

Buying Tips

Low-, Mid, & High-Volume Copiers & Multifunctionals

- ✓ While color copiers are the sexy product that salespeople will want you to buy, black-and-white copiers is still the mainstay of most offices and far less expensive to operate.
- ✓ Take monthly duty cycles with a grain of salt. Use them for comparison purposes only, but don't expect to get the full page count month in and month out.
- ✓ All prices given are list prices (suggested retail price); the reality is that you should be able to buy these products for 25% or more off, if you negotiate.
- ✓ While there used to be big gaps in quality and reliability between vendors, those gaps have narrowed. Determine your requirements and get bids from several vendors.
- ✓ Cost per page is determined by negotiation with your dealer. That cost may be far more important than the sticker price. Make sure you hammer down guarantees before you sign on the dotted line.
- ✓ Service is another area that has to be negotiated before you sign a contract. Make sure you have an agreement on how fast the vendor will respond on-site to a copier problem.
- ✓ In many cases, it is less expensive to buy the added functions (printing, scanning, and/or faxing) in a prepackaged configuration, rather than to add these functions at a later time.
- ✓ Duplex (two-sided) output is a major plus in terms of saving paper costs, but note that you need a two-sided document feeder (RADF) to get two-sided copies easily. Also, you'll have to instruct users on how to use it and keep after them to use that feature.
- ✓ While not all buyers need advanced accounting and security features, most vendors are now offering increasingly sophisticated solutions in these areas. That might be the differentiator between two similar products.

- ✓ If you want printing, be aware that some vendors offer it as standard, while others charge over \$1,000 for the same functionality. In many cases, this disguises the true price of the machine.
- ✓ Faxing might be a nice extra, but scanning to email is becoming a far more convenient and efficient solution for document distribution.
- ✓ Faxing is an expensive option on most copier-multifunctionals, even though it costs vendors relatively little to add it on. It might be more cost effective to buy a stand-alone fax or printer multifunctional if you need it.
- ✓ Salespeople will boast that their machines are more productive than same-speed machines from other vendors. Our testing has shown that current machines operate at between 85 and 100% of rated speed. The performance gaps are just not a big issue.

Tips Specific to Color Copiers

- ✓ Most color copiers now have pretty good color, good enough for office work. If you have more exacting color standards, consider getting a high-end EFI controller or something comparable.
- ✓ Advanced accounting and permission features are very critical with color, as you'll want to control unnecessary use of expensive color printing.
- ✓ Color copiers tend to have even shorter runs than black-and-white ones, so it's easy to pay for more speed than you need.