

## ■ Laser Printers

Laser printers have made great improvements over the past few years – they're faster, produce better quality prints and are cheaper to operate than their counterparts from even five years ago. If you're due for a new printer, this newsletter should help point you in the right direction.

### Laser Printers vs. Inkjet Printers

Laser printers excel in printing text and graphics and work especially well if you go through reams of paper each month. They are well suited for printing most business applications such as word processing, spreadsheets, desktop publishing (small runs), and financial and database reports. Even though color laser printers perform well, if your primary goal is to print photographs, a professional inkjet or dye sublimation printer is the better choice.

## ■ Tip of the Month

### Mobile Printers

Laptops and netbooks have made it easy to stay in touch while on-the-go. But what happens if you want to print when out of the office or home? Turn to a mobile printer - small and lightweight, wired or wireless, inkjet or thermal (no ink or toner), color or monochrome - options abound. You can even print from your PDA/Smartphone, digital camera, or memory cards.

### Wide Format Printers

Most printers limit the page width to 8.5". Wide format printers can accommodate paper 13" wide or larger, greatly increasing the types of documents you can produce in-house. Print full bleed 11"x17" documents on 13"x19" paper; print full color brochures and line drawings; or print photos and posters. Just make sure you have a dedicated space available before purchasing as the footprint of these printers is quite large.

There are two types of laser printers: standalone and multi-function.

### Single Function Laser Printers

Standalone laser printers are available in color and monochrome (black and white) versions. If you print newsletters, MS Excel graphs or line art drawings, using a color laser printer will enhance your output while monochrome printers are still considered workhorses in most businesses. For both types, basic models offer fast print speeds, excellent output, and convenience features found only on high end printers.

Single function laser printers geared for small offices/home offices (SOHOs) print at least 25 pages per minute, offer at least one 250 sheet input tray with the option to purchase larger trays, and have a monthly print volume anywhere between 1,000 and 80,000 pages depending on the printer. Automatic duplexing (printing on both sides of a page) and collating are now standard on most, as is networking (wireless networking is becoming more popular too). Many laser printers offer high capacity toner cartridges and expandable memory - a boon for workgroups that print larger volumes.

If you're in the market for a new laser printer, four features to research would be: print quality (color and/or b&w), print speed, cost of consumables (toner and print drum) and input tray quantity.

Other features such as: energy efficiency (ENERGY STAR and RoHS compliant), automatic duplexing, graphic quality (images) and ease of use can also be considered.

## ■ Websites Worth Watching

1. [www.phillyfunguide.com](http://www.phillyfunguide.com) - Looking for something to do around Philadelphia? Check out this online resource for a list of museums, theaters, concerts, upcoming events, workshops, tours and more.

## All-in-one or multi-function printers (MFPs)

All-in-one (AIO) printers or MFPs (*Figure 1*) offer numerous features in one package. They can print, copy, scan and fax and are offered in monochrome or color versions. The mono (b&w) versions generally have faster speeds and are less expensive than color versions both in the cost of the unit as well as consumables.

Since color MFPs are more expensive, consider how often you will print in color before making your decision. If you make a large number of color prints, it may be cost effective in the long run to buy a color laser printer since color copies in a retail store can be close to \$.50 /page.

Although the cpp (cost per page) can vary widely between manufacturers and models, an industry average for color copies printed on a color laser printer is \$0.10 - \$0.15 /page. Some models will be much less; around \$0.05 per page, or much higher; around \$0.22 per page; still cheaper than if you had prints made at a retail store.

If you just print a few pages per month, though, it will be less expensive overall (though not as convenient) to purchase a b&w printer and do color prints off-site.

A major benefit to MFPs (if you want to keep costs low), is the option to scan instead of print. Many monochrome MFPs offer b&w copying and printing but also offer color scanning. This enables you to scan a photo and digitally insert it in a document that will be professionally printed in color.



*Figure 1.* Brother MFC 8480DN - highly rated monochrome all-in-one laser printer.

Another feature to look for is network scanning. Most MFP models enable scanning from only one PC but a few allow you to scan from multiple PCs - a productivity enhancer preventing downtime.

For both color and monochrome MFPs, two newer features introduced in less expensive models are an Automatic Document Feeder (ADF) that does double sided copying and scanning, and onboard staplers and stackers for larger jobs that require sorting.

Finally, there are many options for how MFPs connect from traditional Ethernet (RJ-45) to USB to wireless (802.11b/g/n and Bluetooth). While wired connections are still considered the best providing reliable speed and security, if you have an open floor plan, you may want to think about getting a printer with wireless capabilities.

## Conclusion

Deciding on a single function printer or MFP comes down to the applications you need and how much space you have in your office. If you just need to print, a standalone printer will be sufficient but if you need to copy, scan or fax documents, you may prefer to have one larger unit rather than 2 or 3 separate ones.

There are a lot of choices on the market so as you consider the options, keep the following features in mind:

1. Print quality - Do you need color or b&w? Does the printer do text and graphics equally well?
2. Paper tray input size - How much paper do you go through per week/per month? Will the input tray be sufficient? Is there a straight paper path for thicker paper to prevent creasing?
3. Print speed - The faster the print speed, the quicker you'll get your documents.
4. Cost of toner - Costs vary widely between models made by the same manufacturer and many replacement cartridges cost more than the purchase price of the printer. When researching printers, compare the price of toner before you make your purchase.
5. Energy efficiency - Saving energy, saves money. Look for printers that are Energy Star certified, have sleep modes, have recycling programs in place for both the consumables and printer, and are RoHS compliant (standard that restricts the use of hazardous materials in electronic products).

**Ready Net Go, Inc.**

610-856-0990

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