BuyersLab
GOLD
TESTED SOLUTION
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Brother BRAdmin Professional 4

Features & Productivity

Usability

IT Admin & Security

Support & Training

Value

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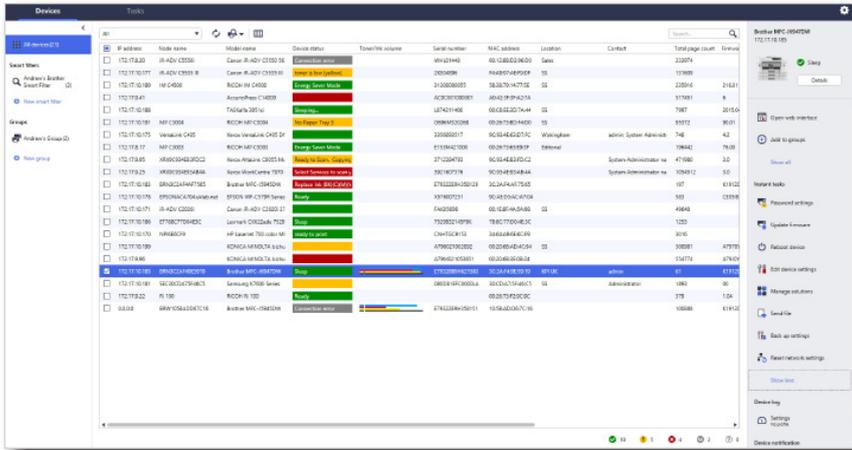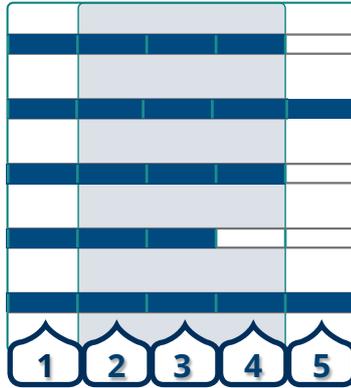
Product Snapshot

Product: Brother BRAdmin Professional 4

Version: 1.02

Software Developer: Brother Industries Ltd.

Web: www.brother.co.uk

For more information on Brother BRAdmin Professional 4 and other products, see Buyers Lab's comprehensive coverage at Buyerslab.com/Solutions.

About Buyers Lab: Since 1961, Buyers Lab has been a leading test laboratory in the world of digital imaging equipment. Buyers Lab is completely independent in all of its testing processes and subsequent reporting. All of Buyers Lab's product evaluations are conducted by highly experienced employees in its on-site testing facilities in the United Kingdom and United States where hundreds of new copiers, printers, wide-format devices, scanners, faxes and multi-function (MFP) products are evaluated and reported on each year.

OVERVIEW

Brother BRAdmin Professional is a device monitoring and administration solution that lets IT personnel to check the status of their Brother devices, update firmware remotely, configure certain device settings and be notified of errors, among other things. In addition to full monitoring and management of Brother devices, the solution provides users with counter, error and other data for non-Brother devices as provided in those devices' publicly accessible Management Information Bases (MIBs). BRAdmin can email users to notify them of device errors, and it collect data from locally connected devices via a data collection agent.

KEYPOINT INTELLIGENCE *Buyers Lab*

CHIEF BENEFITS

TIME-SAVING REMOTE CONFIGURATION – Administrators can update firmware remotely, and even update more than one device at a time, which saves time and increases productivity.

REDUCE DEVICE DOWNTIME – Automated error alerts and the ability to monitor the state of devices at a glance reduces inconvenient device downtime.

LESS MANUAL INTERVENTION – The ability to perform multiple tasks remotely means less interruption to office life by IT personnel.

MONITOR AN ENTIRE FLEET – Lets users monitor non-Brother devices and access their web interfaces.

OUR TAKE

Brother BRAdmin Professional is a fleet management tool that lets IT personnel remotely monitor and manage an organization's printers. For Brother devices, BRAdmin Professional can monitor device statuses, update and configure certain settings remotely, push out new firmware and perform other essential management tasks. For non-Brother devices, BRAdmin Professional provides remote monitoring of device statuses, alerts, counter reads and so on, depending on what is supported by the data available in the devices' public MIBs.

Perhaps the best feature is the ability to manage devices remotely. Conveniently, administrators can update certain settings of multiple devices at once. Another neat feature is the ability to activate solutions on Brother devices. The ability to update the firmware of multiple devices is a real boon, too, especially if users choose to have BRAdmin Professional retrieve the latest firmware itself. Alternatively, users can upgrade a device manually using the firmware version of their choice. Plus, users can set the frequency with which device notifications and device reports are emailed to people.

In contrast to some other tools that are accessible via a browser on any PC on the network, BRAdmin Professional must be accessed from the desktop. It also lacks the more advanced features—such as TCO calculations—that we've seen in the leading fleet management platforms.

