

Does Anyone Really Need a Full-size Copier/printer Anymore?

With the addition of a full-time paralegal and space for it in the new office, I'm considering whether it would be advantageous to get a full-size printer/scanner/copier. I will have two lawyer office mates who can share the cost.

I do mostly litigation. However, even on the big document cases, I don't use formal paper files. I generally only print things for depositions, document review as needed and trial exhibits. We organize the documents into binders that we reuse for multiple depositions, etc. On a big trucking or med mal case, I can end up with 10-15 large binders (or more). On a smaller case, I may only print two binders worth of documents before trial.

I have moved to electronic production options as much as possible. Trial still requires exhibit binders even though I try to use electronic exhibits as much as possible.

Right now, I have an HP color laser multi-function printer (I hate the scanner, images are always crooked) and a B&W Brother laser multi-function machine in my home office. I will probably add a Scansnap at the office to address the scanning quality issue and call it a day unless someone tells me I'm missing something here.

The advantages I can see to the big machine are the ability to do much faster scanning/copying/printing, capturing costs on my billable cases, maintenance included when a machine breaks if that's part of the lease, and the ability to do big jobs.

I'd appreciate thoughts!

I had one of the big machines at my previous firm. Since I went solo I have a high speed laser printer and a scan snap. Literally the only thing I miss about the old printer is the ability to offset the stacks on a collage and the ability to staple pages.

If those things are worth it to you (and for printing multiple copies of large exhibits it might be) then the big machine might be the way to go.

Andrew Mays, Illinois

No.

You need one of these combos:

- 1) Multifunction printer (which will work as a low-volume flatbed scanner and will also be useful for special paper, i.e. letterhead, envelopes, etc.)
- 2) High speed document scanner
- 3) Large fast networked laser printer

OR

A) High speed document scanner *with flatbed*, such as the Fujitsu fi-7260 or fi-7240

B) Large fast networked laser printer

OR

I) The kind of multifunction printer which is basically a flatbed and low-end document feeder, mounted on top of a large fast networked laser printer

II) High speed document scanner.

Here is why those combos are better:

- What makes copiers so expensive is the heavy-duty document feeder.
- Multifunction document feeders and scanners DO NOT have a high duty cycle, and are not reliable for heavy use. For example, my HP MFP (the "I" kind

above, in the last group) has a laser printer with a duty cycle of maybe 100k/month, but a document feeder with a duty cycle of maybe 2k/month.

That is pretty standard, though you have to dig into the specs to find out. However, they are fine for occasional flatbed scanning and occasional copying of small files.

-High speed document scanners can run all day every day; anything 45PPM and up should handle a banker's box per week for years, without blinking (the fujitsu fi-7260 is rated for 9000 pages/DAY). And anything worth copying is worth scanning. Spend the money on 60ppm and you'll be glad you did.

-High speed laser printers, without any fancy add-ons, are some of the most reliable and bulletproof machines you can find in the office.

No matter what package you choose, it's not too expensive to add on a color inkjet MFP, so you pick up low-volume color for cheap. I use an HP which prints (and scans!) tabloid (11x17) and is only \$200 brand new. I rarely use it but when I do I'm glad to have the tabloid capability.

Erik Hammarlund, Massachusetts

Erik, thanks for breaking it down like this. What you are describing is pretty close to the setup I was envisioning and it makes sense.

Deena Buchanan, New Mexico

A high-speed scanner and a high-speed color laser printer should take care of your needs. I have a Fujitsu Scansnap on every desk which takes care of day to day needs, but you can buy a faster scanner (I have one, but don't use it much).

Canon and Fujitsu both make 60 page a minute scanners that stand up to a heavy duty cycle. Fujitsu has several in its 7000 series with varying duty

cycles, speeds and cost. A Canon example would be the Canon DR-G1100. Kodak reportedly is good also, but I did not look up models.

I would recommend a Ricoh high speed color laser printer, something like the Ricoh P C600 because of its low operating cost. I have a prior model Ricoh (actually my last two were Ricoh) and they have been stellar performers.

Right now you are running light duty cycle equipment, at least from your post. Part of the purchase decision is how you are going to staff and operate the equipment you operate. If volume and workflow is designed to keep someone busy all day with scanning, a higher duty cycle scanner is important.

Although I don't recommend it, if you were to buy a traditional copier type product, getting one that is used and purchasing it, with service from a local vendor, can be the best approach. You can buy it over the Internet or work with a local vendor to find one.

