

# 2021 Industry Forecast

## Manufacturers look to the year ahead

Compiled by: Brent Hoskins, Office Technology Magazine

Office technology dealers will forever look back at 2020 as an extremely challenging year. Certainly, 2021 will present its own challenges, but the year will present opportunities as well. What will be the greatest opportunities in the new year? To find the answers, Office Technology magazine asked 12 MFP and printer manufacturers to share their expectations for 2021. Perhaps the insight shared in this year's industry forecast will help you better position your dealership for success.

Each of the contributors was asked to address four questions in essay form. The questions focused on: the primary market, product opportunities and best strategies for success in the new year; the most significant challenges dealers will face in 2021 and how can they best address them; anticipated changes in demand/needs/expectations for office technology among end users in 2021; and the characteristics of the office technology dealership that is best positioned for success in 2021. Following are their responses.



### Sharp Imaging and Information Company of America (SIICA)

Mike Marusic, President & CEO

What a year! I think I speak for everyone with the wish that whatever comes in 2021, we hope it is nothing like 2020. It is not an understatement to say that our world has changed forever. The pandemic has impacted every industry, but it is safe to say that office technology has changed exponentially. While we remain optimistic for the return of some of the fundamentals of our business, we are also quite aware that COVID-19 has accelerated the move away from paper. We need to view this as a tremendous opportunity for the dealer community to bring added value to its customers.

The diversification we have talked about is now more relevant than ever, and expanding from document systems into



information and collaboration solutions to meet customers' evolving needs will allow dealers to help their customers transform into new work environments and further cement the value dealers can provide.

The pandemic accelerated the movement to the remote and mobile work worlds that we have been anticipating. Businesses are adapting but are still "stuck in the middle" between the office world and a remote

one. Dealers are well positioned to make that adjustment a smooth one. By helping customers move seamlessly between the paper world and a digital one — an office and a remote workplace — dealerships can expand their offerings and grow their businesses into adjacent areas.

I am excited for where Sharp and our dealers are positioned. We are not looking to diversify out of the office, but to make it better. Products such as our Windows collaboration display, which we developed with Microsoft, are designed to maximize Microsoft Teams. How many of your existing customers leverage Teams today? Helping them maximize that investment is a great opportunity.

Some elements of work from home are here to stay, and we are proud to be able to offer all the tools needed under the Sharp family. Our recently introduced work-from-home technology bundles allow a Sharp dealership to offer a printer, computer and desktop display to facilitate work for an employee working remotely. But, more importantly, we can do it by leveraging the Sharp product line and then providing added mobility with our Synappx software to help workers move between their homes and offices. Between the Windows collaboration display from Sharp and our work-from-home technology bundles, Sharp is the only company that can use its own products to enhance the investment in mobile workplace technology.

But the most important advice for 2021? Manage your business. Do not let your OEM control you. Cash remains critical. If you find that you need to purchase three months of inventory to get the right price on a product, you might have to

reevaluate what is important in that relationship. Those ideas may have worked in the past, but times have changed. You built your business — do not load it up with someone else's excess inventory.

Throughout a challenging and unpredictable year, our number-one focus has been to support our dealer community. We kept a rigorous product launch schedule, aggressive training plans and took quick action to adjust rebate goals.

We have made some tough decisions that put the dealer first

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and Sharp second, but we did it with the understanding that what is best for the dealer is ultimately best for Sharp. We see no reason to change that approach in 2021, and we look forward to supporting the dealer community in its growth and diversification in the coming year. ■

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