

## White Paper Sample

# 7 Steps to Sustain Your Educational Field Service Contracts *Become their Educational Partner*

*By Dwight Macon, Freelance Technology Copywriter*

### ***The Problem***

Schools – both public and private, depend heavily on copiers to fulfill their day-to day classroom teaching and administrative documentation needs. To accomplish this requires fast, reliable, and easy access to copiers. While there are many vendors that can supply this need, there remains a perennial challenge that all end-users face every day – downtime or otherwise non-functional devices.

### ***The Opportunity***

While sometimes due to machine malfunction or parts wear, 80% of the problem schools encounter is due to improper handling or abuse by the user. There is a critical gap between supplying good devices onsite and the knowledge of best practices to use them.

Addressing this gap with proper and consistent training from the technology provider can provide powerful incentives for sustaining a new or existing service contract.

The following proposes an affordable, win-win-win solution for all stakeholders – the school/ client, its everyday users, and the copier service provider.

### ***Partner vs Customer Perspective***

First, there is a need for the copier provider to adjust their client relationship perspective. Traditionally, providers think and speak of schools as “customer accounts”. That is true in the definitive sense. However, from the educational institution’s perspective, they see a much higher mission.

Schools do not need to just be sold to and serviced – they need a “partner” who understands their mission and role for the youth of today, the leaders of tomorrow. Any supplier/provider can pitch sharper cost-saving numbers, more features, higher quality

and faster pages per minute. But that alone does not address the throughput schools need from technology providers. Failure to understand and address this is not only irresponsible, but also weakens a provider's ability to differentiate from its competitors.

### ***Create A Sustainable Relationship***

A *partner* perspective can enable you as a technology provider to side with the client school district as well as out-distance provider competition. Then, the state board of education, the district, and the individual teacher/administrator would see the provider as a major stakeholder within *their* long-term educational initiatives. With this established in the mind of the client, the provider offers a *sustainable relationship* that transcends model features and benefits, price, and other traditional selling points.

### **Steps Toward Partnering**

1. *Realize the unique technology needs and mindset of public education.* These include budget, safety, and workday time constraints. For example, teachers have 5 minutes between classes to print documents. They do not have time to triage with a help desk on the phone to remedy a paper jam or other error messages. The typical reaction is to switch to another working copier, or to just walk away.

2. *Establish a rapport with school superintendents, principals and other district leaders.* Instead of the traditional "salesman/expert" approach, sit down with them as a consultant. For example, there is usually no budget assigned to a liaison per school to monitor/report copier problems. Brainstorm with them to explore non-financial incentives for in-house tech liaisons. This will take you miles beyond your competition and lay a foundation for a sustainable relationship.

Help them to see you as not only a better choice, but the best and *only* choice who understands their mission and objectives.

3. *Supplement or dovetail with schools existing technology programs.* These include 21<sup>st</sup> Century Scholars, STEM Program, and even local and national private technology donors or grants. As a provider, you may be able to establish your own financial supplement in support of your client schools.

4. *Educate your marketing team about the new perspective.* Marketing directors and field sales reps love to add to their arsenal of selling features. Get them on board with

your unique, new initiative. When it comes to sustaining/renewing contracts they are key stakeholders.

*5. Keep field service techs in the loop.* Often overlooked, your field service technicians are invaluable for feedback on the status and progress of your new initiative. Way beyond the field account rep, techs are your daily “boots on the ground” and the most frequently seen face of your company.

Educate your field technicians and allow them to educate *you* on how your initiative is performing. Every day, techs hear and see everything from your end-user’s perspective. In addition to repair training, be sure to arm them with adequate information tracking tools to respond correctly to onsite questions on-the-fly.

*6. Don’t leave youth outside the loop. Make students the center of your initiative!* Because of the “print management” marketing trend, many providers have made their copiers “off-limits” to students – fearing abuse or vandalism. However, in the school’s eyes, “It’s all about the children...”. Administrators, teachers, technology providers only exist because students are there! Train them to use the technology.

Step 2 above mentions the national program STEM (**S**cience, **T**echnology, **E**ngineering and **M**ath). Such programs nurture early exploration and acquisition of job-ready skills e.g. engineering, computer programming, electronics, cosmetology and barbering – the list goes on and on. Why not feed the copier industry with job-ready technicians for tomorrow?

*7. If the school/district is already your client, use the technology you already have onsite to launch the new initiative.* And if you’re pitching them for the first time, fine-tune your offering to address their existing efforts and unfulfilled needs.

In conclusion, you as technology provider can sustain your existing school service contracts, and “clinch” new prospects by simply adjusting your approach. Become their educational partner. They will be hard-pressed to leave you or turn you down!

### **About the Author**

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