Grow Your Business Through 4 Verticals

Business Solutions collected expert insights on the hot verticals of banking, education, government, and healthcare.

Banking

Typical Decision Maker: branch administrator, branch operation manager, IT manager
Expert Insight:

John James, sales manager, CognitiveTPG: A couple factors that play into the decision to purchase or install printers in the banking industry include:

● Space — Most teller space is extremely limited. In fact, most banks' teller stands were built before all the technology was introduced, so there is barely enough space for the computer. Additionally, you see so many small banks popping up in grocery stores where space is also a factor.

● Noise — Noise is a big factor. Even though banks are price-sensitive, this is a feature they are usually willing to pay for.

● Readability — The deposit tickets need to be easily read by the item-processing/endorsing machine. If the deposit or proof-of-deposit slip is unreadable by the machine, it has to be entered manually, and this can be very expensive for a bank.

● Software — Hardware compatibility with the bank's software is essential and oftentimes the most time consuming part of the sales cycle.

Thermal printers typically are good options for banks because of their small footprint and lower TCO (total cost of ownership) when compared to ink jet printing.

Barry Wise, senior marketing consultant, Epson America: VARs should have a good understanding of how the bank operates and how new or improved solutions can streamline operations. Maybe the bank has a manual process that a VAR could automate to speed up workflow. Maybe the bank has an automated solution that's not as effective as it could be. For example, a bank may have check scanners, but the imager is not good enough and the MICR (magnetic ink character recognition) read rate is unacceptable. If VARs know the questions to ask about nonexistent or poor-performing technologies, they can introduce new solutions that command attention while becoming a good go-to source for other projects.

For printing at teller stations, VARs can offer improved customer service, faster transactions, and enhanced functionality such as validation and electronic check conversion, all in a single unit. VARs should be thinking of how the teller line functions now and what components or solutions may eliminate or reduce manual processes to speed up lines and get customers in and out quickly. When it comes to scanning, back office batch processing can reduce or eliminate check handling beyond the branch,

which can cut cost significantly. VARs should definitely take advantage of vendor industry expertise to get the best ROI sales tools for every solution.

Aris Demosthenous, partner development specialist, N-able Technologies: Overall, managed networking, security, and backup are the three heavy-hitting categories for the banking industry.

Within this industry, Internet connectivity is of the highest importance as many applications are online. That being said, security is a major concern creating the need for a managed endpoint security solution.

Further, as the banking industry has a strong reliance on printing and image generation, monitoring toner levels and availability are important. There is a great opportunity to sell managed print and document management solutions. This vertical has multiple regulatory compliance needs as well: SOX (Sarbanes–Oxley Act), GLBA (Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act), and FDIC (some are even state-related).

Education

Typical Decision Maker: in higher education, CIO/CTO; in K-12, CIOs and IT directors
Expert Insight:

David Kelleher, communications and research analyst, GFI: The Federal Rules of Civil Procedure require educational institutions to archive and be able to produce nearly all electronic communication created within and by the institution. Failure to produce documentation, be it an email or internal memos, could prove costly in a legal battle for educators. VARs are in a prime position to help out. Email archiving solutions are becoming a must-have for educational institutions and a number of solutions are available on the market that VARs can promote.

Educational institutions, especially those that are connected to the Internet and make use of the Internet for teaching and research purposes, are also aware of the dangers of uncontrolled Internet access and the impact malware, spam, and unauthorized software can have on the network as well as the legal repercussions. This creates an additional market for VARs in terms of Web monitoring and Web filtering as well as providing Web security to educational institutions. Educators are exposed to a high degree of liability, and in a society that is becoming even more litigious, institutions need technology to address these problems.

What VARs need to bear in mind is that educational institutions often do not have the money, time, urgency, or plans to deal with these problems. This is where VARs'

Education (cont.)

expertise and experience can play an important role. Packaging solutions, providing additional services at competitive pricing (special discounts for educational institutions) is a key factor that can help with this vertical.

Mike Schmedlen, director of worldwide education, Lenovo: VARs should remember that education is the world's largest vertical market. They should also remember that while education clients are price-sensitive, they are also in need of supplementary services, software, and peripherals, making education an excellent market to address.

At an instructional or academic level, the vendor/reseller community should understand how the technology affects teaching, learning, and administration. While the academic side of computing is more complex than the operational side, it can be learned by categorizing the clients' needs into these key areas: instructional technology, administrative computing, distance learning, and student computing.

Rob Armstrong, principal for worldwide education solutions, Motorola Enterprise Mobility Solutions: Funding is always a challenge on the public side of this market. While the stimulus package has helped, much of that money has been used to support ongoing operations and not new investments in technology, especially when looking at the formula grants.

