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## ChildNet looks to tablets to cut printing costs

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As the mobile workforce increasingly uses tablets and smartphones, a nonprofit group hopes to use the devices to reduce paperwork and cut printing costs.

ChildNet, which focuses on child welfare, will use tablets and smartphones to upload and access case files remotely, which could ultimately help cut printing costs, said Emilio Benitez, president and CEO of ChildNet.

ChildNet, which is based in and based in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, works with Broward County to manage cases related to adoption and independent living of abused, abandoned and neglected children. The organization is moving toward using the Android mobile platform to help case workers remotely access documents.

Printing is a huge expense for the small nonprofit, and cutting down on the paperwork could add up to significant cost savings.


"For us, it's a lot of money, it's very measurable," Benitez said.


Case workers on an average spend 40% to 50% of their time filing and processing paperwork, and each child on an average has five binders, with each binder consisting of 550 pages. The time spent on paperwork also impedes the ability for case workers to spend more time with the children and families they serve, Benitez said.

Tablets and smartphones could also save case workers from lugging around cartloads of binders when at court or when investigating a case on the road, Benitez said.

The company currently uses HTC smartphones based on the Windows Mobile platform to access documents remotely. Windows Mobile is expressly designed for smartphones, and the organization is moving toward Google's Android development platform, which is used on both smartphones and tablets.

The cost related to printing, imaging and document management are usually hidden and can be very high, said Crawford Del Prete, executive vice president of research products and



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chief research officer at IDC. The costs could account for 11% of revenue for low-end manufacturing firms, and up to 15% for health-care firms, he said.

One of the biggest savings could be achieved by controlling document printing and achieving better data flow, Del Prete said.

It's just not about the device, though. More workers are going mobile, and the amount of data available is exploding, so organizations need to manage mobile devices in sync with the data flow to effectively cut costs, Del Prete said.

ChildNet is working with Ricoh to digitize existing case files so they become accessible through mobile devices, and has implemented an indexing system to provide quick access to certain data in compliance with HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act).

Ricoh provides a number of options for organizations to print documents from tablets and smartphones, said Shogo Hyakutake, associate director of the global marketing group at Ricoh.

Users can send an e-mail to a printer attached to the Internet, or use a remote printing service. Ricoh can also provide printer drivers for devices based on the Android OS to clients, Hyakutake said.

Ricoh has not yet looked at developing drivers for the iPad as Apple maintains strong control over development of its devices, Hyakutake said. But the company may look at developing iPad drivers if consumer demand increases.

Ricoh is investing \$300 million over the next three years to expand its managed document services offerings, including mobile printing services. That is a shift in strategy for Ricoh, which in the past has heavily relied on its printer business.

But ChildNet will likely stick with Android in the future as it is gaining more traction in the smartphone and tablet markets, said Dipak Parekh, chief financial officer at ChildNet.

Android provides the capability for ChildNet to build a security apparatus for mobile devices to access documents. Considering the security and sensitivity of documents, Android also provides the flexibility to test the application before full implementation.

Parekh said that ChildNet has provided its Windows Mobile software to the Florida Department of Children and Families, which took some parts of the program to work on the BlackBerry platform. But for ChildNet, the screen space on Blackberry is small, and it does not provide enough real estate to record signatures, Parekh said. The HTC phones provide enough screen space for a case worker to record a signature, upload a picture and record the location through GPS.

Parekh is looking at the Apple's iOS platform, which is used on the iPhone and iPad, but will write applications only after the OS "is proven."