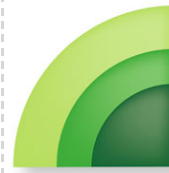


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When it comes to purchasing a printer or Multifunction Printer (MFP), asking the right questions and understanding the real total cost of ownership (TCO) has the potential to save businesses thousands of dollars over the life of the device.

It's becoming more important than ever for businesses small and large to ask the right questions when buying a printer or MFP. Getting the right information at the time of purchase can save your business money and headaches, while hasty purchases that look purely at the initial hardware price, and don't consider whole-of-life requirements, can hurt the company as a whole. While an IT department looks only at specifications for a printer or MFP's suitability to task, and initial purchase cost, it is other departments that ultimately have to live with devices that have high running costs, require time-wasting user interventions and produce a lot of office waste that's harmful to the environment.

Looking beyond the initial purchase price of a printer or MFP is something businesses and technology purchasers have traditionally failed to do, however, the key to a successful purchase is to look at

“Looking beyond the initial purchase price of a printer or MFP is something businesses have traditionally failed to do”

the whole-of-life and whole-of-organisation costs. This is because in reality, the total cost of a printer or MFP is more than the purchase price. The Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) of a printer or MFP is a combination of its purchase price, consumables and service and maintenance costs (training time, infrastructure and software). It's not uncommon for the cost of consumables over the life of a laser

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printer or MFP to be four or more times greater than the initial purchase cost, especially as more companies move to colour and graphics-heavy printing.

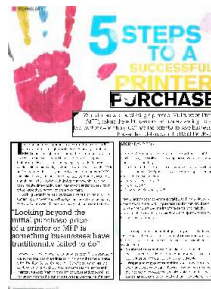
So what are the questions smart businesses should ask when making a printer or MFP purchase? As one would expect, here are three of the most common:

- How much does it cost?
- How fast is it?
- What's the print quality like?

These questions don't cover the critical issues. For a business to make a sound printer or MFP purchase decision that could save thousands of dollars over the life of the device, and help the environment as well, there are series of critical questions that must be investigated properly.

This is perhaps the most important question you should ask. Over the lifespan of the device, the cost of replacing consumables will be greater than the purchase cost by an order of magnitude. You should consider:

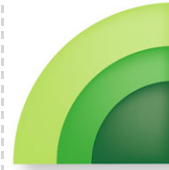
- **Number of consumables:** Depending on the model, manufacturer and style, the number of consumables a given laser printer or MFP requires can vary considerably
- **Lifespan and cost of consumables:** Not all toner cartridges and drums are created equal. Buyers are sometimes lured by the prospect of low-cost consumables, only to find that the component needs to be changed with unacceptable frequency



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- **Media costs:** Typically laser printers and MFPs will operate on low-cost plain paper, while ink and dye technologies often require expensive specialised papers, especially for high-quality colour printing.

2. WHAT KIND OF SERVICE DOES THE SUPPLIER OFFER?

The service and support offered by the manufacturer should be a major factor in any purchasing decision. When a printer or MFP breaks down, you need to know whether you can get someone there to fix the problem before downtime becomes a major drain on productivity. Important questions to ask include:

- Is there a support line for the product?
- What hours is service available?
- What's the average response time in your particular area?
- What kind of training does the contracted service team have?
- Will the warranty cover the expected lifespan of the printer or MFP?

As the saying goes, time is money. It's an all too familiar scenario: a worker goes to the printer or MFP to retrieve his or her printouts, only to find that the toner cartridge or drum is out and there's a serious backlog of print jobs waiting. The office co-ordinator is called in to replace the cartridge (and a replacement may or may not be on hand), and when the cartridge is replaced everybody with a print job pending sits around twiddling their thumbs waiting for the queue to complete.

The more time spent filling paper trays, changing toner cartridges, ordering replacement supplies, dealing with waste and standing waiting for prints to finish, the less real work gets done.

Longer life consumables reduce the cost and number of human interventions, as much as they reduce the purchasing cost of consumables. Large paper trays and expansion options also help to reduce the number of human interventions required to keep the printer or MFP chugging.

4. HOW MUCH POWER DOES IT USE?

Power usage is one of the hidden costs of running a printer or MFP. It hurts both the environment and the bottom line to run a fleet that sucks up an inordinate amount of electricity. To avoid this, Energy Star compliant printers and MFPs are a good place to start.

Energy Star compliance mandates a maximum sleep mode power usage depending on the type of printer or MFP, and a minimum time to sleep mode. Energy Star, the Government-backed

TOP TIPS FROM FUJI XEROX

1. Don't be swayed by the cheapest colour printer you can find. Consider the total cost of ownership. There is a direct relationship between the cost of hardware and its running costs. The cost of producing a colour printed page on an inkjet and colour laser can vary significantly. Find out the cost of consumables as this will make the real difference.
2. Consider purchasing a multifunction device which can print, copy, scan and fax. This represents a significant cost savings instead of having to invest in multiple devices to run an office.
3. Ask about the print resolution. To get the sharpest images, you will need a high print resolution of around 1200x1200 dpi (dots per inch). If quality really matters, find out how accurate the colour reproduction is. Good printing technology often produces the best results.
4. Consider whether consumables can be easily purchased from retailers or ordered online. You don't want to be stranded with a printer, which needs special supplies that have long re-order periods.
5. Ask about the "first page time out" speed. This is an industry standard for determining when the first page will be printed and is often linked to a printer's memory capacity.
6. Consider the number of users who will need access to the printer. This would make a difference between buying a desktop model for a small workgroup or a larger enterprise printer.

For more information visit www.fujixeroxprinters.com.au

program helping businesses and individuals protect the environment through superior energy efficiency, provides information about this and more at www.energystar.gov.au.

Printer and MFP manufacturers should also list the power consumption of their printers and MFPs, both at stand-by and while printing. Businesses would be wise to perform a quick comparison of power usage, recognising that the majority of the time the printer or MFP will remain idle (during the evenings etc). Some printers and MFPs also feature a power economy mode, in which they go into a lower power state than even sleep mode. In some cases, power usage in this mode is negligible.

Getting a low-power printer or MFP is not the only way to help the environment, including the office environment. Minimising and recycling waste, and buying a printer or MFP with low noise output can help you to produce better ergonomics for staff and limit the amount of landfill your business produces.

The process of selecting the most suitable printer or MFP should be a significant one for organisations of all sizes. Ultimately, taking the time to ask the right questions and investigate the true Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) could mean the difference between saving, or costing, your business thousands of dollars. **DB**

— *David Finn is managing director, Kyocera Mita Australia and New Zealand (www.kyoceramita.com.au).*