Schools are focusing on how they can use technology as a force multiplier for teachers, as teachers try to personalize content and curriculum to students' needs. Teachers want to teach a set of individuals, instead of teaching a single class. VARs who can provide solutions that enable this type of teaching process, without requiring the teachers to take on the additional responsibilities and stresses of an in-classroom resident IT expert, will win.

Government

Typical Decision Maker: Most agencies have their own program office that is dedicated to the implementation of products and services throughout their agency.
Expert Insight:

Jon Clark, VP sales, Cabinet NG: There are many functions within government from human resources to project management, all of which are usually paper-intensive and can

Tech Trends

Government (cont.)

become very efficient with the right structure and plan for going paperless.

VARs should strive to consult with the agency or department to understand their specific needs and create a paperless structure and workflow processes to make them more efficient. For instance, VARs have the ability to help the agency analyze document processes and bottlenecks and develop solutions to remove the bottlenecks. VARs also can help the agency integrate document management with other existing applications to streamline data entry and document retrieval.

Larry Huseby, director of business development, Intermec: The problems facing government agencies are not really unique, in that they usually deal with the same types of applications that we see in the private sector: transportation and logistics, maintenance and repair, and warehousing and distribution. The federal government, however, and especially the DoD, has very unique product requirements and rigid procurement rules. The first step a VAR new to the government space should take is to reach out to their vendor partners who have the expertise and experience required to navigate the government system.

Because technology programs are typically deployed on an agencywide basis, pilot systems are employed and tested extensively to make sure that all of the problems are worked out before the systems are rolled out. It is not unusual for a large system deployment to be spread out over many years.

Healthcare

Typical Decision Maker: CIO/CTO
Expert Insight:

Ron Chan, director of marketing, Posiflex: Health IT (HIT) uses many unique acronyms for system types and technology standards. In addition to understanding the basic glossary, VARs should be very familiar with the EHCR (5 levels of an Electronic HealthCare Record) and the technologies, standards, laws, policies, programs, and practices that enable health information to be shared among health decision makers as directed through the National Health Information Network (NHIN). One presidential initiative with the goal of adopting vocabulary and messaging standards is the Consolidated Health Informatics (CHI) initiative.

VARs can investigate the HIT ISV (independent software vendor) community and understand a particular application value and differentiators, starting with the least complex configuration of electronic medical records in a single doctor's office. As with POS (point of sale), the selection of a software application will drive the hardware requirements. The single doctor's office or small clinic is unlikely to have a full-fledged IT department and will require systems integration and support.

Michael Sappington, CEO, gloStream: The vast majority of physicians outsource their IT needs and therefore depend on local VARs. Typical problems might include data backup and recovery or network infrastructure issues. VARs that provide managed services are especially well-positioned. Nowadays, however, the number one question VARs are being asked to solve by doctors is which EMR (electronic medical record) solution they should choose for their practice.

Steve Bergeron, president, PrehKeyTec: When a VAR branches into a new vertical, they should become familiar with the needs of the market. I would suggest that they attend key trade shows and not just walk the exhibition but actually attend the seminars and listen to the speakers. The speakers will tell you what the key issues are.

Should you attend a trade show, try to identify ISVs that are looking for resellers in your geographic area. Be aware that healthcare doesn't have the mature channel structure of other verticals like retail and hospitality. In many cases, the ISV sells direct to the end customer, and the end user is looking purely for hardware and services.

Terry Cruikshank, senior industry marketing manager, OKI Printing Solutions: The ultimate goal in the bedside administration of medication is to reduce preventable errors by ensuring the "Five Rights" — Right Patient, Right Medication, Right Dose, Right Method, Right Time. With a comprehensive solution that includes thermal bar code printers, application software, and consumables/print media, your customers can enhance patient safety where it matters most.

For pharmacy solutions, VARs can create solutions that enable a more reliable medication-administering process to improve the accuracy of patient prescriptions. For instance, label reformatting technology can create enhanced layout of prescription labels which use scalable fonts and clear, data-filled graphics such as 2-D bar codes to increase readability and reduce reader errors. Also, Tall Man Lettering makes similar drug names easily distinguishable (ePHEDrine vs. EPINEPHrine), which can prevent filling a prescription incorrectly.

Greg Davidson, senior bizdev manager of healthcare, Panasonic Computer Solutions Company: The healthcare industry is so much more than hospitals. It's blood banks, it's EMS, it's homecare. It can be part of the larger institution, or it can be independent. The point is when most people think of healthcare they immediately think of hospitals, but that is only a section of the bigger industry.

There is a significant push in the industry to make all electronic healthcare data accessible by all caregivers at any location, at any time. Highly sensitive data like patient records requires mission-critical hardware to access this data quickly, reliably, and efficiently. ●