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'Future Vision' Corporate Social  
Responsibility strategy

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David Clarkson,  
Commercial Director

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### Overview

**Armstrong Watson is a full-service accountancy firm with a strong, 14-office presence in the North of England. Founded over 140 years ago, the business is firmly established in the Top 40 UK accountancy firms with a turnover of £18.5 million (€21.2 million) and a reputation for delivering a "big firm" portfolio of services in a personal, "local firm" manner. Clients range from entrepreneurial start-ups to established international businesses, and in recent years Armstrong Watson has built specialist expertise in the renewable energy and environmental sustainability industries.**

In acquiring a number of smaller accountancy practices, Armstrong Watson inherited an untidy mix of equipment that consisted of 140 printers, 30 photocopiers, 22 fax machines and 20 scanners, from a range of manufacturers. Across the 350-plus staff there were a similar variety of printing practices, with many employees having their own personal devices.

**The abundance of diverse devices was a major barrier to efficiency. Ageing machines were costly, unreliable and in many cases lacked the features necessary for modern business practice.** End-users' experiences were inconsistent, and multiple suppliers resulted in a mix of consumables, differing service responses and numerous contact points. Armstrong Watson tried to outsource their printer maintenance to a third-party IT company, but that solution proved expensive and inefficient. Meanwhile, the absence of a company-wide network and automated workflow made it difficult for management to get an accurate picture of who was printing what and in what volumes and page formats.

### Environmental impact

An additional concern for Commercial Director David Clarkson was bringing the printing operations into line with Armstrong Watson's 'Future Vision' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy. Launched in 2008, **Future Vision sets targets for the firm to minimise its environmental impact in five key areas, including paper, waste and energy.** Explains David Clarkson: "Future Vision is a vital component of our proposition to potential clients in all industries, but especially in the renewable energy and sustainability sectors, where we've worked hard to establish a presence. Having a CSR policy in place differentiates us from competitors, but we also have to demonstrate that we adhere to it."

After considering proposals from a number of vendors, Armstrong Watson selected Canon to scope and implement a new company-wide printing infrastructure. David Clarkson says **Canon won not only for its product and solutions portfolio, but also for its emphasis on understanding the role of printing and scanning within the firm.** "Before making any recommendations, Canon worked hard to get under the skin of our organisation and understand what needed improving and how best to do it. Understanding our clients' businesses is a philosophy we strongly subscribe to ourselves, and we felt very confident Canon was the partner for us."

### Print audit

Taking nothing on trust, Canon's first step was to conduct a thorough print audit, combining visits to Armstrong Watson offices with a questionnaire asking all employees to recount their experiences with the existing equipment and to describe their future needs. The results confirmed the scope for immediate, significant improvements. Many users were frustrated at the unreliability of their devices, disappointed with inconsistent quality, and clear about the features they needed to work more productively.

After collating the findings, Canon submitted a proposal with five objectives: to reduce costs, improve environmental performance, increase productivity, enhance document processes, and improve information security.

The Canon solution replaced the original equipment with just 43 multifunctional devices (MFDs). Technical manager Paul Cullen, who was closely involved in scoping and implementing the solution, says that cutting the number of machines by over 70% "delivered immediate savings on our energy consumption, while Canon's uniFLOW document and device management software has really transformed printing throughout the organisation."

### Facts at their fingertips

uniFLOW gives Armstrong Watson the ability to manage the output of all the MFDs across the practice. It provides visibility and control over printing and scanning and also delivers improved document security, ensuring sensitive data is protected. Says Paul Cullen: "We can drill down into the total volume of print and see exactly what it consists of - who's printing what, on which machines, how much is in colour or black and white, and how much is double sided." He is especially pleased with the 'MyPrintAnywhere' module, which provides secure, confidential printing throughout the organisation without providing staff with personal printers. With 'MyPrintAnywhere', print jobs are held on a central server at Armstrong Watson's data centre until the user authenticates them using a four-digit PIN on the MFD of choice. Jobs remain on the server for 72 hours before being deleted if they have not been selected. "Printed jobs can no longer be left on the printer, which has improved efficiency, reduced wastage and also gives additional document security. So far, 4% of the monthly output is deleted after 72 hours." He adds that uniFLOW also enhances scanning security because users can only scan to their company e-mail accounts.

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### Rapid returns

The project has been remarkable for the speed with which the return on investment has become apparent, says David Clarkson. "60% of all printing across the firm is now double sided and we have saved over one million pages in the first three months. Achieving this while spending less on energy and consumables has had a positive impact on our cash flow."

In the IT department, Paul Cullen quickly noticed big changes too, including a 50% reduction in calls from staff on issues related to printing and scanning. "Instead of spending time solving a variety of problems with a number of suppliers, we have a single number to call at Canon's head office for hardware and software issues. There are also major advantages in dealing directly with the manufacturer, especially on those occasions when parts have to be obtained."

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### Managing change

**The transition from the old to the new system was extremely smooth thanks to Armstrong Watson and Canon working closely together to develop a sensitive change-management strategy.** As David Clarkson explains "We were proposing a root-and-branch reorganisation that would inevitably unsettle some staff, but by involving them from the start we reassured them that their views would help shape the solution." The practice of sharing information with employees has since continued. The company now issues monthly reports - generated by uniFLOW - detailing the savings in paper, energy and consumables.

After an intensive two-month trial of the hardware and software at two of their offices, the new infrastructure was rolled out over a single month, at a rate of one office every other day. Canon worked with Paul Cullen to design the training programme and attended every roll-out. "In addition to training every user on the basic features of the MFDs, we also trained 'super-users' in each location to provide additional troubleshooting expertise."

As evidence for the success of the roll-out, David Clarkson cites the speed with which the staff embraced the solution. "It's no exaggeration to say that, almost without exception, the feedback within just 48 hours was overwhelmingly positive."

And, he says, the technology has had one quite unexpected impact - on the company's culture. "Because people congregate at the MFDs to collect their print jobs, they're talking more instead of dealing with each other just by e-mail. They've left their silos and started to communicate again."

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