
ULTIMATE BUYER'S GUIDE

COPIERS & PRINTERS



Finding the right multifunction printer (MFP), commonly referred to as a “copier,” for your business can be overwhelming. It’s a big investment, and you want to make an informed decision. We have been helping Oklahoma businesses make smart technology decisions for years, and we have made a comprehensive guide to help you choose the copier that is right for you.

Printer vs. MFP

Let’s start with the basics. What exactly is the difference between a printer and an MFP? A printer does just that. It prints! Most businesses, however, need the ability to copy, scan, and fax too. An MFP combines all functions into a single device that can save both money and space. Some MFP’s also have finishing options such as stapling, hole-punching, and sorting which are ideal for businesses that print reports, manuals, proposals, etc. Most organizations have a combination of printers and MFP’s. The printers are typically located in individual offices for convenience and security, while the MFP’s are centrally located for employees to share.





Desktop vs. Floor Model

Multifunction printers are available in two sizes; a compact model made to put on a desk or a larger model designed to sit on the floor. It's important to consider the following factors when deciding which footprint is most suitable for your office.

Space - Whether you plan to put the MFP on a desk or the floor, measure the space to confirm the device will fit. You will also need a network jack nearby unless you plan to print wirelessly. Look for obstructions like overhead shelves that might interfere with lifting the lid to make copies. Also, don't place the MFP too close to a wall; you should leave enough clearance to access the back of the machine when repairs and preventative maintenance are needed.

Volume - Desktop MFP's are typically designed for smaller workgroups with lower volumes. Verify the MFP you select can accommodate your output, or you can expect some service issues down the road. If you don't know your volume, identify how many reams of paper you go through each month. This will give you an estimate. It's also important to anticipate any future business changes that could increase the volume such as the addition of employees or new marketing initiatives. Choose a machine you can grow with otherwise you'll be replacing it sooner than expected.

Paper Size - Identify what paper sizes your employees need for their print and copy jobs. Most desktop MFP's print up to legal-size paper (8.5" x 14") although there are some models that can accommodate 12" x 18". If your office staff uses large paper frequently, you will likely want a floor model so you can designate specific trays for each paper size. If you require media larger than 12" x 18", you will need a digital production printer to support oversized media.

Accessories - While desktop models have limited accessories to choose from, large floor model MFP's have many options from feeding to finishing including high-capacity feeders for maximum paper capacity to stapling, hole punching, folding, and booklet making.

Color vs. Black and White

Multifunction printers are available in monochrome (black and white) or color versions. Below are some points to consider when determining which model is best for your organization.

Visual Impact - Printing in color grabs the reader's attention much more quickly than printing in black and white. From report covers to proposals, integrating color into your documents will enhance your branding efforts and go far to make you more memorable than the competition. Keep in mind that if you need to print high-resolution graphics and images, you'll likely want a production printer instead of an office MFP.

Cost Control - Many businesses are hesitant to transition to a color print environment because they fear it will result in higher costs. While it is true, the cost to print in color can be up to ten times more expensive than black and white, most MFP's have built-in features to control costs. For example, you can default the Xerox® AltaLink C8155 to print all jobs in black and white, set user permissions that allow color printing for specific individuals or departments, or lockout the color function completely. It's also a good idea to educate your employees on the price difference to reduce wasteful or unnecessary color printing.

Toner Prices- The price difference between a black and white MFP and a color MFP can be minimal, however, the cost to run the color device is more expensive because it requires four toner cartridges compared to the monochrome's one cartridge. Research the prices of replacement cartridges so you have a better idea of what your ongoing expenses will be. Take note that a toner's page yield is based on putting ink on just 5% of the page. If you run print jobs with large graphics, images, or text, you will get less yield than what the manufacturer states. For this reason, many business owners opt to partner with a third party. These organizations provide a fixed cost per page on toner regardless of the coverage and include maintenance in their agreements to cover service and parts.

Convenience - Many businesses print primarily in black & white, however, most of them need color occasionally. Printing in-house is both cheaper and more convenient than outsourcing to a commercial print shop so before you decide, ask yourself if it's better to need it and not have it or have it and not need it.

Print Speed

Print speed is measured in pages per minute (ppm). For example, if you copy a 100-page job on a 50 ppm machine, it will take 2 minutes to complete once the first page prints. If you print the same job on a 25 ppm machine, it will take 4 minutes. The following variables play a role in determining what speed is right for you.

Job Size - MFP's can vary in speed from 25 to 90 pages per minute. If your employees run lots of small jobs, a slower machine will be sufficient. On the other hand, if you run large jobs frequently or many people share the printer, you will want a faster machine to avoid bottlenecks.

Volume - Faster machines are designed to accommodate print environments with higher volumes.

Paper Weights - Heavy paper stocks will slow the MFP down significantly, so it is important to check the manufacturer's specs, so you have the right expectation.

Double-Sided Printing - Double-sided or (duplex) printing will also reduce the print speed. If you run duplex jobs frequently, you might consider a high-speed MFP.



Scanning Capabilities

Scanning is becoming more important as businesses look to go paperless. Keep these things in mind when evaluating the MFP's scanning features.

