

Pcounter – the intelligent print management solution

Questions & Answers

Setup & configuration

Q. How easy is Pcounter to set-up?

A. The software can be downloaded and installed with a basic configuration covering print monitoring and accounting in less than one hour. Pcounter monitors all computer users automatically by their login ID on the network so no user setup is required. Printers can be set up with the relevant cost per page, per paper size, in just a few minutes - anything then printed is automatically logged for reporting and cost recovery.

Q. What type of print servers and print devices does Pcounter support?

A. Pcounter supports any printer that uses one or more of the following print languages: all variants of PCL and Postscript, HPGL, Canon BubbleJet, Canon ImageRunner, Epson ESC/P, ESC/P2, ESC/PAGE and Ricoh RPCS. Pcounter supports printers directly connected to a network server, via any print server, or connected locally on networked workstations.

Q. What operating systems does Pcounter run on?

A. Pcounter runs on all Microsoft Windows (including Active Directory), Novell NetWare platforms (both queue-based & NDPS) and Linux with Samba. Accounting is supported for printing from any network client including non-Windows platforms such as Mac.

Q. Can printing be counted for users who are connected to Unix servers?

A. Pcounter can accept and account for print jobs from Unix servers that are sent via Windows or NetWare for printing. Pcounter can also account for print jobs sent from NetWare or Windows to Unix-based printers.

Q. Where does Pcounter keep its accounting information?

A. Under NetWare, Pcounter can use standard NDS accounting or - should this already be in use - custom schema extensions. Under Windows, Pcounter uses standard XBase (DBF) files.

Q. Does Pcounter have any impact on server or network performance?

A. No. Pcounter incurs minimal overhead and requires hardly any additional resources on the server, workstation or network.

Rules & Restrictions

Q. Can Pcounter be used to set limits and restrictions for individuals or groups of users?

A. Yes. Users can be allocated quota/credit; users' balances are automatically updated each time they print.

Q. Can Pcounter be used to set costs and restrictions for each individual printer?

A. Yes. A default printer setting can be used for similar devices but each device or queue is separately configurable as required; costs can be allocated per page and per paper size; restrictions can be based on job type, job size, page count, copy count, paper size or document type (e.g. HTML, .PPT etc).

Q. Can Pcounter do anything about users clicking impatiently on the print icon?

A. Yes. Any printer can be configured to delete duplicate print jobs submitted in quick succession.

Q. Can Pcounter be set up to charge differently for colour and duplex usage?

A. Yes. Each device can be assigned "cost multipliers" for both colour and/or duplex usage, which are invoked when the option is selected within the respective print driver. Duplex handling also provides the option to divide page counts in half to ensure accurate totals are maintained on actual paper usage.

Print Confirmation Messages

Q. Can Pcounter warn users of the cost of a print job before it is printed?

A. Yes. A print confirmation message can display the number of pages and cost of any print job before it is printed and ask the user to confirm or cancel their request.

Client-billing

Q. Can Pcounter be used for "charge-back" or "client-billing" purposes to allocate the cost of printing to a department, contract/project number or client account?

A. Yes, Pcounter supports many different charging methods using the "Popup" feature available as a Windows client or via a web browser for non-Windows clients. The Pcounter Popup "Client-billing" option allows print costs to be allocated by inputting a one or two-level code; including department, contract/project or client code. Ideal for internal budgetary control or external cost recovery.

Reports

Q. What reports does Pcounter provide?

A. Pcounter logs all print jobs recording user ID, printer, workstation, date, time, num. of pages, job size and paper size. Reports can be generated to provide page and cost totals by user, user groups, client codes, and by printer. The "by printer" option provides breakdown by day or by hour showing page counts, print jobs and traffic throughput in MB. Reports can be displayed on screen, printed, saved to a text file, HTML file, or emailed as an attachment.

Common Questions from Education Users

Q. Can students be limited in what they are able to print?

A. Yes. The administrator can allocate credit limits; so whenever a student prints, their current balance is updated automatically based on the cost per page of the device they are printing to.

Q. Can students be prevented from printing when they have no remaining credit?

A. Yes. Once their balance exceeds their credit limit, they can be restricted from printing any more and a message will be displayed informing them that they have no more credit.

Q. Is there a lot of additional administration required in managing quotas?

A. No. No daily administration is required - users pay for more print credit as required. In non-charging environments an option is available to allocate quota on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.

Q. Can students check their own account balances on screen at any time?

A. Yes. Pcounter provides this via either a Windows application or via a web browser for non-Windows client support.

Q. Is there a way to help to control the output to printers in open learning areas?

A. Yes. Pcounter has a complementary add-on option called Pcounter Station that enables all printing to be held in a queue and users have to authorise the release of the printing by entering their ID and password at a release station PC typically located near to the printer(s).

Q. Can Pcounter be used for print accounting where users have shared logins or a number of users share the same workstation?

A. Yes. Pcounter's Popup feature allows multiple users on shared workstations or with shared logins to enter a unique username (not necessarily the same as any network username) and password to authenticate & account for prints.

Q. Is there a way for students to purchase print credits automatically?

A. Yes. Pcounter can interface with value loader vending machines so that print credits can be purchased at any time with no administrative intervention required. There is also a web payment option allowing purchase of print credit using standard debit or credit cards. The add-on Pcounter Station software provides integration with card-based systems (typically used for photocopier control) to enable pay-for-print at release time or transfer of value from a card to the Pcounter database.

Q. Is there a way to integrate photocopier and network printing into a single control system?

A. Yes. As mentioned in the previous question, options are available to integrate with existing card-based solutions. Additionally, Pcounter can integrate with on-line copier control hardware to link photocopier transactions with network print transactions into a single centralised database.