

Some practical ways to trim printer costs

ERIC WICHHART
Correspondent

Each day one of the most expensive things you do with your computer is printing. Each time you hit that print button depending on your printer it will cost you anywhere from 1¢ to 50¢. Currently there are five different readily available technologies on the market, each with its own place and price per page printed.

Before we talk about types of printers though, we need to discuss coverage. In the print world, coverage is defined as the

Tech Tips

amount of space covered with ink when you print a page. Why is coverage important? Coverage is important because when you purchase a toner or ink cartridge it states how many pages it will print. Any normal person would think that a page is a full page, but in fact the definition of pages printed on a toner cartridge is based on 5% coverage. What that means is that a toner cartridge that states it will print 5000 pages will print 5000 pages at 5% coverage. 5%

coverage on a sheet of paper is just over a half sheet of printed text with no pictures.

Most often when you print a sheet, you will be covering more than 5% of the page with ink or toner. Therefore, that 5000 page toner cartridge may only be printing 3000 pages. The easiest way to find out how many pages you are actually printing out of a cartridge is to print a status page when you put in a new toner and write the page count on the front of the toner cartridge,

8-9-04

See TECH TIPS, B3

Daily
Comment

then when the toner runs out repeat this and subtract the beginning from the ending count. Once you have this number, take the cost of the toner and divide it by the pages printed and you will have your true cost of printing.

Please consult your printer manual for instructions on how to print a status page and also note that not all printers offer a page count meter.

The five major types of printers are dot matrix, heat transfer, ink jet, laser and solid ink.

The first two types, dot matrix and heat transfer are mostly limited to cash regis-

ter receipt printing and special application. The most common consumer product that uses heat transfer is the Brother heat transfer fax machine. If you own one of these, unless you only use it once a month or so, throw it away as they are extremely expensive.

The third type of printing technology and the one you are most likely to see in a home is the ink jet. Ink jets are popular due to the low entrance costs. An average ink jet printer runs less than \$100 and offers great color. What people do not pay attention to is the very high operating cost of these printers. The average print cost of

an ink jet printed page runs around 50¢ depending on coverage. Manufacturers often will sell these printers below cost, knowing they will recoup their expense in the sale of ink cartridges. If you think you are paying a lot for a gallon of gas, the price for a gallon of ink jet ink is roughly \$10,000.

The fourth form of technology is commonly called laser. Laser printers have a higher entrance cost, but have a long term savings in the cost per page. An average laser printer has a page cost of 4¢ black and white and 20¢ color. Laser printer will print pages faster than an ink jet and the ink will

not run when it gets wet like a ink jet printed page will. One of the down sides of laser is the messy toner that is hazardous to the environment. If you get some toner on your clothes, you may never get it out.

The last printer we will discuss is a new environmentally friendly type of technology only available from Xerox. Xerox's solid ink technology has no wasted cartridges, is environmentally friendly, has no messy toners, produces near photographic quality on plain paper and has a print cost starting at 2¢ black and white and 5¢ color.

The plain simple answer

to the question of which printer is right for you is that it depends on your situation. If you do low volume color, 1-5 pages per day, an ink jet is probably the right fit. If you print over 100 pages up to 1000 color pages per month a color laser is a good fit. If you are printing over 1000 color pages per month, the Xerox Solid Ink Technology is a good place to look.

I often get the questions "I print only a couple color pages a month, but do high black and white volume, what do I do?" My answer to this question is that they

need to purchase both a ink jet printer for color and also a laser for doing black and white.

At ConnectU we offer businesses a free evaluation of their printing needs. We offer a large array of printing products and our partnership with Xerox has given us a valuable asset when servicing businesses. Please contact us today to schedule an appointment.

Eric Wichart is the CEO of ConnectU, a Eustis-based technology firm. He can be reached at eric@connectutech.com, 352-702-0354 or online at <http://www.connectutech.com>.