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Toshiba News at LEAD 2018 Is Less Than Meets the Eye

Tweaks to Elevate Custom UI, New MFPs, and a Deal with Brother Unlikely to Have Much Impact

Toshiba America Business Solutions (TABS) hosted its eighth annual LEAD (*i.e.*, *Learn, Engage, Act and Deliver*) dealer and end user customer meeting in Las Vegas on September 5 and 6.

For the third year in a row, TABS co-hosted LEAD with Toshiba Global Commerce Solutions (TGCS), which is the much larger retail point-of-sale side of Toshiba TEC in the Americas. However, Toshiba has never gotten a lot of traction among MFP dealers for any TGCS products. Likewise, the TABS investment in digital display signage has also tended to appeal to a relatively small portion of its dealers.

At this juncture, it is probably important to note that I was not among the contingent of industry analysts and press who were part of the 1,600 attendees at LEAD 2018. That figure also included 500 end users on the second day. This was the first time in 23 years of doing *The MFP Report* that I was not invited to an important Toshiba dealer meeting.

What was really strange is that TABS had specifically e-



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mailed me on December 19 last year and again on June 21 this year to "save the date" to attend the LEAD meeting. It was only in late August —

when no further arrangements had been made and after I contacted TABS — that Toshiba told me it had "made the decision to not extend an invitation to you for this year's event." TABS declined to offer any further explanation.

This is not the first time a vendor has opted not to invite me to an event (*HP and Samsung, cough*), but it was the first
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HP Tries to Reinvent the Home Printer with a Quirky "Tango"

On September 25, HP announced the "Tango," a new single-function smart inkjet printer aimed at consumers whose computing environment is centered around a phone, rather than a PC. The product represents the latest effort by a post-split HP to "reinvent" a relatively staid and significantly shrunken home printing market with new types of devices.

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The \$199 Tango X model costs one-third more than the \$149 Tango base model. The extra \$50 is merely for one of several available cloth covers that wrap around the slim printer.

Is There Upside on Either Side for Toshiba's Brother Deal?

With all the talk these days about vendor consolidation in the hardcopy industry, it would be easy to look at the announcement on September 6 of a new partnership between Toshiba America Business Solutions (TABS) and Brother as further evidence of that trend. But in reality, this agreement is much more a case of "Eh" than "Oh!"

The Brother announcement was the key piece of business news at Toshiba's LEAD 2018 dealer and customer event in Las Vegas. Basically, this new agreement gives TABS branches and dealers in the US access to sell what Brother calls its Workhorse Series of laser/LED printers and MFPs. Also included in the deal are "Brother's portfolio of customized services and solutions" for those specific models. In addition, unspecified efforts are in the works to integrate these Brother devices into Toshiba's Encompass MPS program.

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“Dabblers and Dilettantes”

When I started *The MFP Report* 23 years ago, a top concern was how much research, studying, and analysis I needed to do before I could write a single word for that very first issue. Maybe I was humble; perhaps I was just insecure. But I had tremendous respect for those I hoped would read and subscribe to my newsletter. I knew I had to do my homework if I were ever to be credible and if *The MFP Report* were to be useful. And it was then and always has been just me.

So when I see MFP vendors today dabble in adjacent but complex product categories or move further afield from their core businesses – seemingly without doing the requisite work those tasks demand and in spite of the vast resources these companies have – I get annoyed. News flash, vendors. Don’t wing it! Real shortcuts are few and far between. You can’t just pull a new product, business strategy, or professional service out of your corporate backside!

Yet that’s what I’m seeing almost every quarter – and sometimes every month – from far too many petulant hardcopy companies that are scared, frustrated, and want an easy path to new riches. There are so many examples of arrogance, entitlement and narcissism. But the reality is that credibility and success in one domain do not guarantee prevailing in another domain, even an adjacent one. In fact, lucrative and long-standing success in one business may well prove to be an impediment to success elsewhere in that it can blind a vendor to how difficult it is to create a new market and build a new business.

Some of the biggest hardcopy industry pratfalls easily demonstrate my point. There was Xerox’s wasted effort to enter the lower reaches of the BPO market with its ill-fated purchase of ACS. There was also Lexmark’s unbroken streak of overpaying for small ECM companies it was unable to effectively integrate or help grow. And years earlier, there was the multibillion dollar dead-on-arrival collaborative push by Canon and Toshiba into the SED flat panel display business.

But those disasters were somewhat reasonable gambles when compared to a string of smaller but even more suspect product initiatives that have emerged since then from deep within the bowels of multiple print and imaging companies.

Look no further than Konica Minolta, which has done a good job appearing to be the most dilettantish hardcopy company of late. The easiest target is the Workplace Hub, the pre-announced, undelivered thing no one can explain or figure out how to sell. Yet somehow, it’s going to bring in a billion dollars five years from now. And it doesn’t stop there. Konica Minolta is also on track to replicate that kind of “success” with products ranging from ideation software and

digital receptionists, to healthcare management applications and hospitality robots. And AI, too.

Of course, Ricoh isn’t very far behind, with its what-were-they-thinking, a-day-late-and-a-dollar-short investments in unified communications, digital projectors, virtual self-service holograms, LED lighting, digital cameras, and more.

Other vendors have tended to dabble less, probably more due to a lack of resources than a wiser sense of restraint. But Sharp is still working on its good-luck-with-that-conference-room Assist Bot. And Toshiba in the US remains enamored with digital display signage, despite its lack of core technology or competitive advantage.

Yet other failures exist much closer to the core imaging business, particularly as regards those ever-popular pushes into ECM and vertical solutions. Does anyone but Xerox’s new CEO really think Xerox has a chance in hell to challenge Dropbox with its moldering DocuShare platform? And why is it that there are almost no MFP-connected vertical solutions anywhere in this entire industry that integrate with the leading infrastructure applications that are used in those vertical markets?

The good news – if you can call it that – is that there are common factors that help explain how hardcopy vendors have ended up being such dabblers and dilettantes when it comes to diversification. A very most significant factor is the delusionally tenuous idea that just because MFPs are used in offices, and these new things are also for offices, that constitutes synergy. *Wow!*

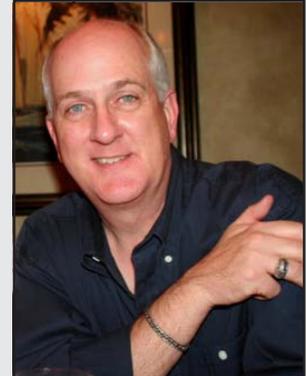
More generally, MFP vendors have assumed creating products is harder than marketing and selling them. They’ve believed that product novelty guarantees success, or that a me-too product will prevail just because of its brand. And they seem compelled to force fit new products into old sales channels. Such obvious errors are all but assured because hardcopy vendors willingly ignore much more relevant and focused competitors in those new market spaces. And because MFP vendors are oblivious to their real competitors, they fail to appreciate – let alone communicate – how their own new products are sufficiently different or more compelling. It’s so much simpler to say, “Stand back world, I’m here!”

The other good news is there are some noteworthy exceptions: HP’s industrial 3D printing push; Canon’s medical systems; Fuji Xerox’s healthcare business; Brother’s industrial inkjet unit. We just need to see more of those would-be winners.

Brian R. Bissett

Publisher & Editor

COMMENT



“When I see vendors dabble in adjacent but complex product categories or move further afield from their core business – without doing the requisite work those tasks demand and despite the vast resources these companies have – I get annoyed. News flash, vendors. Don’t wing it! Real shortcuts are few and far between. You can’t simply pull a new product, a new business strategy, or a new professional service out of your corporate backside!”



