

**Printer-Copier-Scanner-Fax**  
***Small MFPs for Small Business***  
***Are they right for you?***

Many small businesses (and home-based offices) today are considering use of modern MFP's (Multi-Function Peripherals) as their aging fax or copy machines need replacement.

The traditional approach of stand-alone fax, stand-alone printer, and stand-alone copier should be reviewed before aging components are replaced. Often times this quick review will uncover lower operating costs and greater efficiency, that can easily pay for the change to a low-cost MFP.

**Cartridge-based devices - - are they the best way?**

Four or five years ago the 'home-office' market pioneered the use of all-in-one cartridge based devices. The cartridge contained everything needed to print (i.e., imaging unit, developer, toner, etc.). The concept was good for simplicity, but the trade-off was a very high operating cost when compared to 'traditional' business products. Quite simply, when print quality would fall off, there is one (expensive) consumable that the end-user could replace. Tracking the life and cost (per impression) of this item can be a fairly 'eye-popping' experience. Many smaller cartridge-based devices today have real-world operating costs of \$.07 to \$.09 per impression.

By contrast, today corporate America usually demands an 'all-inclusive' operating cost. By this we mean that regardless of how much toner, developer, cartridges (or even emergency service) a device requires, the end-user pays only for the page or print that is successfully delivered.

That cost can be \$.02 or less. With some devices even below \$.01. The good news is that some of the recently introduced compact MFP's can also provide close to these operating costs for small offices and small business. This also can be quite an improvement from the \$.07 to \$.09.

Because of this new lower operating cost, many of these small devices have found their way into corporate America, serving as a satellite and supplement units with larger devices handling large use.

**So, what are the advantages of using an MFP?**

Proponents of today's third generation MFP's maintain there are three or four important reasons these products deserve a hard look.

### 1. **Simplicity & Operation**

It's simply easier to learn (and more importantly, utilize) the full functionality of one device rather than three or four. Also, high functionality has become the rule. In addition to print-copy-fax, some of the latest MFP's also offer Internet fax, scan-to-file, and even Network printing. Incredible capabilities for such small devices.

### 2. **Space & Installation**

For any office, space eventually becomes a premium. Cutting the 'foot print' needed for multiple devices can be important. Not only do three or four devices require three to four times the space, each requires its own outlet for power, and other connections such as network, phone line, etc. The other side of the 'space and installation' argument is that one footprint can bring to a single worker all the functionality of three or four devices. This has been a growing application in corporate America where businesses strategically place MFP's close to the work or workers that need them most. Finding space in these settings for three or four devices would often be virtually impossible.

### 3. **Operating Cost**

When you purchase separate supply components for your fax machine, separate supplies for your printer, and still other supplies for your copier, it's near impossible to shop wisely on all counts. Since each of these components in different devices are replaced at different times, it's also difficult to even know if the expected yield was met or what your operating cost really was.

One small business that recently compared operating cost of their three small cartridge-based machines (a Brother fax, Sharp copier, and an HP printer) found that the return on their investment in buying one of the newer MFP's was less than 18 months. Their savings after that time were significant.

### 4. **Service & Support**

Proponents of modern MFP's would say that separate service calls and service vendors for each device should be a thing of the past. Single source support provides both simplicity and more important, accountability. If a cost-per-impression service program is available, you not only benefit from on-site service, but also from knowing exactly what it costs to keep your office running, which can be a refreshing change.