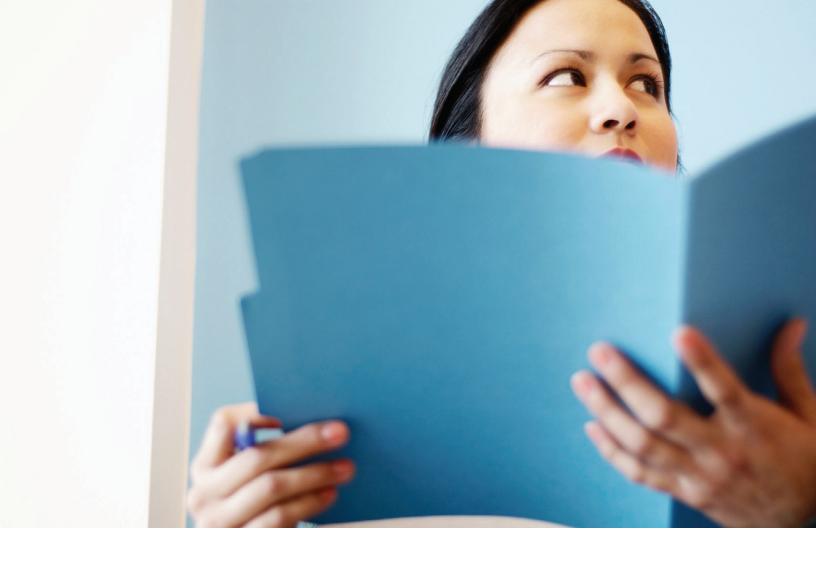# Multifunction Product
Buyer's Guide

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Top 8 issues, services and solutions to consider in assessing and choosing MFPs for Small & Medium Business owners.

1. Clearly define your requirements

2. Total cost of ownership and MFP cost/value benefits

3. Third party evaluations and real use situations

4. Seamless network integration

5. Ease of use

6. Multitasking

7. Bi-directional communications

8. Device management, remote intelligence and support

Clearly define your requirements

Understand what you intend the MFP to do for your business and how adding multifunction capabilities to your mix will support your day-to-day business applications. Beyond printing and copying, how do you anticipate the MFP helping manage documents, reduce paper, and simplify workflows?

- How many copy, print, scan, fax and email jobs will the device be asked to run each day? Are there peak usage periods when jobs might conflict with one another?

- How many users will each device support?

- What is the anticipated total monthly output volume?

- Do you need to offer, as well as control, both black-and-white and color printing?

- Do you need a range of workflow and routing solutions, including scanning destinations such as email, desktop, remote locations and repositories?

- Do you need to combine and route documents in a variety of file formats, and does the vendor offer such a solution?

Total Cost of Ownership and MFP cost / value benefits

MFPs are useful assets to help manage and control costs, and also add new office capabilities to your organization. Consider how MFPs can address total cost of ownership (TCO) by effectively consolidating and managing resources across the organization, and improving business-process efficiency.

- Does the vendor provide fact-based tools and methods to help you assess current TCO and estimate the return on your MFP investment?

- Do different product models perform the same functions the same way across the product family?

- How well does the MFP improve document-production and distribution efficiencies?

- Is the product priced competitively with comparable stand-alone devices?

- Are supply costs competitive?

- Does the MFP have a compact design that will save office space?

Third party evaluations and real use situations

Evaluate the MFP's specifications and compare actual performance, management features and support offerings using reports from independent testing agencies. Be sure to also test and validate the MFP's performance using your own applications within a network environment.

- How efficient is network printing of basic jobs versus the MFP's rated engine speed?

- Does the device optimize scanning file compressions to reduce network traffic?

- Can the MFP handle heavyweight papers?

- Are the print drivers WHQL–certified and based on the Microsoft printer platform, using the Microsoft® Driver Developer Kit? Are the drivers standard with the Microsoft operating system software?

- Does the MFP include standard memory of at least 128MB, with room for optional memory?

- Is the device capable of print quality at 600 x 600 dpi or higher?

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Seamless network integration

Consider how easy the system is to plug into an existing network, and whether it is easy to deploy and will provide immediate benefits with little start-up training.

- Does the vendor provide web-based software that configures, manages, monitors and reports on printing devices throughout the enterprise?

- Will the MFP work well with your current desktop applications, standards, and document repositories?

- Does the scanner create industry-standard file formats, such as PDF (including searchable PDF), TIFF, and JPEG?

- Can users scan documents to their PC for immediate viewing and/or repurposing?

- Can the MFP create text-searchable PDF files, which provide greater access to documents archived in shared file folders or EDMS applications?

Ease of Use

Ease-of-use for end users means a reduction in calls to the help desk, and fewer IT resources for training and problem management. Usability should be paramount, and without compromise.

- Are the user interfaces—on both the MFP and with software applications—intuitive?

- How much training is required for a user to become functional?

- How has the product been designed to accommodate jams? Is the paper path short and efficient? How many touch points are there? How many jam-access reach areas are there?

- Are online help and documentation available and easy to use?

- Does the product work the same way whether you're copying, printing, scanning or faxing?

- Does the vendor provide custom print drivers (same look) for both PCL® and PostScript®?

Multitasking

Take a close look at the MFP's ability to run each of its functions (print, copy, scan, fax) efficiently and concurrently, and assess its real performance and productivity in actual-use situations.

- Does the MFP let you copy, print and receive machine status from the web?

- Does the MFP improve workgroup productivity by allowing virtually unlimited job-program and scan-ahead capabilities without performance degradation?

Bi-directional Communications

A failure to communicate timely and accurate information to users and IT administrators regarding the status of jobs, queues, and devices will result in more intervention by IT staff to solve, prevent or anticipate problems. Solid bi-directional communication both at the device, and across the network, is essential.

- Does the MFP deliver job and device status to users' desktops?

- Does the MFP provide sufficient information, tools, and controls to anticipate problems and reduce machine downtime?

Device Management, Remote intelligence, and Support

Carefully consider the vendor's commitment to providing robust device and fleet management tools and utilities. Also, look for device-relationship-management software and intelligent monitoring that optimize the device's availability and uptime.

- Can you easily integrate the MFP with your existing network and print management tools?

- Does the vendor provide a set of robust web management tools and reporting systems?

- Do the vendor's device management tools provide effective support for competitive equipment, as well as their own?

- To prevent unnecessary downtime, does the MFP provide remote diagnostics, remote service, and proactive supplies ordering?

- Does the vendor provide consistent quality of service?

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