Ricoh Exits the Office Inkjet Export Market After Years of Failed Efforts

After years of open speculation, Ricoh recently acknowledged it has given up selling outside of Japan any current or new desktop printers or MFPs that utilize its piezo-based “gel” inkjet technology. In the US, Ricoh has already discontinued its last four GelJet devices. However, in Japan, Ricoh continues to sell a series of nine GelJet printers and MFPs.

Ricoh launched its first office inkjet printers in Japan more than a dozen years ago. Ricoh started with a line of A4 single-function printers and a single A3 printer. Those models shipped in Japan, the US, and selected other markets in 2005. They were followed by the A3-size multifunctional Imagio Neo MP C1500 in Japan in 2005 and the equivalent Aficio 615C in the US in 2006. That product, which Ricoh very cautiously promoted as an entry-level A3 color MFP for offices, had speeds of just 6 ppm for color and 15 ppm for B&W. But it quickly failed everywhere it was launched.

Then in 2007, Ricoh launched its first A4 inkjet MFPs. Over much of the next decade, it periodically updated its lineup of A4 inkjet MFPs and printers as well, but the changes were nominal. And there was only one underlying inkjet printhead and engine for nearly all of those devices. At one point, Ricoh even created a monochrome printer that used that same platform, but the product was available only in EMEA.

Ricoh had not shipped a new office inkjet device in the US in six years. Those last new GelJet models were the A4-size SG 3110DNw printer; the A4-size SG 3100SNw and

3110SFNw MFPs; and the A3-size SG 7100DN printer.

There are lots of reasons why Ricoh failed with its office inkjet devices, some technical and some business. Foremost, Ricoh’s office inkjet devices were always “in between” products. They were a bit too expensive for SOHO customers and too low-end for most offices. It did not help that Ricoh could never really figure out what to call the products and/or its technology, whether it was GelJet, GelSprinter, or the truly forgettable Liquid Gel in Europe for a time. That ambiguity was symptomatic of the general lack of basic marketing. Whether it was speed, quality or economics, Ricoh never really developed or communicated any credible messages.

Start with speed. Ricoh consistently focused on the old “up to” print speed of 29 ppm, even after that kind of misleading marketing had fallen out of favor in the consumer inkjet segment. And the more credible 12 ppm ISO print speed was not that persuasive. Similarly, the maximum print resolution was a somewhat subpar 3600 x 1200 dpi, and Ricoh often found itself explaining its inkjet devices lacked the image quality of less expensive competing models.

And there was almost no cost of ownership message. The SG 3100SNw and 3110SFNw MFPs were launched in 2012 with OK street prices of \$209 and \$229, and the supplies had high yields (2,500 black pages and 2,200 color pages) and reasonable page costs (1.6¢ for black and 7.0¢ for color), but Ricoh did little to promote those facts. ❏



GELJET

After thirteen years of effort and investment with little to show for it, Ricoh has dropped the last remaining GelJet desktop inkjet devices it had been selling in the US. Ricoh’s final two A4 MFPs, a single A4 printer, and one A3 printer were already six years old.

Was That Homegrown Russian Inkjet MFP Just Fake News? ... Probably

Two years ago, a few breathy press reports emerged with a claim that “The Russians are coming!” The news was that Russia was poised to enter the domestic hardcopy industry in 2018 with a series of homegrown inkjet printers and MFPs that collectively went by the name “Katyusha.”

September 13 marked the two-year anniversary of that strange announcement, which was made on behalf of four obscure Russian companies that together were sourcing the core inkjet printhead technology from UK-based Xaar (*The MFP Report, Sep 16*). The rationale behind the products was made clear by the fact it occurred at the Import Substitution 2016 International Expo that was held in Moscow.

Development of the Katyusha platform was said to be supported by the Industry Development Fund of the Russian Ministry of Industry and Trade, and also by a Russian venture fund called CommIT Capital that is part of Rostelecom, which is Russia’s main long distance phone company.

Few details were available in 2016. The products were said to target “state businesses serving citizens and having archive functions.” The plan at that time called for selling 65,000 Katyusha MFPs per year, starting in mid-2018.

Then in April 2017, the developers said they planned to show an operational prototype that September at the Import Substitution 2017 International Expo in Moscow. The developers also clarified that what they had shown originally

in September 2016 was just a mock-up. Then last summer, a Katyusha web site popped up, providing more product details in both Russian and English. For example, it was made clear that Katyusha was an A4 platform with a 50 ppm professional mode print speed and a 75 ppm office mode print speed. And the developers reiterated their plan to produce up to several thousand devices per month.

But after that 2017 trade show ended, we found no evidence an actual working prototype had really been displayed (*The MFP Report, Sep 17*). And a slick Russian language video that appeared contemporaneously on the Katyusha web site never showed the products actually operating. At no point did prints emerge from it, and no one touched the Katyusha control panel.

It has now been twelve months since then, and no additional information on the Katyusha products has appeared anywhere. Nor has the Katyusha web site been updated. We also could find no evidence the Katyusha developers exhibited at this year’s annual Import Substitution International Expo, which was held in Moscow from September 11-13. Color us skeptical. ❏



There’s little reason to believe the 75 ppm A4 inkjet “Katyusha” MFP will ever actually ship in Russia.

Xerox Is Still Buying Time to Come Up with a Credible New Strategy

On September 6, newly minted Xerox CEO John Visentin spoke at the Citi 2018 Global Technology Conference in New York. It was the first time Visentin had spoken at a financial industry event on behalf of Xerox, and it followed his Q2 earnings call on July 26 (*The MFP Report, Jul 18*).

Just as he had on the July call, Visentin at the September event sought to assure Wall Street analysts that Xerox is working on a new strategic business plan, while at the same time not offering many details of that plan, and trying to buy a few more months in order to get that plan finished. The few tidbits that Visentin did reveal about the evolving plan at Xerox showed how steep the learning curve may be for the company's new leadership when it comes to understanding the hardcopy industry and the options available to Xerox.

Visentin opened by saying he is focused on the end-to-end supply chain and accountability. He acknowledged that Xerox's business is "quite complex" and needed to be simplified. And he criticized Xerox for having "had two owners for any different part of our business, versus just having one." As a result, Visentin stated he had initiated something called Project Own "that is really focused on simplifying everything we do." Project Own was described as "questioning the process of everything we do." This was said to be in marked contrast to previous cost reduction efforts, which focused on using fewer people but retained the old processes.

As in July, Visentin criticized Xerox's old "transformation program" for not having delivered much improvement to the company's bottom line. He stated that \$680 million in transformation program cost reductions in 2017 had translated into only \$50 million in bottom line improvement. Now, Visentin said, "the focus has been shifted to doing everything quicker ... more efficiently ... simpler."

Surprisingly, Visentin claimed that "overall demand is stable" at Xerox. However, this appears to be at odds with recent trends in revenue, placements, pages, prices, profits and margins at Xerox and also across the industry. He also characterized the SMB market as "a growth market." SMB is indeed an opportunity for growth at Xerox, and the SMB portion of the MPS market is growing, but it is not the case that the overall SMB hardcopy market is growing.

Visentin again trotted out the tenuous claim that Xerox's moribund DocuShare business "is similar to Box or Dropbox" and something that Xerox can exploit. He also described Xerox's PARC facility and its overall R&D apparatus as "a hidden gem" that has "created over \$1 trillion of industry value for others." But it remains as unclear as ever how exactly Visentin believes PARC will generate tangible new revenue streams for Xerox in the short-run and longer run.