Darrell G. Stewart, Texas

Thanks, Darrell. The responses are illuminating fact that my printers are not heavy duty enough for how my litigation practice is growing. They are great for desktop machines and were fine for what I needed when I started in January, but I really need a networked option with higher/faster capacity for both printing and scanning now. I just took on a handful of new litigation matters over the last couple of months that will definitely require the next step. I could kick myself for under-investing, but I wasn't sure how my practice would develop when I started out. I guess it's a good problem to have and I can invest appropriately now.

Deena Buchanan

Think of it this way: A serious high duty copier would probably cost \$3500.

You can hardly get into the copier market for less than \$2000 and even then you have service contracts, etc.

But you won't need to spend anywhere CLOSE to that if you have multiple products--AND you'll have better, faster, longer-lasting things with a higher PPM output, which will no longer require any annual service or maintenance, and which can be used (and replaced, and upgraded) individually..

My main advice would be to spend the extra money on a high-speed doc scanner. Nothing wrong w/ a Scansnap and you can keep it somewhere for backup use. But they are SLOOOOOOOOW. For any serious work you want at least 45ppm and (as someone who has 45ppm) you're better off w/ 60+ ppm.

Yes, it will cost \$800-900 rather than \$450 but it will pay for itself in a year (or less, if you're busy.)

A functional high-speed Brother can be had for less than \$300. A super nice laser w/ extra trays and duplex will still be well under \$1000, especially if you buy b-stock.

Erik Hammarlund

I think you'll do fine with a high-speed workgroup scanner (Fujitsu fi-series) and a high-speed laser printer. I paid about \$1,000+ for each of my Fujitsu fi scanner and HP LaserJet M600 and they've been able to handle a lot of scanning and printing each month. I do a lot of both.

Eugene Lee, California

Thanks! I checked and my current Brother B/W is 36ppm as a printer. For now, I'm going to spring for the Fujitsu fi-7160 (the Brother and my HP have a flat bed and I rarely need it). The next step will be to replace one of the printers for something with a bit more capacity but I'll keep these around for now.

I really appreciate all of the input on a Sunday afternoon.

I negotiated the last two big printer contracts for my old office and I just don't want to spend like that if I don't need to.

Deena Buchanan

My office, two to three lawyers and a paralegal, has not had a copy machine for more than fifteen years. A good fast scanner takes care of it all.

David Masters, Colorado

It seems to me that it's a numbers question, one that will be specific to your practice. The advantage of the full-size, dedicated printer copier scanner is that it is cost-efficient for high volume work. An honest sales rep would probably give you numbers on the number of copies/pages printed per month you'd need before it starts making sense. My practice is transactional and almost entirely electronic--my HP Deskjet largely sits in the corner gathering dust, and I've had ink cartridges dry out on me before I get to use them.

Kevin Grierson, Virginia

The price savings for a full-blown copier require a VERY high use rate though. If you're like most smaller firms, then "2-3 boxes of paper per month" is a very busy printing month. And if so, you are going to underuse a heavy-duty laser printer--which is fine, because they are cheap. But you can't afford to underuse a copier.

To put this in perspective, here's a laser printer on Newegg; Xerox B600--huge, 58ppm. It costs \$720.

<https://www.newegg.com/xerox-versalink-b600/p/N82E16828116676?Item=9SIA6ZP6HM4404>

And here's the equivalent MFP (same printer with a copier top)... for \$2340. You pay 2-3x the printer cost to get the copier add-on.

<https://www.newegg.com/xerox-versalink-b600/p/N82E16828116676?Item=9SIA6ZP6HM4404>

So, buying a copier makes it prohibitive to get a fast and durable printer body. and that is bad because of Hammarlund's First Rule: TIME IS TOO PRECIOUS TO WASTE ON SLOW PRINTERS. ;)

Erik Hammarlund

Frankly, it doesn't sound like you need a big copier. Those few times when you need to print a large volume, you can always outsource it to a local copy shop.

But some of us still find it useful, particularly in small firms with more paper-heavy practices (in my case, estate planning.). I did the math and found that purchasing a new copier and pairing it with a maintenance contract (which includes all toner) was still going to be more cost-effective than leasing. We have a maintenance and toner agreement, but I purchased a new copier outright after receiving many, many quotes.

Most of my staff has a ScanSnap at their desk, but we attorneys do not and often use the copier for scanning - and it is also very fast at that.

In my smaller office I have a heavy-duty printer that can double as a copier, and it is much slower to print the first page than my big copier, and a bit slower generally. It is rarely used and was about \$700 to purchase, as opposed to several thousand dollars.

Cynthia V. Hall, Florida