

Evolutions in the printer industry



By [Heinrich Pretorius](#)

9 Nov 2012

Printer technology has by no means remained static over the years, even though the concept of the paperless office may never have materialised, and printers still form a vital part of day-to-day business. Computers, processors and the latest gadgets often get all of the publicity, but behind the scenes the humble printer has continued to evolve.

New features, new functionality and enhancements, as well as innovative twists on tested technology have made these unsung office heroes faster, greener, more efficient and more reliable than ever, enabling many businesses to simply take for granted that printers are there and will work as and when it is needed.

One of the evolutions in the printer industry has been the sheer variety of different devices, different print types and different applications which are now available. Targeted printers are now available to appeal to the home user, the small or home office, small and medium businesses, large enterprises and even specialist printing applications such as large formats, in both colour and black and white.

Old technology such as the dot matrix printer has become super efficient, perfect for printing multiple copies of invoices and bills of sale, while laser printers now deliver affordable, professional print quality for businesses at lightning speeds on a variety of paper sizes. Both dot matrix and lasers have also become more eco-friendly as a result of increasing environmental awareness, and these devices act as an integral part of the modern business across industry sectors.

Mature and still widely used

From slow, single line at a time and noisy printing, the dot matrix device has come along in leaps and bounds. While this technology, as mentioned, is old, it is also mature and is still widely used particularly in applications where reliability is key and high volumes of multi-part forms need to be printed at a low cost per print. Using ribbon technology and impact printing, dot matrix devices easily produce multiple copies simultaneously, and can feed both cut sheet paper and continuous forms for versatile paper handling.

The latest evolution of the dot matrix can now print up to 700 characters per second, using up to nine pins on a print head, enabling fast throughput that is perfect for demanding environments such as warehouses, factories, repair and service centres, wholesalers and more. These devices also incorporate supreme durability and reliability, and can both push and pull paper through the feeder, using roll paper to economically print logs and other large data streams.

Eco friendly features on new devices include sleep mode to keep running costs and energy consumption to a minimum, reducing carbon footprint, and long life ribbon technology means more prints per ribbon.

When it comes to laser printers, colour is the name of the game for business, and the ability to deliver crisp, clear text and vibrant realistic images in vibrant colour are of the utmost importance. Where colour used to be an expensive print technology, it has become increasingly affordable and is now available for all size of business, enabling organisations to print professional quality documents from the office. Resolution on office printers has vastly improved, with dots per inch of up to 1200 by 1200 now standard features, and photo enhancing tools to ensure lifelike images can be printed with ease. High speeds, high capacity toner cartridges and lowered running costs have made colour printing more affordable than ever.

The ability to print on multiple paper sizes is another print innovation that has revolutionised office printing, as users can now print from A6 to A3 on the same device, and various thicknesses of paper are also supported for added versatility. Mobile printing has become a standard feature, enabling wireless printing from notebooks, tablets and even smartphones, and added security features such as print release, secure printing and colour access management ensure that confidential documents do not fall into the wrong hands and wasteful colour printing is avoided.

Eco-friendly features

Eco-friendly features such as standard duplex (double sided) printing, compact design, energy efficient technology, sleep mode and auto off help to minimise carbon footprint, and toner save features help organisations get the most of their print supplies. New features such as the ability to print in monochrome when colour cartridges are empty, rather than the printer not functioning at all, help to increase productivity and efficiency.

When it comes to printers, efficiency and eco-friendliness are key, and most of the developments in the industry have evolved around improving these features, as well as improving speed. The printer is often the heart of the business, so organisations would do well to select a device from the wide range available that meets their specific needs, whether this is for high volume, multi-copy invoicing or professional colour documents and printing. Whatever your needs, there is a printer that fits the bills, and by selecting a new model substantial savings and reduced carbon footprint are often easy goals to achieve.

ABOUT HEINRICH PRETORIUS

Heinrich Pretorius is Product Specialist at Drive Control Corporation. He joined Drive Control Corporation (DCC) in October 2010 and manages three brands including OKI, Targus and Canon Hardware & Photography. Contact him on tel +27(0)11 201 8927 or email heinrichp@drivecon.net
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