Visentin stated the issues Xerox has had with Fuji Xerox and some of its large investors have rarely been a reason for not winning new sales or not renewing existing business. Moreover, he explained that Xerox's relationship with Fuji Xerox is "stronger than ever." Visentin claimed Fuji Xerox has recently been "more responsive than they've ever been

Fuji Seeks to Lift Stay on Deal

On September 25, the New York State Supreme Court heard an appeal by Fujifilm asking it to lift a preliminary injunction issued on April 27 that blocked Fujifilm from proceeding with its plan to buy 50.1% of Xerox. Fujifilm and Xerox had announced the transaction back on January 31. The Court in April had found, "The transaction was largely negotiated by a massively conflicted CEO in breach of his fiduciary duties to further his self-interest and approved by a Board, more than half of whom were perpetuating themselves in office for five years without properly supervising Xerox's conflicted CEO."

On May 13, Xerox – with a new Board of Directors and a new CEO in the form of John Visentin – had walked away from the deal. Five weeks later, on June 18, Fujifilm filed a \$1 billion lawsuit against Xerox in which it claimed these changes were merely an attempt to back out of the original agreement.

In the 30-minute hearing before the New York State Supreme Court on September 25, Fujifilm pointed to those same major changes at Xerox as providing sufficient reason to lift the preliminary injunction. If that happens, Fujifilm might ask Xerox to proceed with the original deal. More likely, observers said, Fujifilm would use that decision as leverage in its ongoing negotiations with Xerox. At the end of September, there was no word on whether further hearings would be held or when the Court might issue a decision as regards the preliminary injunction.

... and they're focused on treating us like a customer on the supply chain side." And he said the two companies are "continuing on with the product and R&D development that we have historically been doing."

This sounds like a precursor for Xerox simply to declare victory and continue relying on Fuji Xerox to supply the vast majority of the printing hardware it sells. Xerox also reiterated that the current five-year Technology Agreement with Fuji Xerox comes up for renewal in March 2020, and at that time Xerox will evaluate the agreement and its impact.

Xerox promised to provide a lot more detail on the changes it is making inside the company and in the company's strategy at its annual Investor Day. That will include "a model that says here's what revenue is going to look like and here is where it's going to come from." And it will include an explanation of organic versus inorganic revenue growth. Meanwhile, Xerox said it remains committed to returning at least 50% of its free cash flow to investors this year and ongoing. But it remains unclear how Xerox plans to do that while pursuing a stepped-up M&A program and funding other new efforts to generate inorganic growth.

Lastly, Xerox did not offer any clear answers to questions regarding the possibility of taking the company private or selling off the company's equipment finance business.

Xerox's Investor Day is not yet scheduled, but it will likely be in late in Q4 of 2018 or early in Q1 of 2019. 



Surprisingly, new CEO John Visentin stated that "overall demand is stable" at Xerox. However, this appears to be at odds with recent trends in revenue, placements, pages, prices, profits and margins at Xerox and also across the industry. He also characterized the SMB market as "a growth market." SMB represents an opportunity for growth at Xerox, and the SMB portion of the MPS market is growing, but it is not necessarily the case that the overall SMB hardcopy market is growing.

Konica Minolta's "Shinka" Update Highlights Its High Hub Hopes

On September 27, Konica Minolta in Japan released the first update to the so-called Shinka 2019 Medium Term Business plan it debuted back in May 2017. Shinka is the Japanese word for "evolution," and the plan is intended to outline several efforts Konica Minolta is undertaking to create a new business future between FY2017 and FY2019.

The three-year Shinka Plan is geared mostly around targets for FY2019, which ends in March 2020, but there are also some looser goals for FY2021 and a few goals even for FY2023. The priorities in the Shinka plan are essentially threefold: (1) to transform Konica Minolta's core office and production printing business; (2) to add new growth businesses that extend from that current core business; and (3) to layer completely new businesses on top of all that.

The original Shinka plan document called for Konica Minolta to reach ¥1.1 trillion in revenue in FY2019, which is \$9.63 billion at the current exchange rate, but there was no corresponding figure for FY2021. The plan also called for operating profit to exceed ¥75 billion in FY2019 (\$657 million) and to surpass ¥100 billion in (\$876 million) in FY2021. The corresponding net profit targets were ¥50 billion (\$438 million) in FY2019 and ¥70 billion (\$613 million) in FY2021.

In terms of top-level financial metrics, Konica Minolta got off to a solid start in the first year of the plan. For FY2017, which ended back on March 31, Konica Minolta exceeded its forecast for revenue (¥1,031 vs. ¥980 billion); operating profit (¥53.8 vs. ¥46.0 billion); operating profit ratio (5.2% vs. 4.7%); and net profit (¥32.2 vs. ¥30.0 billion).

Whereas the Shinka plan document released in May 2017 was vague and qualitative as regards specific initiatives, the September 2018 document provides some interesting details and insights. For example, Konica Minolta expects the revenue contribution from its core hardcopy business (i.e., office and professional print) to decline from 75% this fiscal year, to 72% in FY2019, and to 66% in FY2021. Similarly, the contribution of the printing business to Konica Minolta's operating profit is expected to decline from 71% this fiscal year, to 68% in FY2019, and to 57% in FY2021.

But in absolute terms, Konica Minolta is still forecasting both portions of its hardcopy business will grow and then plateau. Konica Minolta sees its office printing revenue growing from ¥583 billion this fiscal year, to ¥593 billion in FY2019, and to ¥594 billion in FY2021. That may be optimistic in the context of a shrinking market. And Konica Minolta expects its professional print revenue to continue increasing, from ¥227 billion this fiscal year, to ¥261 billion in FY2019, and to ¥297 billion in FY2021. Given its expansion into industrial printing, that could be feasible.

It is also interesting how Konica Minolta portrays in this document the trajectory for its various non-print businesses. Most notably, revenue from new business endeavors is expected to triple in relative terms and quadruple in absolute terms, from 5% of revenue in FY2019 (i.e., ¥54 billion or about \$470 million), to 15% of revenue in FY2021 (i.e.,

¥203 billion or almost \$1.8 billion).

Of particular relevance to the MFP industry is what Konica Minolta is saying now in the Shinka plan about its hopes for the perpetually delayed Workplace Hub initiative.

Konica Minolta has categorized the Workplace Hub as a "new business," rather than as a "growth business" that leverages its current office printing operation. Nonetheless, the first hardware device in the new lineup incorporates a 22 ppm A3 color MFP with embedded Workplace Hub functionality. That MFP was originally planned to have shipped a year ago, and Konica Minolta has offered no updated shipment date in over a year.

One can infer from the new Shinka plan document that the first Workplace Hub units will ship sometime between now and March. That is because Konica Minolta is presently forecasting a tiny sliver of revenue for these devices in FY2018. The target in the updated Shinka plan document is roughly ¥3 billion, or about \$25 million. However, even that nominal level of sales and revenue may be optimistic.

From there, Konica Minolta is forecasting a massive ramp up in Workplace Hub sales, with the associated revenue climbing to approximately ¥20 billion (\$175 million) in FY2019; ¥50 billion (\$650 million) in FY2020; ¥80 billion (\$700 million) in FY2021; ¥100 billion (\$875 million) in FY2022; and ¥120 billion (\$1.05 billion) in FY2023.

In other words, Konica Minolta is expecting the Workplace Hub product line to grow from 0.3% of its total revenue in FY2018, to 6% of its revenue in FY2021. And it is expected to be a billion-dollar global business in FY2023.

