat feature within MPS Monitor is the ability to chat online to a member of the MPS Monitor support team, although that is limited to normal business hours.

VALUE

MPS Monitor is competitively priced compared with other MPS solutions we’ve evaluated. It’s worth remembering that MPS Monitor is hosted by MPS Monitor srl, so dealers don’t need to maintain a server unless they opt for a hybrid cloud setup. Customers who subscribe to the Light interface pay a little less than those who opt for the Contract interface, but they forfeit the Contract interface’s extra features such as contract and consumable management, and the BillBook, which is used to remind dealers to bill customers for their services. It’s worth noting that those who subscribe to the Contract interface can use the Light interface free of charge.

Dealers who opt for the Contract Portal view can subscribe to the Enterprise plan, which allows them to pay in arrears for the exact number of devices they’ve monitored, or subscribe to one of four packages for a fixed monthly fee: Mini Cloud (€150, up to 100 devices), Small (€250, up to 200 devices), Standard (€350, up to 400 printers) and Professional (€450, up to 600 printers).

If dealers choose the Enterprise plan, MPS Monitor srl says the typical cost for a dealer who manages 2,000 devices includes a one-off start-up payment of €2,800 and a €1,300-per-month subscription. Maintenance and support is included in all subscriptions. The start-up payment includes three days of training at the dealer’s premises, remote webinars and consultancy, it also includes the migration of a dealer’s existing data into MPS Monitor and the integration of MPS Monitor with other software that a dealer might use, if such things are required. Those who choose one of the fixed price packages forfeit on-site training, and data import and integration is subject to negotiation.

Dealers who just need the Light interface or want to use the API have two options. The first is the Exact plan, which enables customers to pay in arrears for exactly what they’ve used. Customers who choose this plan pay 0,70€ (approximately 50p) per printer per month with unlimited data history. With the Exact plan there’s no minimum number of devices and no fixed fee; customers simply pay for what they’ve used that month.

The second payment method is to choose one option from a set of packages. A Basic package allows the customer to manage up to 100 printers per month for a fixed fee of

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€60 (approximately £43), rising to €1,450 (approximately £1,029) for a 10,000-printer Top package.

With MPS Monitor, the price per device varies according to how many devices a dealer needs to manage, so it's hard to compare it exactly to the competition. In the interests of comparison, though, other MPS solutions that BLI has evaluated include a suite with a per-device price of just US 25c (approximately 16p), although that solution requires a minimum spend of US\$250 (approximately £161). Another solution costs US\$100 (approximately £65) to manage up to 100 printers. With MPS Monitor, the more devices a dealer needs to manage, the cheaper the price per device. Even so, MPS Monitor should present good value to dealers with relatively small fleets, especially as the price per device will fall as their fleet expands.

Dealers who cancel their subscription have 30 days in which to retrieve their data in a number of ways. They can:

- Export the data for each customer from MPS Monitor in CSV format before the subscription runs out
- Request an OLAP cube via Dropbox with all data in an Excel pivot table.
- Request an SQL database containing the dealer's data, which is supplied free of charge.
- Download and import data using online services that make use of MPS Monitor's REST APIs, before the subscription runs out.

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