

Should The Office Buy A Laser or Inkjet Printer?

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Whats Hot

- "Kim Dotcom launched his new project Mega on Sunday, claiming it was to be 'the privacy company.' But it might not be so private after all, as security professionals have ripped it to shreds. There are numerous problems with how encryption is handled, an XSS flaw and users can't change their passwords, they say. But there are suspicions Mega is handling out encryption keys to users and touting strong security to cover its own back. After all, if Kim Dotcom and Co don't know what goes on the site, they might not be liable for copyright prosecutions, as they were for Megaupload, Mega's predecessor."
- Microsoft Corp is in discussions to invest between \$1 billion and \$3 billion of mezzanine financing in a buyout of Dell Inc,



Inkjet V's Laser

The "inkjet vs. laser" printer stereotypes are becoming less accurate. Once home-oriented, inkjets now include models that are sufficiently fast and capable to keep up with an office's demands. By the same token, the work-horse laser and LED printers of yore have spawned a new generation of machines that are small enough to fit into a home office. Which one is best for you? Here's how to decide between an inkjet and laser printer to handle work around your workplace. Before you start shopping, take

Inkjets Keep It Simple And Excel at Photos

The basic inkjet method of squirting liquid through microscopic nozzles onto a page hasn't changed, but ink and hardware advances have made inkjets worth considering even for business users.

Consider an inkjet if you want to...

Print Photos

Inkjets still do a better job than lasers of blending colors smoothly. Some have special photo inks that help create

subtler shadings and contours, and of course, special photo paper garners the best results. You don't have to be a photo enthusiast or a snap-happy family to want this level of quality. Visually oriented businesses such as real estate and design, or any business that wants to create photo-heavy promotional materials, should also consider an inkjet.

Print on a variety of media.



Caxton Printing Press

some time to think about your printing habits--the kinds of things you print (plain text, graphics and photos, or a mix), how much you print (in pages per week, say), and whether you need to share the printer with your family or coworkers. If your prints include external communica-

Inkjet printers can print on fancy cotton or textured stationery; specially coated fabric, canvas or iron-on transfers; or on banner-size sheets. Some can print on specially coated CDs and DVDs, to boot.

Keep it simple.

Inkjet printers tend to be smaller and lighter in form factor, and also simpler to maintain than laser/LED printers.

Laser and LED Printers Are Still Business-Basic



HP Inkjet

Laser and LED printers use their respective light sources--either a fast-moving laser or an array of LEDs--to beam an image onto a rotating drum. The image attracts toner, and the toner transfers from the drum onto paper via a quick baking process. Laser and LED printers--even color models--are now available at prices and sizes that accommodate a home or small office, but they're not inkjet killers yet.

Consider a laser or LED printer if you want to...

Print perfect text. Laser and LED printers create precisely drawn black text, and their colored text is usually either just as good or almost as good. If you print mostly text with occasional, simple graphics, a laser or LED printer is the easiest way to go.

Print exclusively on plain paper. Laser and LED printers work well with any laser-compatible paper: sheets that are smooth-surfaced and designed to handle the high heat of the fuser mechanism. Basically any standard office paper will meet that requirement. While laser and LED printers can handle some thicker and banner-size media, anything heat-sensitive cannot be run through them.

Print quickly. Most laser and LED printers are faster than most inkjet printers; but some low-end

laser and LED printers have no speed advantage. Take vendors' claims of double-digit engine speeds with a grain of salt, as the numbers are often derived under artificial conditions. Our tests indicate that most printers achieve 50 percent or better of their specified top engine speed. Our printer reviews detail the results of real-world print-speed testing that we conduct for specific models.

Print a lot. Laser and LED printers are designed to handle high-volume printing easily. Most come with 150-sheet or 250-sheet main input trays, and many models offer dual or extra-cost trays. As with inkjets, automatic duplexing is a useful feature to have.

Ink and Toner Costs Are Equally Complex

If you thought that lasers were cheaper to run than inkjets, think again: A low-end laser with an alluring price may rely on toner that is every bit as expensive as any inkjet's ink. Meanwhile, many inkjets use truly low-cost inks. For inkjets, keep the following factors in mind. Lower-end inkjets may use tri-color cartridges that contain cyan, magenta, and yellow inks in a single package. These are generally a bad deal because you have to replace all three colors as soon as you deplete one of them. Dedicated cartridges for each ink are more efficient. Models that separate the ink tank from the printhead (the microscopic nozzles through which the ink squirts onto paper) can save you money, too. For lasers, designs that separate the toner from the drum may provide cost savings, but it really depends on the model. Unfortunately,

more and more often we're seeing printers that may cost very little coupled with toner that costs more--sometimes a lot more. Some printers have high-yield cartridge options, which promise a lower cost per page than you'd get with standard-size cartridges. If you print fairly little to begin with, however, be aware that having a large, expensive cartridge sitting in your printer for months isn't any better of a deal.

Inkjets and Lasers Have Fewer Trade-Offs

Once you've chosen the best technology for your needs, a further detail is whether to buy a multifunction printer. MFPs let you add copying, scanning, and faxing capabilities without buying separate machines. If you do a lot of any of these things, though, buying a dedicated machine

is a better idea in the long run.

Buying both an inkjet and a laser or LED printer might sound a little silly--and it definitely is not space-efficient--but it's worth considering if your printing needs gravitate to both ends of the spectrum. For instance, if you want to

print chiefly plain text and high-resolution photos, investing in a simple monochrome laser and a high-quality color inkjet printer might be the best way to satisfy your needs. The good news is that most inkjets and laser or LED models can do most things at least competently. Their strengths and weaknesses tend to lie in specialized areas, such as photo or media versatility.

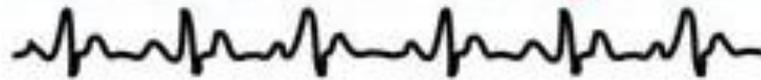
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