Speed – Scan speed is measured in images per minute (ipm). An “image” refers to one side of the page. For maximum productivity, choose an MFP that can scan both sides of the page simultaneously. This is referred to as single-pass scanning.

Document Feeder - It's also important to note the paper capacity of the document feeder. If your typical scan job contains more pages than what the document feeder can hold, you will have to divide the scan job into parts. If your job will require this, then look for features that allow you to combine the parts into a single job.

Automated Workflows – Many manufacturers allow you to create custom workflows that reduce a multi-step process into a single touch. For example, some machines allow you to scan a document and route it to multiple destinations simultaneously such as email, network folders, and cloud repositories.



Paper Capacity

The paper capacity of the MFP varies depending on the configuration, however, most floor model MFP's have four paper drawers and can hold around 3,000 sheets of paper. If you print large jobs frequently, consider adding a high-capacity feeder to maximize the paper capacity and limit how often you must refill the paper. Specialty media such as labels and postcards are run through the bypass tray on the side of the machine to avoid jamming.



Security

Cybersecurity is a growing issue, especially with the increase in the number of employees working remotely or from home. There are several features to look for when considering what MFP to buy to minimize your risk of a security breach.

Built-in Security Features - Hackers are always looking for ways to sneak into your network, and many people do not realize that MFP's can be an access point. Look for security features that will safeguard access and data transmission to the device, alert you if anyone attempts to change the system firmware, and prevent users from sharing confidential company information. Also look for encrypted data storage and auditing tools.

From the Device - Employees often leave documents that have sensitive information such as social security numbers, credit card information, payroll figures in a copier's paper tray. To avoid exposing confidential data, look for an MFP that has security features to avoid such mishaps. For example, Xerox's SecurePrint feature allows a user to assign a PIN code to a document and then release it to print at the device by entering the code.

Third-party Partnerships and Certifications - Look for manufacturers who are committed to protecting you by partnering with credible third-party companies to develop best-in-class security features. Also, look for machines that have passed rigorous security testing and received certifications from organizations like the National Information Assurance Partnership (NIAP).

Additional Features & Advantages

Historically, business owners evaluated copiers based on specific features such as print speed, scanning capabilities, paper capacity, etc. In the print industry, we refer to this criterion as “speeds and feeds.” While those factors are still a critical part of the evaluation process, copier manufacturers have been forced to discover new ways to add value to their products to stay competitive in today’s market. For example, Xerox’s MFP’s built on the ConnectKey® platform offer an extensive gallery of proprietary and third-party downloadable apps designed to simplify business processes and to increase productivity.

Below are some examples:

Scan to Cloud – From the MFP, scan documents into or print documents from cloud-based repositories such as OneDrive, Google Drive, or DropBox.

DocuSign – Email documents for immediate signature or sign a document from anywhere with your smartphone or tablet.

CapturePoint – Scan a paper document and convert it into a Word document, Excel spreadsheet, or a .PDF. and then send it securely to destinations like OneDrive, Google Drive, or Dropbox.

Audio Document App – Turn a paper document into an audio file (mp3) and email it to yourself for easy listening while you are on the go.



Leasing vs. Buying

One of the most common questions prospective clients ask us is “is it better to lease or buy a copier?” Well, the answer is “it depends.” Quite frankly, there is no right answer, so it’s important to examine both options carefully to determine what’s best for your business.

Let’s take a closer look.

Pros of Leasing - Business owners lease MFP’s for several reasons. First, many business owners do not have the upfront money to buy an MFP outright. After all, they are expensive. Converting this large capital expense into a monthly operating expense is more manageable for many businesses. Fixed payments also make budgeting easier. Second, business owners do not want to get stuck with obsolete equipment. Technology changes quickly, and leasing allows you to trade in your old copier for a newer model at the end of the term. Finally, it is less hassle to lease because most equipment providers offer maintenance plans which are included in the monthly payment. And finally, the lease payment is tax-deductible, and it is not a depreciating asset since you do not own it. If you buy it, you must capitalize it as an asset and depreciate it over time according to the depreciation schedule.

Pros of Buying - There are still many business owners who prefer to buy rather than lease, and their reasoning is just as valid. For example, it is less expensive in the long run to buy a copier than to lease it because the lessee pays the interest on the copier and the maintenance which usually costs more than the value of the equipment. Furthermore, many business owners hesitate to get locked into a contract. Most leases carry terms of 36, 48, or 60 months, and early termination can result in large fees so make sure you review the terms of your agreement carefully before signing an agreement. Lastly, just like anything, copiers have a shelf life, but if you are lucky you can get many years of use out of the same machine to maximize your return on investment. And when you are ready to replace it, you can sell it (since you own it) to offset the cost of the replacement device.

At Connected Office Technologies, we build custom technology solutions for businesses.

*Our purpose is to help business owners thrive by integrating technology into their overall corporate strategy and using it to solve their greatest business challenges. If you’d like to learn more about how to choose the right copier for your business or would like a **free technology assessment**, contact us today at **877-597-7666** or follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram.*



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