



COPIERS

Photocopiers have become a very large part of the schools use when it comes to printing. Most offices use the main copier for most printing. In this section we will explore various issues involved in getting a new copier - pitfalls to watch for and explaining various options available on modern copiers.

First we will look at types of copier and uses - we will then look into different contract types usually associated with copiers to help you make the right decision.

Black copies/prints only:

In the past, colour copiers were significantly more expensive than mono versions and, if colour were not a specific requirement, it made financial sense to elect for mono copies only. However, in recent years the technology has advanced dramatically to the point where, in terms of hardware, there is very little difference between the cost of a mono and the cost of a colour machine, and in terms of consumables, the average price of a colour copy has now come down to a level which everyone can find acceptable and justifiable.

Colour copying slower than mono:

When they were first introduced, copier/printers that could create full colour prints often operated much more slowly in colour than in mono. Modern technology has largely eradicated that, however, and any modern machine should be capable of operating at the same speed whether it be mono or colour.

Non Networked Equipment:

Within a modern office environment, the stand alone photocopier is a thing of the past. Indeed, in recent years, levels of photocopying have dropped dramatically, being replaced by direct printing. With modern multi-functional copy print devices it is considerably cheaper to print than to use a small desktop printer.

Some years ago, ICT managers were cautious about linking copiers and multi-functional devices to their networks, but those days are long gone and the technology is now tried and tested as being safe, secure and sensible.

Duplicators:

The Digital Duplicator, Priport or Riso machine is extremely effective at creating cheap and fast runs of print for wide distribution. However, they are a little unwieldy, even using the latest technology, and certainly not cost effective for shorter runs or where quality is important. With the consistent reduction in running costs for traditional copier/printers and the availability of greater speeds and colour - the Digital Duplicator is looking increasingly weak as an option for the busy school.

Furthermore, as double sided printing is not easy with a duplicator, paper saving and environmental responsibility is less achievable.

Contracts Explained

Lots of Equipment on one agreement:

Again, the argument in favour is that of simplicity and common sense. However, the drawback from the school's point of view is that, should printing and copying requirements change and there is a need to upgrade the equipment, the whole of the leasing agreement, and everything on it, needs to be settled, making the appropriate changes prohibitively expensive.

The greatest flexibility for the school is achieved by having separate leasing agreements for each item of equipment.

Toner Exclusive contracts:

Service agreements from all reputable suppliers will include all parts, consumables and labour. There are still a few companies around who attempt to appear very cheap for service, by excluding the cost of toners from their agreements. In fact, the toner element of the service charge is usually the greater part, as genuine manufacturer's toners are relatively expensive. By entering into a toner exclusive contract, the school is exposing itself to potentially considerably more cost than is necessary.

Minimum Billing Service Agreements:

Some supplier's service agreement stipulate a minimum monthly charge irrespective of how many prints or copies are produced on the machine. If the total volume of usage of the equipment is more than the minimum, then there is indeed no issue. However, if usage falls below the anticipated volume, then the school may end up paying for service and copies that they have not had. Furthermore, the agreement may not allow for the peaks and troughs of usage created by school holidays, exam period and so on.

Prohibitive Service Settlements:

If a school decides to settle the outstanding lease agreement on its machine, there should be no further service requirement, and the service agreement should be cancelable with a fair and sensible notice period.

Beware of small print in service agreements committing the school to service for the full lifetime of the equipment, activating a substantial penalty for early cancellation.

“Evergreen” Service Agreements:

Some service agreements purport to be for a year only, but unless the school cancels the agreement within a very brief window of opportunity, the contract automatically rolls over for another twelve months, indefinitely for the lifetime of the machine to which it pertains.

Whilst in principle there is nothing particularly sinister in this, it can create significant additional cancellation fees should the school ever wish or need to change suppliers.

Bulk Free Copies included:

If managed and set up properly, this is a perfectly legitimate way of including copies in the cost of the quarterly rental on the machine so that the school receive one simple invoice every quarter - saving administrative confusion. However, many salespeople miscalculate the actual copy volumes, leading to additional unexpected costs or pressure to re-sign a new agreement, which essentially overcomplicates a situation that should be clear and simple.

Refurbished or Ex-Demonstration Equipment:

Whilst this can appear excellent value for money at first glance and on a tight budget, it will almost always prove to be a false economy. In addition to buying into what is already outdated technology, the reliability factor of older equipment is questionable at best and likely to deteriorate significantly through the life of the equipment. In order to compensate for the cost of parts and labour, it is likely that the supplier will need to regularly increase the service costs, even though the initial offering might be quite competitive.

The way that equipment is sold today, it is very rare to put machines out on trial, and many companies do not utilise a showroom facility and so “Ex-Demonstration” machine is very often euphemism for “Refurbished” or “Second Hand”

Things To Watch out for in choosing a copier

The Following is a list of things to be watching out for when you are making your choices. They are ranked in order of speed - ability and longevity.

Red being things to avoid.

Orange is a good short term place to be - but its time to start thinking of changing.

Green will last the longest and you are future proofing yourself as much as possible.

Blue is up and coming breaking technology - it may catch on - it may not !

Non networked Copiers
Refurbished Equipment
Ex Demo Equipment

Black Copies / Prints only
Duplicators
Colour prints slower than mono

SIMS Compatibility
Full scanning capability
Strong service commitments

Archiving Software
Wireless Technology

Cashback offers
"Bulk free" copies included
Toner exclusive contracts

Minimum billing agreements
Prohibitive service settlements
Evergreen service contracts

3 Year agreements
Clear and fair terms and conditions
Good testimonials and references

Managed Print service
Total Volume Print Plans

Things To Watch out for in choosing a contract

The Following is a list of things to be watching out for when you are making your choices. They are ranked in order of speed - ability and longevity.

Red being things to avoid.

Orange is a good short term place to be - but its time to start thinking of changing.

Green will last the longest and you are future proofing yourself as much as possible.

Blue is up and coming breaking technology - it may catch on - it may not !