And Konica Minolta provided additional financial information on the Workplace Hub. For example, it expects 30% of that revenue to come from fixed monthly charges, with the other 70% from pay-per-use, licensing and maintenance.

Konica Minolta says it will need a cumulative total of about 10,000 Workplace Hub customers for the program to hit the breakeven point. It expects that will happen at some point in FY2020. And Konica Minolta is bullishly forecasting it will have 35,000 cumulative Workplace Hub customers worldwide by the end of FY2023. However, these sales figures appear to be derived using a rather crude top-down approach that is based on achieving certain levels of market penetration, rather than with a bottom up "how do we actually sell this thing" type of analysis. ❏



Konica Minolta is forecasting about \$25 million in worldwide revenue this fiscal year for the Workplace Hub, which is now a year late and still has not shipped anywhere commercially. Thereafter, it is expecting a massive ramp-up in Workplace Hub sales, with revenue climbing to about \$650 million in FY2020 and surpassing \$1 billion in FY2023. Time will tell.

KM Buys Another ECM Reseller

On September 18, Konica Minolta announced its latest purchase of a US channel company that specializes in electronic content management (ECM), business process management, and document conversion services. Based in Lexington, Kentucky, VeBridge Holdings was founded in 1998, and it has somewhere between 11 and 50 employees. Several of its target markets are the type of horizontal or vertical opportunities Konica Minolta already targets, including accounts payable, human resources, higher education, manufacturing, and retail. As with nearly all of the other ECM specialist firms Konica Minolta has purchased in the US, the main ECM software VeBridge resells is OnBase from Hyland. And it also sells Frevvo workflow software and Digi-tech Systems ECM software. VeBridge will operate as "A Konica Minolta Company" while retaining its own name, offices and existing management team.

Toshiba/Brother Deal: Less Than Meets the Eye for Both ↪ ... from page 1

Brother launched the Workhorse Series in early 2016. The comprises a relatively small subset of the A4 devices Brother sells in the US: just two monochrome MFPs; two monochrome printers; one color MFP; and one color printer. The products have speeds ranging from 33 ppm to 52 ppm, and their street prices span from \$299 to \$799. Also, Brother on some occasions sort of lumps certain of its single-function document scanners into this group of products.

The Workhorse Series represents the latest in a long line of initiatives from Brother in the US going back twenty years to expand sales beyond its historically strong presence in retail and online outlets into the IT reseller and office equipment dealer channels. This particular initiative appears to have been more successful than many of the company's past efforts in this regard, but the Workhorse Series still represents a tiny fraction of Brother's overall hardcopy sales, which stood at approximately \$3.8 billion last fiscal year.

Part of the problem is that all of the Workhorse Series devices are readily available directly to end users and resellers or dealers from large online sellers, such as CDW and TigerDirect. Moreover, the Workhorse Series products share most of the same toner cartridges and the same drum units as other Brother products, which affords TABS dealers and branches no real protection for post-sales supplies revenue.

Brother also has not done very much to grow or differentiate the Workhorse Series product line. The four monochrome models in the series debuted when the initiative was announced 31 months ago, and the two color models were added 18 months ago. Also, the customized services and solutions for these specific products are not all that extensive. Nor are the solutions generally compatible with those available for the other A4 products TABS sells from competing vendors or for its own lineup of A3 e-Studio devices.

In fact, while Toshiba in its announcement called the Brother Workhorse Series an "ideal complement" to its own

array of A3 e-Studio MFPs, it said nothing about how it plans to differentiate the Brother products from the A4 Lexmark models (including new Toshiba-branded versions) and HP models its branches and many of its dealers have been selling for years. In fact, Toshiba later said the Brother models are intended to complement those other A4 devices. And the TABS web site now shows one A4 printer from each of its three US "partners" (i.e., Lexmark, HP and Brother).

Lexmark will prove to be the biggest challenge for Brother in TABS' direct and indirect sales channels. Lexmark

has a very broad selection of Business Solution Dealer (BSD) MFPs and printers that are available only through specifically authorized office equipment sales channels. That includes all of the TABS branches across the US and a large number of TABS dealers in the US market.

Lexmark's BSD product line overlaps with Brother's Workhorse Series, but it also extends much further upward in terms of speed, functionality, price and solutions support. Moreover, the consumables for Lexmark's BSD models are not available in the open market, thereby protecting critical post-sale annuity revenue. And Lexmark has years of experience working with Toshiba in the US. These are all significant advantages Brother will struggle to overcome.

Also, even though Toshiba's embrace of HP in the US is not as tight as it was years ago, TABS branches and dealers looking to place "safe bet" A4 printers and MFPs with customers — and who for some reason are not aligned with Lexmark — may well opt for HP as the path of least resistance in such accounts. That will be another hurdle for Brother.

And one should also probably consider Toshiba's failed product development and two-way product sourcing relationship with OKI. That arrangement began more than five years ago and is now effectively over for TABS. That alliance was certainly much tighter than this new sales agreement with Brother. It was well intentioned as a way to help Toshiba remedy its dearth of compelling A4 models. Yet even with that kind of tight arrangement, the effort with OKI still failed.

Finally, the addition of the Brother relationship alongside Toshiba's relationships with Lexmark and HP (and its failed deal with OKI) once again emphasizes that Toshiba is not able to compete fully with larger competitors in the global printing market. And there remains no clear path for Toshiba's TEC's hardcopy business going forward other than to sell that part of the business to a competitor or buy a small competitor. ❏



Brother launched the Workhorse Series in 2016 for dealers and resellers. It consists of two monochrome MFPs, two B&W printers, one color MFP, and a color printer, with prices that span from \$299 to \$799. But the products are not in controlled distribution, they are aging, and the line-up has not been expanded. The B&W models shipped 31 months ago, and the color devices debuted 18 months ago.

Ninestar Says Lexmark Improving

Ninestar, the Chinese toner company that became the primary owner of Lexmark almost two years ago, reported in China in September on what looks to be improving results for the US-based office printer and MFP vendor. Basically, Ninestar reported on recent unit sales and profit at Lexmark, and it offered estimated figures for the near future.

From what we can gather, Lexmark sold 1.48 million devices in 2017 which was said to be more than a 10% increase from 2016. That is consistent with the information Lexmark shared during its spring product roadshow, when it described that same level of growth as its best performance in a decade. Additionally, it appears Ninestar is targeting sales of 1.7 million Lexmark devices this year, an increase of 15%. Ninestar made no mention of revenue, but it said Lexmark lost money in Q1, was likely to break even in the Q2 and Q3 period, and would earn a small profit in Q4. ❏

New Brother US Ad Campaign

On September 10, Brother launched a new US advertising campaign with the tag line, "Make Your Business Hum." It is focused on Brother's Workhorse Series of MFPs and printers. The new campaign is designed to reinforce rather than replace Brother's long-standing "At Your Side" slogan. Brother said the campaign is intended "to convey the rhythmic sounds of a Brother-optimized office." However, Brother made no effort in its announcement to describe the elements of the ad campaign or communicate where the ads will be running. And after a month, there was no evidence of the campaign on Brother's US web site. We also noticed that five weeks after Brother posted a 30-second commercial on YouTube, it had just 350 views and no comments.

Toshiba LEAD 2018: A Case of Less Than Meets the Eye ↻ ... from page 1

time I had ever been *disinvited*, especially in such a childishly passive-aggressive manner. And in those other cases, I could at least see how a thin-skinned vendor might not have liked something I had written. But in this case, Toshiba has not really done much to warrant coverage, good or bad. I can only presume it was some petty personal matter.

