

Re: Printer problems....

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- *From:* Mark Ferguson <nunya@xxxxxxx>
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Colin Dawson wrote:

<snip>

There's no such thing as identical computers, even laptops of the same model have different combinations of parts. There used to be a running joke at one of my previous jobs. When we purchased 20 PC's, on one purchase order from a company, they'd send us 20 PC's with "identical specification". The first thing we'd do it take the lids off, and see that we had 20 "Similair" machines, no two would have the same configuration. There'd be at least 5 different motherboards, 5 different CD-Roms, we were lucky to get 2 floppy drives of the same brand, 2 or maybe 3 hard drives all different sizes (even though we specified the same size for all).

Thank god we were switched on enough to realise this and that ghosting the machines wouldn't work. We insisted on using the same network card, so we ordered them from a different supplier, even then we ended up with a couple of different versions of the same card!

I don't know who you were dealing with, but a couple decades ago I worked for a Systems Integration house here in AZ. We went to absolutely ridiculous lengths to get identical parts for all the puters we sold a given customer.

Frinst, we got a really huge contract (two _hundred_ 386's running custom-written QNX-based software, rows and rows of PLC cabinets, conveyor-belts and associated hardware for them to control, cute little keypads in steel boxes for the zip-coders to use, dozens and dozens of shoebox-sized laser barcode scanners, hundreds of videocameras and video switchers to keep an eye on all the machinery from a few locations, huge welded steel cabinets that housed three to four puters, four color

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monitors with touchscreens and six B/W video screens, and on and on...) with the USPS and boy, was I glad all the machines were indeed identical when I had to go to Texas to teach their "techs". They "fixed" problems by following onscreen prompts (written by us after many allnighters drawing fault trees) to replace whatever broke out of huge crates of spares we shipped with the as-builts, like preloaded HDs; just plug 'n' play.

Mind you, lots of the stuff was built in-house; the video switchers, the keypads, the clutch-brake controllers on the belts, and like that. All of the puters were built up from boxes and boxes of cards etc. and all of the drives were loaded in-house. From floppies. By hand. "Drive imaging" wasn't even a pipe dream back then.

Oh, and one of the hardware engineers (not me) was nearly fired because he wrote up a joke spec for an "Industrial-Grade Rat" that would stand up to abuse a mouse couldn't; waterproof gasketed stainless steel shell, payphone-style armored cord, and like that, and it somehow got to the customer who would absolutely accept nothing less. I still want one. :(

Those were the days...

Mark L. Fergerson