

Published in Law Office Computing:

PRINTERON'S WIRELESS REMOTE PRINT SOLUTION

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From time to time, most of us will have reason to need to print a document on the road. You can carry a portable printer to accommodate that need. Carrying a printer adds a minimum of several pounds and considerable bulk to your travel gear. Nevertheless, if you print a lot on the road, that may prove your best option. PrinterOn offers another option. PrinterOn makes printing easier and more accessible for the mobile professional. PrinterOn extends network printing with mobile printing services that enable remote printing from a computer, a PDA with Internet access or an Internet-enabled PDA/ telephone device with email capabilities, such as the Treo 600. With PrinterOn Wireless, you can view, fax, and print email, attachments and web pages from virtually any wireless handheld device. Print to printers in your home, office or to public printers listed in the PrinterOn Directory such as at hotels and WiFi hotspots.

Software:

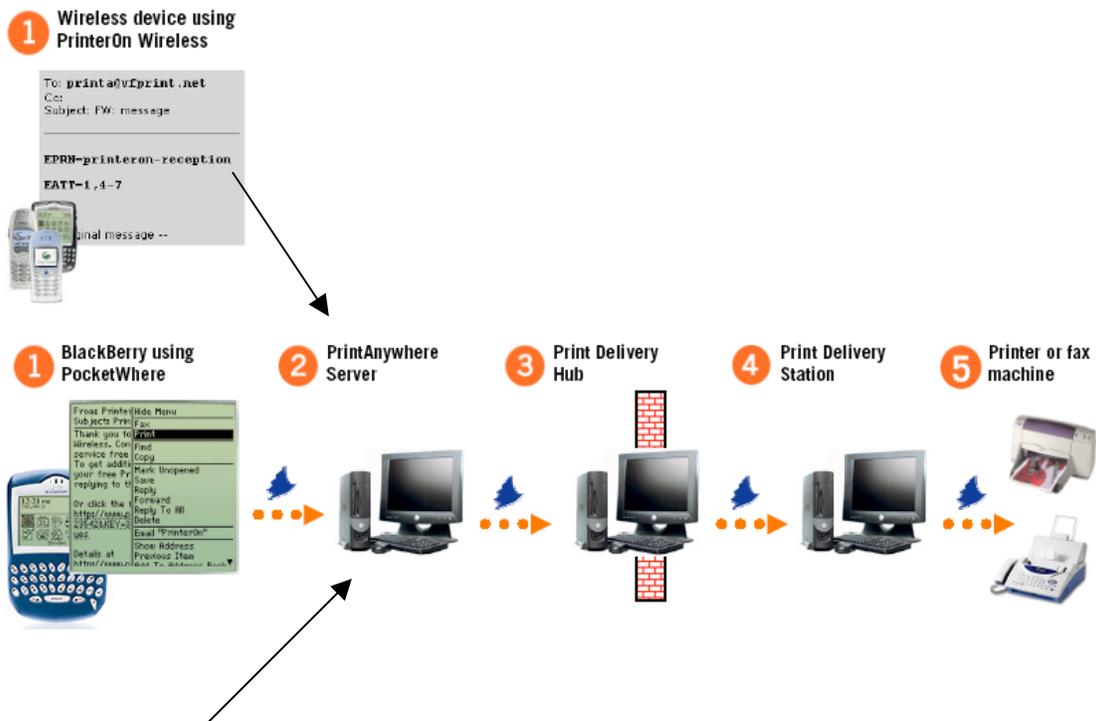
PrinterOn's calls its wireless software "PocketWhere". For some of the more common devices, PrinterOn has developed specific PocketWhere software solutions that enhance and simplify the user experience by adding print features to the wireless device and facilitating forwarding the print request and the information to be printed to the PrinterOn servers for processing. For those wireless devices for which a PocketWhere software solution does not exist, you make a printing request by forwarding the email and/or attachment via an email to the server. You can download the software free from the PrinterOn website at www.printeron.com.

How It Works:

The PrinterOn Wireless service is based upon PrinterOn's "Envoy" product, which supports over 100 file types for viewing, printing, and faxing attachments. PrinterOn Wireless can also handle "nested" email messages, and attachments within compressed (.zip) files. A partial list of formats includes: Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, Microsoft PowerPoint, Microsoft Visio, WordPerfect, Adobe PDF, TIFF, PICT Fax and AutoCAD.