Still, one might have thought all Toshiba family companies would surely have learned the importance of being a bit more humble and less piddling over the past few years. And considering that Toshiba has long been stuck in the lower tier of the US MFP market, TABS might also want to do more to ingratiate itself with the few people who are interested professionally in what the company does in hardcopy.

Moving on, the theme for LEAD 2018 was *Empowering the Art of Business*. TABS said the theme “celebrates the notion that each company is a unique collection of people, ideas, culture and brand ... [and] the idea that every client is unique.”

Not surprisingly, TABS opened up LEAD 2018 with a high-level corporate update intended to convey to dealers that both Toshiba TEC and Toshiba Corporation are in much better financial shape today than just a year ago. Back then, there were questions as to whether and how Toshiba might continue to exist as an independent company, and whether it might sell its 50% stake in Toshiba TEC to raise cash.

As is customary at these kinds of events. TABS cherry-picked a few numbers to share, including an 8% increase in MFP units placements. However, it was not fully clear what the time frame and geography were for that specific figure.

From a news point of view, TABS made two formal announcements at LEAD 2018, and both were of the less-than-meets-the-eye variety. First, there was the announcement that TABS had partnered with Brother to offer a third brand of lower-end A4 printers and MFPs to its dealers and branches (*story on p. 1*). And second, there was the announcement of thirteen new 20-50 ppm A3 color and monochrome e-Studio MFPs that are barely enhanced versions of products it launched at the LEAD 2016 event (*story on p. 10*).

Although not formally announced in Las Vegas, TABS also previewed a trio of Toshiba-branded A4 e-Studio MFPs that will ship in November. Currently, the only A4 e-Studio models in the US are five aging B&W and color MFPs from a defunct joint development partnership with OKI, and a pair of rather limited 28 ppm monochrome MFPs that Toshiba TEC developed primarily for China and emerging markets.

The new 40 and 50 ppm A4 color MFPs and a 50 ppm A4 monochrome MFP are rebadged e-Studio versions of models that Lexmark launched in the spring. In other words, TABS is belatedly getting on board with the same kind of A4 device OEM'ing that Toshiba TEC has been doing with Lexmark in Europe and some other markets for several years.

These devices also make the TABS approach to the A4 space more complex and confused, with various Lexmark models, HP devices, Toshiba TEC units, and Brother products alongside these three Lexmark-made e-Studio devices.

As was the case last year, Toshiba at LEAD 2018 put a lot of emphasis on its Elevate customizable UI, which works with both recent and new e-Studio MFPs (*The MFP Report, May 17*). However, the actual functionality of Elevate is still pretty rudimentary. Many of the icons on Elevate screens are for common tasks that have no particular vertical connotation (e.g., *simple copy, copy and staple, e-mail PDF*). None of the UIs have connectors for key vertical industry applications. And even though TABS insists on calling Elevate a personalization tool, the Elevate screens are tied to the MFP; they are not linked to specific authenticated users.

Having said that, there are some new Elevate templates available, plus support for a wider range of backgrounds and logos, and a new text string that displays on the screen.

Much more importantly, Toshiba has addressed a major weakness in Elevate by creating the Elevate Composer. This is a simple drag-and-drop tool that Toshiba dealers and branches can now use to customize the standard Elevate templates so as to better meet the needs of specific customers. Until now, a dealer or branch had to use the TABS professional services group to create every custom Elevate UI.

In addition, Toshiba showed the first two Elevate Workflow Solutions, a concept it described but did not show last year. The new workflows are for Employee Management and Invoice Processing, but not a lot of details were available.

Conversely, TABS has not added any new third-party software partnerships, leaving it with one of the shortest list of partner applications among office MFP vendors in the US. That means all of Toshiba's MFP software partnering in the Americas is focused on solutions from just five developers: DocuWare, PaperCut, Prism, PSIGEN and XMedius. ❏

Xerox Cloud MPS Available to Feds

Xerox announced on September 26 that its cloud MPS solution is the first such print-related offering to be authorized under the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (*FedRAMP*) for deployment across government agencies and entities. Earlier this year, Xerox had announced its cloud-based MPS solutions were moving a step closer to being authorized for such use (*The MFP Report, Feb 18*).

FedRAMP was established in 2012 as a centralized assessment and authorization process by which US government agencies ensure security when accessing various kinds of cloud computing products, software and services. Before FedRAMP, every federal entity managed its own cloud technical and security assessments. Under FedRAMP, cloud solutions pass through three stages, which are referred to as Ready, In Process and Authorized. Xerox's cloud MPS solution was Ready in August 2017, In Process in April 2018, and officially Authorized on September 10. Xerox has one of 214 FedRAMP Authorized cloud solutions, but no competing cloud MPS offerings are at any FedRAMP stage. ❏



TOSHIBA
LEAD2018
EMPOWERING THE ART OF BUSINESS

One might have thought all Toshiba companies would have learned the importance of being more humble and less piddling in recent years. And considering Toshiba has long been stuck in the lower tier of the US MFP market, TABS might want to do more to ingratiate itself with the few people who are interested professionally in what the company does in hardcopy.



Xerox's cloud-based MPS tools are now among 214 FedRAMP Authorized cloud solutions. No other competing cloud MPS offerings from hardcopy vendors or others are at any stage presently in the FedRAMP process.

Konica Minolta Quietly Releases Refreshed A4 Models from Lexmark

Over the years, Konica Minolta has been consistently the largest office MFP vendor to show a generally active disinterest in the A4 side of the market. This has been especially true in the US. And that pattern has continued in recent weeks, as Konica Minolta quietly shipped a refreshed set of four monochrome bizhub MFPs that are based on updated models Lexmark launched earlier in the summer.

The economical 38 and 46 ppm bizhub 3622 and 4422 are basically rebadged Lexmark products, while the relatively more expensive 42 and 50 ppm bizhub 4052 and 4752 are much more customized devices that have the same control panel and solutions support as A3-size bizhub MFPs.

Konica Minolta had formally announced the same four MFP models in Europe back on June 12. And the company had announced the bizhub 3622 and 4052 in Japan on July 18, along with the bizhub 3602P, which is a related 38 ppm single-function printer. Then on September 13, Konica Minolta announced the bizhub 4422 and 3602P in China, along with a related 50 ppm single-function printer called the bizhub 4702P. It is not clear if or when Konica Minolta plans to ship either of the new printers in the US or Europe.

The multifunctional bizhub 3622, 4422, 4052 and 4752 replace the current bizhub 3320, 4020, 4050 and 4750, respectively, that Konica Minolta launched with a bit more fanfare over four years ago (*The MFP Report, Feb 14*). And the list prices for the new MFPs have remained the same. The bizhub 3622 and 4422 are \$749 and \$1,649; and the bizhub 4052 and 4752 are \$3,499 and \$4,199. But keep in mind that street prices on the new A4 bizhubs are frequently less than half of these suggested list prices.

bizhub 3622 and 4422. These two devices are the least expensive MFPs Konica Minolta sells in the US. And except for the different exterior color scheme, they are basically the same as two of the A4 monochrome MFPs Lexmark launched back in the spring (*The MFP Report, Apr 18*).

Specifically, the \$749 list-priced bizhub 3622 is comparable to Lexmark's \$399 street-priced MX321adn, and the \$1,649 list-priced bizhub 4422 is comparable to Lexmark's \$449 street-priced MX421ade. So generally speaking, the

Lexmark models will be the better choice for most buyers. Having said that, Konica Minolta has not shared pricing for the supplies on these new bizhub MFPs. However, it does not appear on a street price basis that Konica Minolta is offering a cost advantage on the pricing for its supplies.

