

Multifunction Printers for your Multitasking Staffs

All-in-ones print, scan, copy, fax and more; at price points comparable to many single-function printers.



The market for multifunction printers continues to grow in leaps and bounds. Lower prices coupled with enhanced functionality make today's printers more value-filled than ever. According to Lyra Research, which tracks trends in the imaging market, shipments of color laser multifunction printers (or MFPs) — printers that can copy, scan and fax — will grow at 220 percent, compounded annually, to 2009.

“What we're seeing is a continuation of the megatrends of the past two years,” says Rob Wait, director of commercial marketing for Hewlett-Packard.

Multifunction printers are a single unit capable of printing, copying, scanning and faxing, at speeds, image quality and price-performance suitable for workgroup and departmental needs. Beyond the obvious savings on consumables and office space, MFPs, and in particular color laser MFPs, offer fast page printing, lower cost per page, duplex printing (printing on both sides of the paper) and network connectivity — making them attractive to medium- and large-size businesses.

Historically, non-desktop multifunction machines have often been based on the “engines” of copier machines, which are more mechanically complex than printer engines in order to handle copiers' more complicated paper feed and output paths. Recent multifunction office devices are based instead on more simple and reliable printer engines — making for less maintenance and greater dependability.

Companies such as Brother, Epson, HP and Xerox, have brought the best of their technologies to the MFP space at affordable prices for all businesses. Smaller machines start well below \$1,000, and higher-capacity, fuller-featured machines fall in the \$1,000 to \$5,000-plus range.

“We have released duplex monochrome MFPs over the past few years in a price/performance band that was never seen before in MFPs. Our color laser MFC is being positioned as a step-up from our current MFC-8000 series and is a natural direction for Brother to take,” says Donald Cummins, senior vice president, Brother International Corporation. “There is a clear market expansion for both laser and color inkjet MFPs.”

With the increased use of e-mail for correspondence and online tools, many companies have found that printing is less of an absolute necessity. While printers have a solid place in the work environment, expectations have changed. According to Kim Beswick, MFP category marketing manager for North America at Hewlett-Packard, “It is cost efficient to utilize multifunction machines offering capacity that's right for many of today's businesses.”

In addition, consolidating or replacing desktop and office single-function devices with workgroup MFPs offers significant savings in consumables' (cartridges, toner, and paper) costs — experts expect savings of 20 to 40 percent or more vs. using personal desktop printers. In addition, MFP devices use 40 to 50 percent less floor space and boost productivity and workflow by offering multitasking capabilities.

It's important to know that a lot of the small units won't let you program a copy job while the machine is printing another job. “The more robust workgroup printers have true multitasking,” says Marlene Glazer Orr, printer industry analyst at Buyers Laboratory, a leading independent office equipment test lab and business consumer advocate. “The more robust workgroup printers have true multitasking.”



The Xerox WorkCentre C2424DN offers the convenience of solid-ink technology for consistent, vivid color reproduction.



Epson's first U.S. color laser, the AcuLaser CX111NF, delivers fast performance, quality output and the features you need in an all-in-one printer.

Monochrome Still Sells

Black-and-white and color inkjet MFPs have been around for several years, but laser may be a more attractive option for businesses since those systems have faster output and generally require less technical attention than inkjet printers. For example, toner cartridges used in laser systems last far longer than the ink cartridges used in inkjet models.

According to Larry Jamieson, director, Hard Copy Industry Advisory Services at Lyra Research, the growth of color laser MFPs will come at the expense of the inkjet MFP market, but shouldn't jeopardize sales of standalone printers. Yet the popularity of color laser MFPs is another indicator of a long migration toward ▶

color printing. “We still see a lot of monochromatic printers, but there’s definitely a trend toward color,” Jamieson says.

Yet, most manufacturers continue to offer monochromatic printers at drastically reduced costs. In general, black-and-white multifunction printers make sense for smaller workgroups. Prices start well below \$1,000, making them ideal to distribute throughout larger offices, conveniently closer to more employees.

One example of black-and-white MFPs in the sub-thousand dollar range is the MFC-8840DN from Brother, a five-in-one network-ready laser printer, copier, PC Fax (sends directly to or from networked PCs) and color flatbed scanner (sending to e-mail or files). With an MSRP of \$599, Brother’s MFC-8840DN is a good choice for small workgroups (up to 25 people) in Fortune 2000 companies, suggests Andy Schaeffer, senior product manager for laser, multifunction and digital copiers, Brother International.

Dollar-saving features of Brother’s MFC-8840DN include paper duplexing without manually refeeding and also the ability to print two-sided faxes. “Many incoming faxes are only two pages, one of which is a cover sheet,” Schaeffer points out. “Large companies go through reams of paper. To be able to use duplex on some documents can save money and reduce waste.”

