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**Kyocera
ECOSYS
A3 MFP
Range
wins
Editor's
Choice Award**



So simple, it's brilliant

A lower entry point for A3 colour MFPs gives more choice to small businesses and departments with low print volumes and small budgets.

The trend in MFP sales is all in one direction. According to IDC, the ratio of A4 to A3 MFP sales went from 60:40 in 2004 to 76:24 last year. By 2012, the research company predicts, the ratio will be 80:20.

Some might be surprised that expensive A3 MFPs can still command almost one quarter of the market: after all, the number of A3 pages produced is comparatively small – 2-5% according to most estimates – and network printing allows you to centralise A3 devices and have A4 machines locally, reducing the need for an A3 MFP on every floor.

In their favour, and aside from the fact that A3 devices are designed for high volumes of A4 output too, office workers still have a need to print large format documents, especially in colour.

As Brother's success with its entry-level inkjet models shows (see cover story on page 14), office workers value the ability to print in A3: what they aren't so happy about is the high cost of existing toner-based A3 devices.

In response, a growing number of vendors, among them Lexmark and Kyocera Mita, have introduced simplified A3 devices, with slower print speeds, lower monthly print volumes and a correspondingly low purchase price – typically around 33% less than a fully fledged A3 MFP.

Lexmark X925DE

Lexmark recently announced the Lexmark X925DE colour A3 MFP. Based on LED technology, it has A4 print speeds of 30 pages per minute for black and white and colour and sits below the 40/45ppm (colour/mono) X945e MFP and 30/40ppm

X940e in Lexmark's range.

While being slower and less versatile than its stablemates (it has no finishing units and a smaller paper capacity), the X925DE is significantly cheaper, costing around £3,500 online compared to about £7,000 for the X940e and £7,500-8,000 for the X945e MFP.

Many businesses will consider reduced functionality and slower print speeds a price worth paying if it makes A3 colour more affordable, especially as in many respects the Lexmark X925DE is state-of-the-art. Features include a 10.2in colour touchscreen; eTask interface; support for the Lexmark Embedded Solutions Framework (eSF) for integrating third party applications; energy-saving Sleep Button and Hibernate mode; duplex scanning; user-replaceable consumables; and the latest copy features, including the ability to interrupt long print runs to make a copy.

Kyocera Smart MFPs

Kyocera Mita is an interesting case because it has a foot in both camps, being both a traditional copier MFP supplier and a printer manufacturer. Its new range of ECOSYS A3 MFPs (see caption) sits between its A3 ECOSYS printers and its TASKalfa MFPs, providing customers with an affordable A3 solution that could impact both markets.

In fact, Kyocera Mita product manager Jonathan Robbins is confident that these represent a completely new category and will have no impact on sales of TASKalfa MFPs. Instead, he believes that Smart MFPs will appeal to smaller organisations or departments that don't have the print volumes or budget to warrant a fully fledged TASKalfa MFP, as well as to customers upgrading from an A3 printer to an MFP.

According to Robbins, the reason for choosing a Smart MFP over a TASKalfa is all about affordability and convenience:



Significantly cheaper: the Lexmark X925DE

"The initial purchase price of a Smart MFP is about one third less than TASKalfa MFPs, but running costs are more. These are low monthly duty cycle machines (2,500-3,000 pages a month), but if you compared a TASKalfa 250 against the FS-8020MFP, the 8020 would be more economical if printing up to 4,000 pages a month. With mono devices the break even point is up to 14,000 pages," he said.

The trade off is a reduction in print speed, throughput and functionality, as Smart MFPs have no hard disk drive and don't support Kyocera's HyPAS platform for integrating MFPs with third party print and enterprise applications (though Kyocera's own secure print and card-based authentication systems are supported).

The greater simplicity of the devices extends to servicing and support requirements: replacing the maintenance kit, which must be done every 200,000 pages on the colour machines and every 300,000 pages on the mono one takes an engineer 10-15 minutes compared to an hour on TASKalfa devices.

The user interface is simpler, too. "The colour touch-screen front panel has a wizard so if you are scanning you press the scan button and it asks where you want to scan to; then in what format; and at what resolution. One screen leads to another: it's much easier for an end user. And the front panel can be configured for individual users with their own selection of functions. Up to 20 users can have their own default screens," explained Robbins.

Combining the core functionality of an A3 MFP with the configuration and price point of an A4 MFP, Smart MFPs are a welcome option at a time when businesses must watch their pennies, while continuing to project a professional image.



Kyocera's Smart MFPs include the B&W FS-6025MFP (25ppm, £3149-£3,599) and FS-6030MFP (30ppm, £4,499); and the colour FS-C8020MFP (20/20ppm, £5,359) and FS-C8025MFP (25/25ppm, £5,999).

Certificate



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EDITOR'S CHOICE AWARD

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ECOSYS A3 MFPs

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