In terms of Konica Minolta's product line, there are just a few changes between the new 38 and 46 ppm bizhub 3622 and 4422 versus the old 35 and 42 ppm bizhub 3320 and 4020. The most obvious changes are faster print speeds.

In addition, there are new supplies with higher yields. The new toner cartridges have gone from 10,000 and 20,000 pages on the old models, to 15,000 and 25,000 pages on the new MFPs. However, the 60,000-page imaging unit is the same, and the maximum monthly print volumes remain 50,000 and 100,000 pages, respectively.

Other improvements relate to the controller. While Konica Minolta does not mention the new processor, it is undoubtedly the same 1 GHz dual-core chip Lexmark uses in its own MFPs. The memory has also been boosted from 256 MB on the 3320 and 512 MB on the 4020, to 1 GB on both the 3622 and 4422. And WiFi has gone from optional to standard, joining Gigabit Ethernet and a USB device port.

The only paper-handling change is an increase in the capacity of the manual bypass from 50 sheets to 100 sheets on the bizhub 3622. Both new MFPs still have a front-facing, C-shaped paper path; a 250-sheet paper tray; duplex output; and a 150-sheet internal exit tray.

The 44-pound bizhub 3622 is 16" wide, 17" deep and 18" high. It pairs a letter-size scanner with a 50-sheet simplex document feeder. The bizhub 4422 is three pounds heavier, three inches wider and slightly taller because it pairs a legal-size scanner with a 50-sheet recirculating document feeder. However, the simplex scan speeds on both MFPs are identical (45 ipm B&W and 20 ipm color). The control panel on the bizhub 3622 has a 2.4" color LCD, and the one on the bizhub 4422 features a 4.3" color touchscreen.

On the 3622, customers can add a 250-sheet paper tray for \$167 or a 550-sheet tray for \$256, for a maximum input capacity of 900 sheets. But on the 4422, customers can up to three paper trays in any combination of sizes for a maximum of 2,000 sheets. A \$317 side-mounted convenience stapler and a \$299 copy desk are available for both.

There are no changes to the MFP features for these new bizhubs. For printing, there are Lexmark's PCL and PostScript emulations, plus mobile print support for AirPrint, Mopria and Google Cloud Print. The MFPs can also be equipped with a \$443 card to store forms and fonts, or a \$650 card that handles IBM's IPDS host printing data stream. The basic PC and network scanning features, plus the 33.6 Kbps

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With a list price of \$749, the 38 ppm monochrome bizhub 3622 is Konica Minolta's least expensive MFP, but it has to compete with Lexmark's more readily accessible MX321adn, which has a street price of just \$399.

Olivetti OEM's Kyocera A4 MFPs

In September, the Olivetti unit of Telecom Italia shipped its latest OEM'd series of d-Copia B&W MFPs. The A4-size 4513MFplus, 4514MFplus, 5514MF and 6014MF have respective A4 print speeds of 45, 45, 55 and 60 ppm. The new d-Copia models are rebadged versions of the ECOSYS M3145idn, M3645idn, M3655idn and M3660idn that Kyocera launched in the US earlier this year (*The MFP Report, Apr and Jun 18*). The new MFPs replace the Kyocera-made d-Copia 4003MFplus, 4004MFplus, 5004MF and 6004MF that Olivetti launched almost four years ago (*The MFP Report, Nov 14*). Olivetti sells through dealers in Italy, parts of Europe, and a few other selected countries.

Konica Minolta: A4 MFPs ↻... from p. 8

non-JBIG fax capabilities, are the same on both devices.

bizhub 4052 and 4752. In contrast to the rebadged bizhub 3622 and 4422, the bizhub 4052 and 4752 combine a Lexmark engine with a Konica Minolta controller, UI and software platform to provide the same look-and-feel and solutions support as Konica Minolta's A3 models. As a result, these A4 MFPs are much more expensive. Unlike the new bizhub 3622 and 4052, the print speeds on the new higher-end bizhub 4052 and 4752 have not changed.

In terms of the laser engine and MFP hardware, the \$3,499 list-priced bizhub 4052 is based on Lexmark's \$449 street-priced MX421ade, just like the new \$1,649 list-priced bizhub 4422. As for the 50 ppm bizhub 4752, the new \$4,199 list-priced MFP is based on Lexmark's \$1,499 street-priced MX622ade. The bizhub 4052 and 4752 share the same new supplies, which are different from those for the bizhub 4422, despite having the same yields. Those yields are 25,000 pages for the toner and 60,000 pages for the imaging unit, with a 100,000-page monthly duty cycle.

The other principal changes in the new bizhub 4052 and 4752 relate to the controller and scanner. Konica makes no mention of the processor it uses. The base memory is still 2 GB and can be doubled to 4 GB. And the hard drive is actually a bit smaller (250 GB vs. 320 GB). Gigabit Ethernet and a USB device port are still standard, with WiFi being optional. But there is a new USB device port kit and also a version of that same kit with Bluetooth. And of course, there

Canon's New "Cloud-Based MFP Functionality Expansion Platform"

On September 3, Canon Inc. announced in Japan what it rather inelegantly called a "Cloud-Based MFP Functionality Expansion Platform." The new platform, which Canon at times has also called its Cloud Connector, is in some ways similar to but less expansive than the free ADVANCE Cloud Portal Canon USA announced two years ago. All of the imageRUNNER ADVANCE Gen3 2nd Edition MFPs Canon launched earlier this year come standard with a dedicated button on the touchscreen control panel for connecting to the new platform. And that same capability can be added with a firmware update to all iR ADVANCE MFPs released since 2009.

Canon was careful to explain in its press release that the "platform is not a function to be added to an MFP." Rather, it is a cloud-based platform that features a range of functions. These cloud-based functions include printing from mobile devices, image processing, image deskew, OCR, and conversion to Microsoft Office file formats. The platform is also said to enable centralized management of these and other cloud functions across multiple iR ADVANCE MFPs.

The same cloud platform can connect to certain Canon cloud solutions, including uniFLOW Online and uniFLOW Online Express, as well as to various third-party cloud solutions from Box, Evernote, Google, Microsoft and SAP. ☒

is support for Konica Minolta's Open API software platform.

The core print, scan and copy features are the same as on the previous A4 models. That includes support for security and mobility. However, fax is still optional, rather than standard, like it is on the new lower-end A4 models.

In addition, Konica Minolta has broadened the list of i-Option MFP expansion kits versus those for the previous models. There is new support for an enhanced PDF kit and a voice guidance kit. These join the prior kits for embedded OCR, barcode printing, Unicode printing, and Thin-Print. And there continues to support for an optional ID card reader and a biometric (*i.e., fingerprint*) reader for user authentication.

Both of these new A4 bizhubs continue to have a legal-size color scanner, but the feeder has been upgraded from a 50-sheet recirculating model, to a 100-sheet single-pass duplex model. The simplex scan speed has gone up slightly, from 48 to 50 ipm for B&W, but it is still 32 ipm for color. However, the duplex scan speeds are now 100 ipm for monochrome and 64 ipm for color.

Otherwise, paper-handling is unchanged on the new bizhub pair. Each 52-pound device is approximately 19" wide, 19" tall, and 22" high. Along with the new document feeder, they have a 100-sheet bypass tray, a 550-sheet letter/legal tray, duplex output, and a 250-sheet internal exit tray. Both also feature a 7" color touchscreen with the bizhub UI, and there is an optional 10-key pad that can attach to the side.

