Things to Consider When Making a Colour Printer Purchase

It's difficult to keep up with the changing models of printers. Here's the latest on printers we recommend and how to choose a printer that's best for you:

First, there is the question of laser vs. inkjet. Both types of printers can give excellent results and one needs to weigh several factors when making this choice. Inkjets are generally less expensive to buy, but in high volume environments, laser printers usually have lower operating costs and can generally produce labels faster. Inkjets allow users to print a partial sheet of labels and then re-feed the sheet to print the remaining labels. You should NEVER feed a partial sheet of labels in a laser printer (pressure and heat will cause adhesive ooze). If volume of printing warrants a laser printer, but there is a need for immediate printing of individual labels, one should consider using one-up facestock (e.g. LALZ-S8).

Inkjet Printers:

Currently, we recommend the Epson Stylus C88+, the Epson WorkForce 30 or WorkForce 40 for an inkjet printer. These models are available today, but that could change. The reason we like the Epson and things to consider on any inkjet printer:

1) We find the Epson Dura-brite inks have excellent durability and great vivid colours.

2) These printer models have separate ink cartridges for the different ink colours. Some printers combine the colours in one cartridge (what we refer to as a tri-colour cartridge) and you have to replace the whole cartridge when one colour runs out – that can get expensive.

3) These models have a very straight paper path – feeds or pulls from the back and outputs to the front. Some brands of printers load from the front and output to the front, meaning the media has to make a pretty tight turn inside the printer – more apt to jam or cause feed problems. We've also looked at the specs of the Hewlett Packard Officejet Pro K8600, and with its optional rear feed of heavy media, believe that it would also be a good printer choice. It is a bit more expensive than the Epson, but has a higher duty cycle and might be a good choice for higher volume printing requirements.

Laser Printers:

We currently recommend the OKI Data C710 for a laser printer. This printer is a good value, is real workhorse and OKI has excellent product support. The reason we like the OKI and things to consider on any laser printer:

1) Print quality - the OKI lays down great colour and produces labels that have excellent durability. Remember that, unlike an inkjet where the ink is actually absorbed by the media, laser printers depend on the powdered toner being fused to the media by heat and pressure. The amount and quality of the toner can make a big difference in how the colours look. Less expensive laser printers may not achieve ideal fusion of the toner to the media which can lead to flaking or chipping of the colours, especially if the file is handled a lot. In some cases we recommend the use of overlaminates (a clear adhesive covering for the label) to ensure durability for files that see a lot of handling.

2) Printer Drivers - the printer should ideally have a Post Script driver for easiest configuration and printing from our software. Not all printers have Post Script drivers, so check the manufacturer's web-site before making a purchase decision. Regardless of the driver type (PCL drivers can generally be configured to work), you should choose settings that will a) **Download TrueType fonts as bitmaps** and b) **NOT substitute printer fonts for TrueType fonts**.

3) Paper Path - It is critically important to use the "Label" or "Heavy Card Stock" or similar setting on the printer driver. This slows down the print engine, allowing for smoother feed of heavy media and more time through the fuser, allowing the heavier media to come to proper temperature for good toner fusion. On some printers this setting also increases the temperature at the fuser. Most printers force you to feed label media from the MPT (Multi-Purpose Tray) because the paper path is more direct. They cannot be set to pull from the higher capacity paper drawer and use the "Label" setting. Most MPTs do not allow for loading of more than 25-30 sheets of media. In a high volume environment, this can mean several trips to the printer each day to keep media loaded. The OKI C710 has the ability to handle the heavier label media from the paper drawer without special drivers and firmware. These settings can be made from the front panel, making setup and configuration very easy for the end user. Basically, just about any colour printer can work with our software, but you now know all the things you need to consider when making a colour printer purchase. Please contact Compact Technical Support if you have any questions or need any further assistance.

Important Note:

We have recently experienced problems with host based printers when configured as shared printers connected via USB. For more on this problem, you can check the following link to HP's website where you will find a short discussion of the problem and where the June 18, 2008 entry describes how to

configure the printer to eliminate the problem:
http://forums11.itrc.hp.com/service/forums/bizsupport/questionanswer.do?admi
a=109447626+1229097056759+28353475&threadId=1032468

It seems that the key is to NOT SHARE the printer when connected in this
fashion.

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