MARKET NOTE
Print Manufacturers Making a Difference in the Battle Against COVID-19
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EXECUTIVE SNAPSHOT

FIGURE 1

Executive Snapshot: Print Manufacturers Making a Difference in the Battle Against COVID-19

This IDC Market Note focuses on the initiatives that print manufacturers have taken, leveraging extended and adjacent technologies and skills, to help alleviate the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Takeaways

• Initiatives from manufacturers well known for their office print business have brought their extended and adjacent technologies and skills to the forefront, raising their image as global responsible citizens.

• In driving out operational cost but increasing operational efficiency, many print manufacturers had already turned their attention to the efficiency of their manufacturing operations and the supply chain. They have also focused on their ability to be agile to take advantage of emerging opportunities and react promptly to disruptive events — usually related to international trade disputes and competition.

• All manufacturers will increasingly need to address their ability to react to unforeseen events that can negatively impact business. These events present a business opportunity and enable them to support their communities through the ability to develop, implement, change, and move production activities at short notice.

Source: IDC, 2020
IN THIS MARKET NOTE

This IDC Market Note focuses on the COVID-19 breakout and the initiatives that print manufacturers have taken to help alleviate the situation. As manufacturers, these featured companies are likely to make a global impact as they leverage their technology developments, often beyond print technology, to help alleviate the impact of COVID-19.

Major print/MFP market players have posted statements to reassure their employees, partners, and customers that it is "business as usual" as much as possible, given various national government guidelines. However, some printer manufacturers can leverage their existing technology to make a more significant impact in combatting the COVID-19 outbreak. In this issue, IDC features four of these manufacturers: Canon, Fujifilm, HP Inc., and Ricoh.

Canon Inc.

Canon Medical, the business unit of Canon Inc. announced in March 2020 that it will begin developing a rapid genetic testing system for COVID-19. The project is headed by the Japan Agency for Medical Research and is part of a research program run in collaboration with Nagasaki University for the development of diagnostic methods for COVID-19.

Canon Medical offers a broad range of diagnostic medical imaging solutions, including computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance (MR), x-ray, ultrasound, and healthcare informatics worldwide, with 13 subsidiaries outside Japan.

As part of the project, the loop-mediated isothermal amplification (LAMP) method, developed by EIKEN CHEMICAL, will be used as the basis for the test and reagents being developed for COVID-19 ribonucleic acid (RNA) testing. A compact isothermal amplified gene fluorescent detector manufactured by Canon Medical will be used to detect the presence of the virus more easily and more quickly compared with the conventional test method. This is particularly valuable in local areas where the outbreak has been extensive.

Canon was able to leverage its medical unit's previous work in supporting medical emergencies across the world, including the delivery of Ebola rapid testing kits to the Republic of Guinea in 2015 and the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 2019, as well as the commercialization of a Zika virus test in 2018.

Fujifilm Holdings Corporation

This manufacturer is better known for photographic and imaging equipment and its previous partnership with Xerox to form Fuji-Xerox. In another example of how existing capabilities can be leveraged in times of crisis, Fujifilm Toyama Chemical, its pharmaceutical subsidiary, was announced in March 2020 as the first company to provide effective antiviral medicine approved for the treatment of COVID-19 in China. The drug is also being trialed in Japan, although it was also used in Japan as an emergency aid to counter the Ebola virus in 2016.

The drug, called Favilavir, was actually developed in 2014 as an influenza treatment in cases where other treatments proved ineffective against a new or re-emerging virus.

Under the brand Avigan and with the discovery that it contained an active ingredient that seemed to help coronavirus patients recover, Fujifilm's shares surged by 15% in March. Despite speculation about the efficacy of Fuji-Xerox (now called Fujifilm Business Innovation Corporation or FBI) entering markets outside Asia, Fujifilm is currently focused on biotechnology with a planned investment of £72 million in the expansion of its U.K.-based biotechnology site.
**HP Inc.**

On March 18, 2020, HP Inc. announced initiatives it had put in place to support its employees and the community at large during the COVID-19 outbreak:

- It donated millions of dollars to help students, families, and the community. This included automatically extending warranties due to expire in March or April by 30 days and providing 24 x 7 support to respond to customers’ enquiries related to the virus.
- HP Inc. is leveraging its 3D printing skills to design, validate, and produce essential parts for medical responders and hospitals, in collaboration with its digital manufacturing partner network. These essential parts include the production of ventilator valves, breathing filters, and face mask clasps, as well as the development of plastic door handle adaptors enabling users to open doors with their elbows rather than their fingers to help curb the spread of the virus. HP Inc. made its own-developed design files available globally so that the parts can be produced anywhere in the world, enabling distributed print-on-demand capabilities to help avoid supply chain interruptions.
- In support of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government agencies, and pharmaceutical companies, HP Inc. is providing its BioPrinters with the relevant supply cassettes to help accelerate drug and vaccine research to combat the virus. HP Inc. had leveraged its printhead technology to provide this valuable tool for the life sciences sector. Its BioPrinter can dispense small molecules in picoliters or microliters for drug discovery. As a result, medical researchers can more easily analyze the behavior of antimicrobial bacteria to discover an effective microbiotic. Its foray into microfluidics is a lesser known capability arising from its Print Adjacencies and Microfluidics Lab and has already been used extensively in cancer research.

**Ricoh Europe**

On March 20, 2020, Ricoh Europe announced that, as a result of discussions with Make UK, the national manufacturers' organization, and the U.K. government, it has offered to assist in producing much-needed ventilators, leveraging its 3D printing (additive manufacturing) capabilities.

The U.K. Health Secretary had previously called for urgent help from U.K. manufacturers. At the time of publication, Ricoh was on standby to design and produce any required parts, emphasizing that additive manufacturing enabled the production of custom-designed parts quickly and inexpensively.

This would not be Ricoh’s first involvement in medical projects. Other developments include a lever-hinge mechanism for ankle-foot orthotics and new technology for the scanning of limbs for precise replication ahead of operations.

**IDC’S POINT OF VIEW**

With the risk of other disruptive events impacting business across the world, the ability to maximize technological skills and manufacturing capability in an agile way can make or break a business. For manufacturers whose core business is printing, the impact is a major sudden blow for the business.

In terms of corporate social responsibility goals, the current situation provides opportunities for some providers more than others, depending on the extent to which they can offer essential capabilities and products and whether there is a means of commercializing these initiatives, even if it is short term. However, we see that all market players are promoting their ability to continue "business as usual" to reassure employees, partners, customers, and prospects.
It will be vital that print/MFP market players are ready to move rapidly as the worst passes, taking advantage of short-term opportunities. However, they must also have planned for the medium to long term while building scenarios regarding the extent to which the COVID-19 outbreak will reshape customers' behavior, spending, and priorities.

**Related Research**


**Synopsis**

This IDC Market Note focuses on the initiatives that print manufacturers have taken to help alleviate the COVID-19 pandemic.
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