Customers can add up to three 250-sheet trays (\$167 each) and/or 550-sheet trays (\$256 each), for a maximum paper capacity of 2,300 sheets. There is also a \$299 copy desk. Unlike the lower-end bizhubs, these MFPs can be equipped with a simple \$399 inner finisher that has 20-sheet stapling, and there is also the same overpriced \$317 convenience stapler that attaches to the side of the unit. ☒



With a list price of \$4,199, the 50 ppm B&W bizhub 4752 is the most expensive of Konica Minolta's four new A4 monochrome MFPs. And it shares the same controller, MFP features, UI and solutions as current A3-size bizhubs.

Canon Partners with PrinterLogic

On September 27, Canon USA became the first major US hardcopy vendor to announce a formal partnership with Utah-based PrintFleet, a maker of serverless enterprise print management solutions. Earlier this year, PrinterLogic raised its profile in the print market when it received a \$15 million venture investment from Mercato Partners (The MFP Report, Jan 18). With this new alliance, Canon USA branches and dealers will be able to offer their customers the full line of PrinterLogic's serverless print solutions, including the on-premises Printer Installer and the cloud-based PrinterCloud. The announcement of the new alliance with PrinterLogic also comes just a couple months after Canon USA announced a strengthened print and scan software relationship with its long-time partner Nuance to serve customers in key vertical markets (The MFP Report, Jul 18).

Toshiba Launches Barley Refreshed e-Studio A3 Line at LEAD Event

The main hardcopy product news coming out of the Toshiba America Business Solutions (TABS) LEAD dealer and customer event in Las Vegas (*story on p. 1*) was the announcement on September 6 of a refreshed line of A3-size e-Studio MFPs. The launch encompassed a total of thirteen devices: seven color models spread across two different series (2010AC, 2510AC, 2515AC, 3015AC, 3515AC, 4515AC and 5015AC); and six monochrome models from a single series (2018A, 2518A, 3018A, 3518A, 4518A and 5018A). The speeds ranged from 20 ppm to 50 ppm, and all of the new MFPs were available immediately in the US.

As is sadly common these days, however, Toshiba said little about what actually distinguishes the new models from their predecessors, which were launched a bit more than two years ago at the 2016 LEAD event (*The MFP Report, May 16*). Basically, Toshiba alluded to four enhancements.

Foremost, Toshiba highlighted the Elevate customizable UI it announced at LEAD last year, but the few new Elevate features work equally well on the current and new e-Studio models. Toshiba also pointed to the multicore Intel Atom processor that powers the controller, but that dual-core chip was actually introduced in the e-Bridge Next controller that debuted in the previous models two years ago. This would appear to leave as the main new features two things: NFC support for user authentication with an Android smartphone, and enhanced MFP security via support for the recent Hard Copy Device Protection Profile (HCD-PP) that updates Common Criteria. On that latter point, Toshiba now joins Sharp, Xerox and Lexmark in supporting the HCD-PP standard.

Beyond these changes, we spotted only one other modest improvement across all of the new 20-50 ppm color and monochrome e-Studio MFPs. Toshiba has upgraded the color touchscreen control panel, replacing the old 9" WVGA screen with a larger and higher resolution 10.1" WSVGA screen.

Interestingly, the original brochures for the new models also mentioned what appeared to be another change called the Monotype Font Option. But TABS subsequently said there was no such option. It was all due to some kind of miscommunication with Japan. However, that option was still on all of the datasheets on the TABS web site in mid-October.

One other minor difference we spotted is limited to just five of the lower-end models, specifically the 20 and 25 ppm color e-Studio 2010AC and 2515AC, and the 20, 25 and 30 ppm monochrome e-Studio 2018A, 2518A and 3018A. On those models, Toshiba now includes just 2 GB of memory, instead of the previous 4 GB. To get the extra memory, it costs \$150 to replace the bundled 2 GB with 4 GB.

Other than these few items, everything else about these thirteen new A3 e-Studio models is identical to the devices TABS shipped in 2016. That includes all of the standard and optional features, as well as the supplies. And it also includes the list prices for each of the new e-Studio MFPs.

Prices for the seven new color e-Studio models are \$5,339 for the 2010AC; \$6,895 for the 2515AC; \$14,051

for the 2515AC; \$16,277 for the 3015AC; \$20,729 for the 3515AC; \$25,181 for the 4515AC; and \$26,241 for the 5015AC. And prices for the six new monochrome e-Studio models are \$7,299 for the 2018A; \$9,062 for the 2518A; \$10,650 for the 3018A; \$11,302 for the 3518A; \$13,768 for the 4518A; and \$15,298 for the 5018A.

Meanwhile Toshiba TEC announced nine of the new models in Japan on October 5, although the products were not expected to ship there until late November. Toshiba TEC did not announce the e-Studio 2010AC, 2510AC, 3015AC or 2018AC in Japan. But it also included in its announcement five higher-speed MFPs. These were the 55, 65 and 75 ppm color e-Studio 5516AC, 6516AC and 7516AC; and the 65 and 85 ppm B&W e-Studio 6518A and 8518A. These faster models are likely to be launched in the US shortly.

e-Bridge Next ... Again. Aside from the aforementioned tweaks, all of new e-Studio MFPs share the same Linux-based e-Bridge Next controller that debuted in 2016. That controller has a 1.33 GHz dual-core Intel Atom processor, either 2 or 4 GB of memory, and a 320 GB self-encrypting hard drive. An even more secure FIPS-certified hard disk is \$395, and Toshiba also sells a \$799 IPsec enabler for added network security. Gigabit Ethernet and a USB host interface are standard, while a combined WiFi and Bluetooth kit is a rather pricey \$629. The main reason for that Bluetooth support is to add a \$99 optional wireless keyboard.

PCL and PostScript emulations are standard, plus direct PDF and JPEG print support. Windows, Mac and Linux drivers are included, and mobile print is supported via AirPrint and Mopria, as well as with Toshiba's e-Bridge Print & Capture mobile device app. A Unicode font enabler is \$675.

A multi-station print feature enables secure print release on up to ten similar e-Studio devices, allowing users to pull a job sent to one MFP and print it on any of the other MFPs.

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All of the speeds, prices, supplies and operating costs are unchanged versus two years ago on the modestly updated e-Studio A3 color and monochrome MFPs Toshiba announced in Las Vegas in September.

The switch from a 9" color touchscreen to a higher resolution 10.1" color touchscreen is the most visible change on the short list of enhancements in the thirteen new A3 e-Studio monochrome and color MFPs Toshiba announced at its annual LEAD event.

Toshiba: e-Studio Tweak ↪ ... from p. 10

Pricing for this option starts at \$195 for a single MFP.

The authenticated network scan and scan-to-USB features are unchanged, and there is still an optional embedded OCR kit that converts images to searchable PDF or Word files. That option relies on ABBYY's FineReader OCR and is quite expensive, starting at \$775 for one MFP. Toshiba also still sells its \$524 Metascan Enabler kit to append text fields to scanned images. In addition, either one or two 33.6 Kbps fax cards with JBIG can be added for \$1,025 apiece.

The e-Bridge Next controller continues to support the latest iteration of the web services based e-Bridge Open Platform that Toshiba launched in 2008. Additionally, the MFPs support a trio of e-Bridge Plus Connectors for direct scanning to and printing from Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive and Dropbox. Meanwhile, Toshiba sells \$495 Connectors for Microsoft SharePoint and Exchange, and a \$199 Connector for Google Drive. In Japan, Toshiba TEC mentioned what appears to be a new connector for Microsoft OneDrive for Business, SharePoint Online and Exchange Online.

