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Be Original.



Case study.

Each day, the Auckland Kindergarten Association encourages hundreds of pre-schoolers to embrace their creativity as part of their learning journey. The latest technology from Sharp New Zealand is helping them capture, store and share those precious documents—a child's first stories and pictures.

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We focus on outcomes.

Sharp has enabled the latest in wireless technology and high-quality colour printing within the Auckland Kindergarten Association's (AKA) 100+ early childhood centres in throughout Auckland. The association also uses Sharp's automated solution, Plus One, to streamline their accounts payable function.

Technology is unleashing new channels of creativity for the under-fives, with iPads and other devices commonly used within early childhood centres. So, when choosing Sharp as a supplier to their 100+ centres, AKA knew they needed a technology solution capable of keeping pace.

Originally established in 1908, AKA is a charitable trust with more than 100 kindergartens throughout the greater Auckland region. It also has four KiNZ early learning centres and five playgroups under its umbrella.

Creating stories and artwork plays a key role in the child's learning journey, as CEO Tania Harvey explains, "During their time with us, each child is encouraged to create a portfolio book. These are kept in both paper and electronic form, and they provide a record of the child's individual learning journey."

While the portfolios are stored at the AKA centres, they can be taken home to share with the family. They are also given to the child when they leave kindergarten.

"As you can imagine, in creating all these wonderful stories and wall displays, the photocopy machines at our centres are very well-utilised!"

Like most creative workplaces, AKA's centres are fully Mac-based. Every teacher is assigned either a MacBook Pro or an iPad, and there are also one or two iPads at every centre for the children to use.

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The solution.

In late 2016, when AKA put their photocopier contract out for tender, they had a wish-list of requirements.

Firstly, the technology needed to be compatible with their Mac environment—and allow for wireless printing from Apple devices. They were also looking for a supplier that could automate their payroll and accounts function.

As CFO Rubina Khan recalls, it was a rigorous tender process.

“We had a list of about 15 different criteria ranging from the speed of the machines, to how well the supplier understood our business. We assessed all tender bids against our criteria and ranked them accordingly.”

Lynn Granshaw, AKA’s education technology specialist, recalls one of the reasons why Sharp’s winning presentation stood out. “Sharp clearly put a lot of thought into their proposal. They showed that they really understood the needs of our kindergartens—and how they could help us.”

Another factor that scored highly was the fact that Sharp’s AP solution, Plus One, is a New Zealand-based offering. “We prefer to deal with local providers,” says Lynn.

“In the past, we’ve had experience with offshore products that proved too big and inflexible, where you’re expected to fit their solution rather than the other way around.”

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– Lynn Granshaw, Education Technology Specialist

Sharp won the contract to supply AKA with a total of 115 multi-functional devices—one for every centre, as well as head office. These MX3050 machines

print up to A3 in high-quality colour and at high speeds.

The service contract is based on a pay-per-page model. This includes all toners, regardless of how much colour is used. This is useful for an organisation like AKA who print relatively low page volumes but want a high colour-coverage per page.

When the technology arrived, recalls Lynn, staff were delighted to see that Sharp had even personalised the machines to AKA. “They put our AKA logo on the user screen of each printer... which we thought was a nice touch.”

After using the new machines, teacher feedback has been positive—they like the fast, wireless printing from Apple’s AirDrop, as well as the quality of the colour.

“We do a lot of photo-rich printing, so it’s great to be able to show details like the kids’ faces in higher resolution.”

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Plus One automation.

The next stage of the project is to roll-out Plus One—a Cloud-based invoice collection and processing engine that will streamline AKA's accounts payable function.

Sharp is an authorised installer of PlusOne, which is designed for companies that process more than 2,000 AP invoices each month. It is particularly suited to organisations like AKA that have a network of offices or centres.

As CFO Rubina Khan explains, they will use PlusOne to consolidate the accounts function across the centres. “We currently have a very manual AP function, with the usual issues associated with that, such as chasing up invoices that go missing. Using PlusOne, suppliers will be able to email their invoices to us directly and they'll be automatically scanned, authorised and processed. The plan is to have around 75% of our AP function completely paperless.”

Another advantage of being a Sharp client is that AKA can also purchase a range of other appliances on account—including fridges, microwaves, TVs, panels and other electronic goods.

“Previously, if a teacher needed a monitor or a TV, they had to go out and buy it retail,” says Lynn. “Now they just tell us what they need, we order it direct on the invoice and get it delivered.”

Did you know?

Sharp New Zealand is a preferred supplier to the Early Childhood Council, which is the national membership body for early childhood centres.

To find out more about the range of Sharp MFDs, or the Plus One solution for automated Accounts Payable, contact the Sharp Business Solutions team.

The roll-out.

Given the large-scale roll-out, the implementation was first piloted at a single kindergarten.

“We explained to Sharp how we run as a kindergarten, and how we wanted our technology to reflect that. We were impressed by the Sharp team's willingness to adapt, based on what each centre needed,” says Lynn.

“We also worked together with Sharp to tweak the training materials, to make them more user-friendly for our teachers.”

The implementation was then rolled out throughout Auckland, covering two centres per day. “We had a spreadsheet detailing what was happening and when; so it all went smoothly.”