PrinterOn Wireless works with standard email systems using "forwarding" of messages. You can print the email itself as well as any attachments. (Note that some wireless email providers strip attachments to optimize bandwidth. Stripped attachments cannot be viewed or printed. Check with your email provider to determine whether it strips attachments).

To print, you must first identify a printer. You can set up your own printer to receive and process print commands. You can also use public access printers available through the PrinterOn network. To print emails, attachments and web pages, you either issue a print command through the PocketWhere software or you forward what you wish to print along with the Printer Name of the printer you wish to print to `vfprint.net`. PrinterOn Wireless sends the document to the selected printer. If you are traveling, you can ask the Hotel or Company that you are traveling to if they have an Internet Printer listed in PrinterOn's Global Printer Directory. The Global Printer Directory is an online, searchable resource that allows people to locate Internet Printers. PrinterOn's servers then send an email report back to you advising of any problems or confirming the processing of your command and the printing of your material.



1 Pocket PC using
PocketWhere



The number of public access printers or limited public access printers associated with the PrinterOn network continues to grow. Many hotels have signed on and have PrinterOn printers on site. A recent PrinterOn press release stated that:

“The PrinterOn Guest Printing Service is now active in over 60,000 rooms in North America. The service has already been installed at all Hilton Garden Inn, Larkspur, AmeriTel and Doubletree hotels. Choice Hotels International and Hilton Hotels and Resorts have now endorsed PrinterOn as a preferred printing vendor. Other individual brand properties that have installed the PrinterOn service include Hyatt, Sheraton, Radisson, Courtyard by Marriott, Renaissance and Holiday Inn.”

I tested the PrinterOn services and software in several configurations including sending via email, using the PocketWhere software on a Blackberry device (7200 series RIM PDA) and the Pocket PC version of PocketWhere. It worked fine in all versions, however, I did initially encounter some problems with printing email attachments from the RIM using the PocketWhere software. Switching to the forwarded email commands solved the problem and everything printed fine after that.

Setting Up Your Own Printer.

You can set up your own networked printer for use with the PrinterOn system (either for private or more public uses) relatively simply. Your printer must have Internet access and a static IP address. Additionally, you must have a local computer on the Windows operating system networked to the computer to receive and transmit the printing commands. The local computer will also establish a log of completed print commands. To set up your printer, you download the required software from the PrinterOn website, install it and configure your printer. If you have a firewall (as you should), you will need to be sure to enable the print commands to move

through the firewall. The configuration issues respecting the printer can be somewhat problematic with some printers. I experienced some difficulties with configuring my office printer for remote access through PrinterOn. With assistance from PrinterOn's Technical Support personnel, the configuration problems resolved and the printer connection worked fine. You must pay an annual fee of \$36 to have an active printer accessible by the PrinterOn servers.

Cost.

To access the PrinterOn system, you must subscribe to its services. You will pay \$36 per year per user for the subscription and use privileges. For larger firms, the per-user cost decreases; for firms with over 100 users, the cost is only \$30 per year. If you want to have your own printer available, you must pay an annual fee of \$36 to list an active printer accessible by the PrinterOn servers. PrinterOn offers enterprise pricing packages as well.

Pros.

1. Reasonably priced.
2. Increasing size of installed base of public access printers will make it relatively easy to locate a nearby printer in most locations.
3. Cross platform.

Cons.

1. Different platforms use different interfaces.
2. The software does not work equally well on all platforms. The Pocket PC software and Blackberry software are similar and easier to use than the interface for Palm devices. I experienced some configuration issues with the Blackberry software as well as some difficulty in printing out email attachments. The Palm interface is the least user-friendly, but I experienced few problems with it in connection with printing email attachments. All of the software printed emails without problems.

The Verdict.

If you need to print on the road and choose not to carry a printer, PrinterOn offers a good solution. The bottom line is that once you get everything set up, the program/service works simply and easily. At a cost of \$36 per year, if it saves me 15 minutes in locating and arranging for a printer in the course of a year, it has more than paid for itself (figure your own break even point based on your hourly rate). I have historically emailed documents to the

office that I wanted printed there and my assistant has downloaded them, printed them and handled their distribution. It would not take a great deal of her time to offset the \$36 annual cost for having the office printer on line allowing me to print directly to it so that all she would have to do is collect the documents and distribute them.