BRAdmin is visually engaging and its tabulated consumables and device status data is a boon for busy IT workers. However, it's not always obvious how to use some functions. BRAdmin is a handy and useful tool for monitoring and managing devices in a Brother-majority print fleet.

Features & Productivity

Device Discovery

Devices can be discovered using IP broadcast, IP Unicast (IP list) and through the use of an agent, with the latter being used to monitor locally connected devices. Users can perform a manual search for new devices on the network or create schedule that performs a recurring device search at a specific time daily, weekly or monthly.

To discover and report the status of locally connected devices, users must install a data collection agent (DCA) on the PC to which the local device is attached. The DCA then transmits the local device's data to Brother BRAdmin.

Device Monitoring

Devices are displayed in a 15-field table that comprises much of the BRAdmin Professional user interface. Users can choose the columns that are displayed in the main device table and arrange them how they want. Changes are persistent, which is a neat and convenient touch. Fields include devices' model name, IP address, MAC address, serial number, total page counts, firmware version, and the date and time at which a device's status was last updated. Users can double-click a device in the table to view the data for that device in a dialog box.

Device statuses are colour coded in green, yellow, red and grey (Ready, Non-Critical Error, Critical Error, and Connection Error respectively), so users can quickly triage devices visually. The status that is shown depends on the device's MIB data. Users can open a device's web interface using a link. The devices on screen can be filtered to show just one particular alert type, such as Critical Error.

The data within the main table is updated at a set interval, and users can specify the number of minutes (between one and 3,600 minutes) between the refresh of status updates to change this interval. Users can set separate intervals for networked devices and USB devices.

BRAdmin provides more data on Brother devices than it does on other vendors' devices, including consumables data (which is shown graphically for easy comprehension of toner and ink levels) and activated functions (the solutions installed on the device such as Brother SecurePrint+ and Barcode Utility). Users can see data they've entered for a device such as the location of the device and the contact for the device.

Users can create groups of devices, and click a link to see just the devices relating to that group in the table. Users can also create Smart Filters that reduce the devices shown on screen to a subset based on criteria such as model name, IP address, MAC address, Location and Contact. A wildcard character (*) lets users specify partial values, such as "Brother*" for the Model Name criterion, which means that any Brother device is included in the filter. This increases the ease with which filters can be created. Groups can be created for devices with Location set—like "Sales", for example—or all devices of a certain brand. Users can leverage Boolean expressions to filter conditions, but these logical AND/OR operators are applied to all conditions. It would be good to be able to specify a logical operator for each condition, as a user might want to have one condition, such as Location, always satisfied, but not others.

Device Management

Users can alter settings for Brother devices. They can add location and contact data for the device—for example, they can set or modify the password for a device—and set the device data that should be backed up (address book, display, network, et cetera). Backed up data is saved as a DPK or encrypted DPK file. Network settings such as IP address and node name can be changed, too. Users can also specify licence files and licence codes to activate on-device solutions remotely. Devices can be rebooted remotely, too.

Brother devices can have their firmware updated to the latest version or one selected by the user. Multiple Brother devices can be selected to have their firmware updated at the same time, reducing work for the user.

Users can have device notifications emailed to them so that if a device has an issue, such as a depleted ink cartridge that needs replacing, the user can be told about it without manually having to monitor BRAdmin for status changes. The email details data relating to the device so that it can be identified. Different device notification profiles can be created, and each profile can notify users of different events. One profile could report on consumables warnings, for example, while another could just report on empty paper trays and paper jams. Users can check all the items for which they

should be notified in a list. Notification profiles can be edited and deleted at any time, and users can specify the time period between notifications, from one minute to 1,440 minutes.

Device Logs reports contain current data about devices' counters and status, but also provides data on past device errors and the meter count at which those errors occurred. There are also more counters than are displayed on BRAdmin's main table, such as scan counters and monochrome duplex counters. However, the data present depends on the data that a device provides. Plus, the user can specify the types of data present in a device log when they set it up, and can amend it subsequently. Meanwhile, Device List reports provide recipients with the data present in BRAdmin's main table.

Users can schedule Device Log and Device List reports to be created and emailed to multiple recipients recurrently at a specific time and date. These reports can also be saved to a location on disk. Device Log reports can be rendered as CSV or XML files, while Device List reports are rendered as CSV files only.

USABILITY

BRAdmin Professional's user interface looks modern and provides at-a-glance data on Brother and non-Brother devices. A collapsible panel on the left-hand side of the screen lets users filter the devices on screen using one-touch, pre-programmed filters. Users can view further details on a device in a number of ways. They can double-click a specific device or click a device to see further details in a panel to the right-hand side of the screen. The right-hand panel lets users set options and perform tasks. This layout keeps the user interface neat and tidy, so users aren't hindered when performing tasks.

