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ComColor Series Wins Editors Choice Award



Out with the old, in with the new

The demise of HP Edgeline MFPs clears the way for Riso's new range of high-speed inkjet printers

THE NEWS THAT HP HAS DISCONTINUED ITS EDGELINE MULTIFUNCTION DEVICES, THE HP CM8050/CM8060, WILL HAVE SURPRISED NO ONE WHO HAS WATCHED HP STRUGGLE TO ESTABLISH ITS HIGH-SPEED INKJET MFPs IN THE OFFICE MARKET.

Despite some innovative features, notably two-tier colour pricing and a Color Accent feature that charges pages with a small amount of colour at the B&W page rate (now offered on Xerox's solid ink ColorQube MFPs), HP's devices never won favour with IT managers, FMs or copier dealers.

So, does this mark the end of an enterprise print solution? Will office printing now be completely dominated by laser devices, with a smattering of solid ink Xerox ColorQube MFPs providing a niche solution for businesses with waste reduction programmes? Or is there still a place for high-speed A3 inkjet devices in the office?

HP may have decided to standardise on laser technology for its A3 MFPs, stating that "at this time, HP can meet the needs of our customers better by continuing to build out a laser-based MFP portfolio", but others are sorry to see Edgeline go.

David Smith, CEO of HP managed print specialist The Landscape Group said: "As one of the largest resellers of Edgeline technology we are disappointed this has been discontinued, although we still hold many of these products in stock. Edgeline was an excellent device to blend into Managed Print Contracts, assisting

in lowering overall costs for colour and mono printing when it came to HP fleets."

Another company that believes there is a place for high-speed, single-pass inkjet devices is Riso. At Ipxe, held in Birmingham from May 18-25, it demonstrated a new range of ComColor A3 and A4 sheet-fed inkjet printers and MFPs, which it is promoting as an economical alternative to toner-based products not just for commercial printers and central reprographics departments but also for day-to-day office output.

The ComColor 7050 MFP (A3, 120 pages per minute), the ComColor 9050 printer (A3, 150ppm) and the A4-only ComColor 3050 MFP (90ppm) have two main selling points: fast print speeds (including no loss of speed when printing on both sides of the page) and very low running costs.

These are in the region of 0.4p per B&W page and 1-2p per colour page when printed on normal office or recycled paper. The devices can also be used with specially developed coated paper for an all-inclusive cost of about 2.5-3.5p per colour page (including paper and ink).

This is significantly cheaper than toner devices: even if print quality of 300 x 600 dpi is not what office workers have come to expect, it is more than adequate for invoices, internal documents, drafts and some marketing material e.g. flyers.

Tamal Saha, managing director of Riso UK, does not expect ComColor devices to replace laser MFPs completely, but told PrintIT that they do have a role to play as part of a balanced deployment.

He said: "A ComColor is not the



only machine you should have: but it is the principal machine you should have - you could do 80% of your print on it. Don't think just because 20% of your output is not suitable for such a device that that's a good reason not to get one."

SUCCESS IN EDUCATION

This is not the first time Riso has launched a high-speed inkjet printer (not to be confused with its digital duplicators, which are based on different technology and have other selling points). Five years ago, it launched the HC5000 series (and the HC550 series 18 months later) and since then has installed more than 3,000 across Europe.

Although the HC5500 series enjoyed some success in the education market, it failed to make an impression outside this niche.

"At the time of its launch there was no financial crisis and people didn't want lower quality, so we pitched the product into the education market where there were big print volumes, limited budgets and where quality was not such as issue," Saha said.

This time around, he is confident that a greater range of organisations will be appreciative of ComColor's benefits. "The economic downturn has enabled us to go to commercial



organisations that used to say they wanted better quality and promote the TCO argument and point out that there is an alternative to laser MFPs," he said.

The economic climate is not all that's changed. The new ComColor series is cheaper, faster, more compact and more office-friendly than its predecessor. It is built like an office MFP, with a user-friendly, touch-screen control panel and an optional 40ppm scanner (compared to 20ppm before) for copying and scan to email. And it can be enhanced with useful extras, such as card access control and PaperCut print management software.

With a variable data printing capability, over-size A3 output, 400gsm paper handling, built-in and external RIPs and a choice of finishing options, the ComColor series is well suited to commercial and CRD print markets. The big question is whether its undoubted TCO benefits win over office buyers. If they do, Riso could yet become a force in office print.

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