

Buying Tips

Office Laser Printers

- ✓ Print resolution is not an issue for the majority of offices; it should not determine your choice.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ The street price of a printer is usually in inverse proportion to the price of toner. The cheaper the machine, the more expensive per page.
- ✓ Cost per page is based on an industry standard coverage of 5%. If you use lots of graphics, shaded boxes and/or small type or print Web pages and/or photos, your costs will be higher.
- ✓ PostScript is a must if you use illustration or page layout programs. For other office uses, PCL or host-based printing is fine.
- ✓ Extra memory is a big plus if you use PostScript; it's needed if you run multipage and multicopy jobs (electronic collation); it adds nothing to host-based printing.
- ✓ Most users don't need hard disks on their printers. An exception is for high-security printing, often-used forms, or truly enormous electronically collated jobs.
- ✓ It's great to have thousands of pages of input, but not if you have only a 250-sheet exit tray.
- ✓ Toner saver and automatic duplexing can be money savers — but only if you get people to use them.

Tips Specific to High-Volume Printers

- ✓ The biggest issue with high-volume printers is feeding them. The best systems now offer software for preparing complex jobs like booklets and complex folded or tabbed documents and for combining page layout programs with archived pages and scanned materials. All the speed in the world is useless without a steady stream of work.

- ✓ Customization and the use of variable data are supported by some systems better than others.
- ✓ Cost per page on the higher-end models is determined by negotiation with your vendor. That cost may be far more important than the sticker price. Make sure you hammer down guarantees before you sign on the dotted line.
- ✓ You can usually get a better price on extras (finishers, added paper drawers) if you negotiate them up front.
- ✓ 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 problem.
- ✓ Consider getting several slower machines instead of a single faster machine. For some users, the existence of a back-up printer in case of a problem is more critical than raw speed on one unit.