Brother has even less expensive multifunction laser-based devices, he notes. “If you don’t need a flatbed for scanning, we have a sheet-fed machine, the MFC-7220, starting at \$199, that does 20 pages per minute. Its compact size and full functionality doesn’t sacrifice anything — high-quality laser printing, ▶



Easing Printer Maintenance

As printer manufacturers continue to design new multifunction printers with faster print speeds at lower prices, more and more companies are jumping on the MFP bandwagon. However, the cost of maintaining these machines — from keeping toner in stock to troubleshooting technical problems — is a major concern for IT administrators, says Matt McCloskey, CDW HP brand manager.

Enter a new program developed by CDW and national services company Danka. The service offers HP printer customers all the toner and technical support they need for one fixed price. With the Danka OneRate program, CDW customers can call a toll-free number anytime to order toner or next-day onsite tech support.

The Danka OneRate program is available to all new and current owners of HP LaserJet printers, regardless of where they purchased the products. Under the program, customers can call a Danka toll-free number 24 hours a day to request more toner or to report a printer malfunction. Genuine HP toner is shipped by CDW the same day at no extra charge. For printer problems, a Danka technician will call customers back the same day to schedule an onsite visit and fix the problem the next day.

IT administrators must weigh the cost of training IT staffers on printer repairs and having them spend their time fixing printers versus contracting the work out, says analyst Bill Gott of the marketing analysis and consulting firm Venture Marketing Strategies, located in Los Gatos, Calif. “In more cases than not, it’s more economical to subcontract it to a dealer or manufacturer,” he advises.

By outsourcing printer maintenance, IT administrators can concentrate on more important — and more fulfilling — work, such as keeping computing resources up and running and working on new projects, McCloskey points out.

copying, scanning, faxing and PC Fax are all included. You can distribute these units among departments, rather than over-centralize."

Another advantage of Brother's single- and multifunction devices, Schaeffer points out, is that the various models in the company's 8000 Series use the same consumables. And the same holds true for the 7000 Series models. "This lets a business standardize on consumables for many of its printing and faxing functions. Companies want to buy consumables in bulk, up front, to get the cost down, but not have any left over that can't be used."

Need more speed and capacity? Hewlett Packard's LaserJet 4345 monochrome laser multifunction printer, starting at \$2,599, can print and copy at up to 45 pages per minute (ppm), and do two-sided printing, copying and scanning. The unit's Digital OCR (optical character reading) software not only supports network faxing, but also can turn scanned documents into searchable PDF, TIFF or Word files. It can also send documents directly to e-mail over the network.

Easy Color

Printing in color is becoming more and more the norm as business users choose to print out Web pages, brief presentations, and spreadsheets in color. These often don't require a lot of color richness and accuracy, but do lend a certain air of professionalism to brochure handouts and in-house marketing literature.

Up until recently, most medium-size companies would have to send color jobs out or use personal inkjet printers, which over time, can increase the cost of color copies. But today's color laser MFPs offer savings of 35 to 50 percent by bringing the jobs in-house. Some companies may even see a return on MFP investment within five to six print jobs.

In the sub-\$1,000 range, ideal for small workgroups and remote satellite offices, Epson recently introduced its network-ready AcuLaser CX11NF, offering color printing, copying, scanning and faxing, with an MSRP starting at \$799.


The AcuLaser CX11NF includes a 50-page automatic document feeder accommodating up to 8.5 x 14-inch size paper, and its standard input tray supports 180 8.5 x 11-inch sheets. The device will print, copy and scan at up to 25 pages per minute in monochrome and 5 ppm in photographic color output. For copying, first copy out speeds are 12 seconds for monochrome and 29 seconds for color.

The color fax in the Epson CX11NF includes a unique feature: it can auto-sense whether an incoming document is in color, thereby allowing the fax to print in color. In addition, Epson includes software productivity bundles.

"We include Office Ready Essentials templates that simplify making marketing collateral, brochures and presentations," says Dorinda Hill, product manager for laser at Epson America. The Web-to-page WYSIWG (what you see is what you get) is a document management package that lets you preview what the Web page will look like when its printed.

To support larger groups, a good choice is Xerox's WorkCentre C2424DN, the world's first solid-ink multifunction (printer/

copier/scanner) device. With prices starting at \$1,999, the WorkCentre C2424DN is a workgroup product, intended to support groups of several dozen users. Advantages of solid ink, vs. inkjet or laser, include more compact form for the consumables and far less to recycle or dispose of.

For groups of 10 to 15 people, a good match is HP's Officejet 7410 MFP, in the \$500 range, suggests HP's Beswick. For smaller workgroups of five to 10 people, HP's Officejet 6210 is in the \$200 range. And for larger groups, the HP Color LaserJet 4730 MFP offers 30 page-per-minute color laser multifunction capabilities, in the \$6,000 range. "It's an easy transition for someone who also needs color in one device," says Beswick. 



Standing 21.8 inches tall and weighing about 40 pounds, Brother's MFC-8840DN is smaller and lighter than many other laser MFPs.



The HP LaserJet 4345x offers maximize productivity – get print, copy, scan to e-mail, fax and document finishing functions in one easy-to-use device.



Did you know that CDW offers configuration, product support and customized professional services? Call your account manager for details.