Check devices quickly using the colour-coded statuses.

Double-click a device to view more in-depth data about it.

Select a device to see options available for it, such as updating firmware, setting or changing passwords, and more.
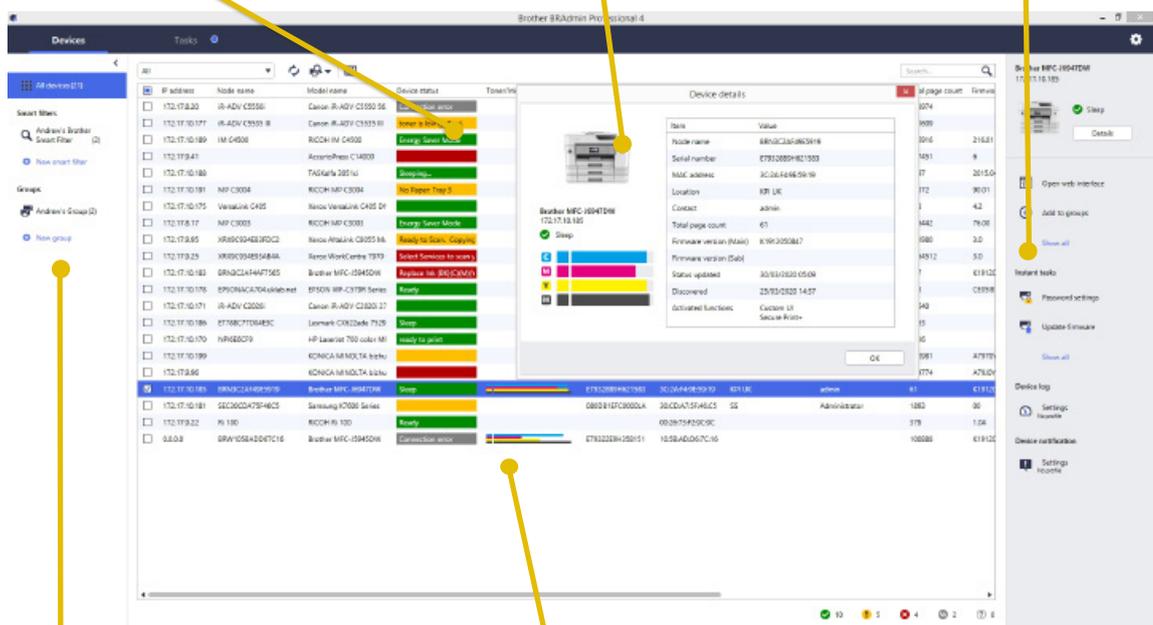
Create smart filters to show only those devices with certain properties.

View consumables at a glance to replace ink and toner proactively (Brother devices only).

IT ADMIN & SECURITY

Installation of BRAdmin Professional is straightforward and is completed using a standard wizard-style installer.

BRAdmin Professional is a compact solution, so involved or regular administration isn't necessary, except for the creation or modification of device discovery, device log and notification schedules. The ability to update the firmware of Brother devices remotely by clicking a button will be a boon for administrators. Application settings can be backed up and imported.

Brother BRAdmin is a single-user application, and as such the primary security method is the initial user authentication provided by the user's workstation, but it is possible to set a password that must be entered before BRAdmin can be used. This further prevents the chance of an unauthorized person making changes to devices. BRAdmin doesn't require the entry of a password before writing data to printers unless the individual devices are password-protected. BRAdmin Professional is compatible with SNMP v3, which provides authentication and encryption of data as it's transferred across the network from a device to BRAdmin.

SUPPORT & TRAINING

BRAdmin is a free and simple application so support is provided via the Brother website. There is also a good, graphical manual that will help users understand what BRAdmin can do and how to do it.

VALUE

Brother BRAdmin Professional 4 is free to download and use.

STRENGTHS

- Allows monitoring of non-Brother devices, albeit more limited
- Shows remaining consumables life of Brother devices
- Provides data on locally connected devices
- Allows remote firmware updates for Brother devices
- Allows remote configuration of Brother devices
- Provides quick access to devices' web interfaces
- Allows use of SNMP v3 for greater security of data retrieved from network devices

WEAKNESSES

- Very limited number of device settings that can be updated compared to previous versions
- Doesn't show consumables data for non-Brother devices
- The device filter isn't as flexible as it could be
- Minimal meter count data available in the application
- Basic reports

PRODUCT PROFILE

Versions	One version only
Pricing	Free
Users	One user
Server	Windows Server 2008 or later
Client	Windows 7 or later
Mobile Device Compatibility	N/A—desktop application only
Compatible Output Hardware	Network printers\MFPs, and locally connected devices if used with a DCA
Software Integration	None
Availability	Worldwide
Languages	Chinese (simplified) Danish, Dutch, English, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Norwegian, Portuguese, Brazilian Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Swedish

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