Lastly, while the new color touchscreen control panel is larger, it can still be paired with the same \$99 numeric keypad that snaps onto the right side and the aforementioned \$99 Bluetooth keyboard that sits a tray in front of the LCD.

e-Studio 2510AC Series. The updated 20 ppm 2010AC and 25 ppm 2510AC are Toshiba's least expensive color MFPs. They replace the same speed 2000AC and 2500AC from 2016. These compact devices are built around an LED printhead from OKI. The 2010AC and 2510AC have monthly duty cycle ratings of 67,200 pages and 84,000 pages, respectively. As for supplies, the black toner yields 38,400 pages, and the color toners yield 33,600 pages.

The 2010AC and 2510AC are sparsely outfitted. They come with a 250-sheet cassette, a 100-sheet bypass, duplex output, and an internal exit tray. For \$1,675, customers can add a 100-sheet recirculating document feeder with a 50 ipm simplex scan speed, or there is a \$47 platen cover.

Customers can also add a 550-sheet cassette for \$550, and either a \$299 stand, a 2,000-sheet large capacity feeder for \$1,225, or a paper feed pedestal with a 550-sheet cassette for \$980. The paper feed pedestal can accept another 550-sheet drawer for \$550, or a \$550 envelope drawer.

The list of output options starts with a \$389 job separator tray. There is also a \$1,760 inner finisher or a \$3,395 floorstanding saddlestitcher. Both finishers require a \$265 bridge kit, and each one support an \$860 hole-punch kit.

e-Studio 5015AC Series. This series of midrange color MFPs encompasses five models. The 2515AC, 3015AC, 3515AC, 4515AC and 5015AC have respective color and monochrome print and copy speeds of 25, 30, 35, 45 and 50 ppm. They replace the same speed 2505AC, 3005AC, 3505AC, 4505AC and 5005AC from two years ago.

Unlike Toshiba's lower-end color MFPs, these midrange color models utilize a laser engine. However, the laser and LED devices use the same toners. The monthly duty cycle

ratings on the laser MFPs range from 75,000 to 105,000 pages for color, and 150,000 to 210,000 pages for black.

Otherwise, there are really just three differences between these updated 25-50 ppm midrange color MFPs and the more entry-level updated 20 and 25 ppm color models. First, the 100-sheet recirculating document feeder is priced the same (\$1,675) but it is faster. The simplex speed is 73 ipm in color and B&W. Second, the midrange models support a 300-sheet single-pass duplex document feeder priced at \$2,263. It scans it 120 ipm simplex and 240 ipm duplex for color or B&W. And third, the midrange models support one additional finisher. The 50-sheet finisher with saddlestitching is \$3,395, plus \$265 for a bridge kit.

e-Studio 5018A Series. Finally, this modestly updated monochrome series consists of six models. The e-Studio 2018A, 2518A, 3018A, 3518A, 4518A and 5018A have respective speeds of 20, 25, 30, 35, 45 and 50 ppm. They replace the same speed e-Studio 2008A, 2508A, 3008A, 3508A, 4508A and 5008A launched two years ago.

These B&W MFPs share the same platform as Toshiba's updated midrange 5015AC color series, but they use different black toner cartridges that have a much higher yield of 43,900 pages. The drum and developer are also different, with yields ranging from 80,000 to 150,000 pages.

The monochrome MFPs come with dual 550-sheet universal cassettes, a 100-sheet bypass, a 550-sheet internal exit tray, and duplex output. The same recirculating and single-pass duplex document feeders are optional, with respective prices of \$1,675 and \$2,263. The paper supply can be expanded with a \$1,286 large capacity tray that holds 2,000 sheets, or a \$1,029 paper feed pedestal with a 550-sheet cassette. A second 550-sheet cassette is available for \$578. And there is also a \$550 envelope drawer module.

The output options vary by the speed of the device. The 20, 25 and 30 ppm MFPs can be equipped with a \$289 job separator tray; a \$341 offset catch tray; a \$1,760 inner finisher with 50-sheet stapling; or a \$3,395 saddle finisher that holds 1,000 sheets. The finishers need a \$265 bridge kit, and they each have an \$850 punch kit.

Lastly, the 45 and 50 ppm MFPs support these same output options, plus they can also be equipped with a 50-sheet console-style finisher priced at \$2,284. That finisher requires the same \$265 bridge kit and has an \$850 hole-punch kit. ❏



The 20 ppm e-Studio 2010AC, with a starting price of \$6,895, is the least expensive color MFP in Toshiba's updated lineup.



The 50 ppm e-Studio 5018A, with a starting price of \$15,298, is the most costly monochrome MFP in Toshiba's updated lineup.

Canon Ships Trio of Entry-Level A4 Monochrome imageCLASS MFPs

With no announcement, Canon USA in September launched a trio of 30 ppm A4 monochrome laser MFPs, plus an unrelated 23 ppm printer. The imageCLASS MF264dw, MF267dw and MF269dw MFPs and the LBP113w printer are strictly retail products. Canon had already announced related models elsewhere in August. That included the low-end MF112 and MF113w MFPs, which shipped in China and EMEA but are not coming to the US (see sidebar). However, those MFPs are actually based on the \$99 LBP113w.

As for the new MFPs in the US, the \$199 MF264dw, \$249 MF267dw and \$299 MF269dw are third-generation replacements for the identically priced second-generation MF244dw, MF247dw and MF249dw that Canon launched two years ago (The MFP Report, Sep 16). The original models that introduced this platform had shipped back in 2014.

Canon has made a handful of changes to the new series of MFPs, with the most obvious improvement being a slight increase in the print speed, from 28 ppm to 30 ppm.

A more significant change in terms of operating eco-

nomics is the fact that Canon has switched from using an all-in-one supplies cartridge to creating a separate drum unit and toner cartridge. This is something Canon has generally shied away from, especially in its mass market monochrome laser printers and MFPs.

The new MFPs come with a long-life 23,000-page drum unit and the new 1,700-page 051 toner cartridge. The cartridge is \$65, and a replacement for the drum unit is \$91. There is also a \$104 051H toner cartridge that prints 4,000 pages. Including the cost of a replacement drum, the cost per page is either 4.2¢ or 3.0¢. However, customers with low print volumes may not need ever to replace the drum, lowering their page costs to either 3.8¢ or 2.6¢. By comparison, the single 2,400-page all-in-one cartridge for the current models produced a 3.2¢ page cost.

The few other changes in the new imageCLASS MFPs are less obvious and less significant. Canon has added WiFi Direct to join the existing WiFi, Ethernet and USB device connectivity. It has cut the shared memory in half to 256 MB. In addition, Canon has switched to a 6-line text LCD on the tilting control panel for the MF267dw and MF269dw, while keeping the original 5-line LCD on the MF264dw. And it has cut the capacity of the output tray in half to 50 sheets.

It is not clear that two other differences are true “changes” in the new models. First, Canon is not quoting any usage metrics, but one presumes there is no significant change from the 15,000-page monthly duty cycle or 3,000-page maximum recommended monthly print volume quoted on the prior models. Second, Canon is now providing ISO “images per minute” scan speeds rather than less useful “seconds per page” scan speeds, which is rare on these kinds of MFPs.

But otherwise, the new models are pretty much the same as the old ones. The \$199 MF264dw is a 3-in-1 device with Canon’s host-based UFR II-LT printing, PCL emulation, and mobile print support via AirPrint, Mopria, Google Cloud Print and the Canon PRINT Business app. Canon also provides simple PC and network scanning, plus digital copying.

The 27-pound MF264dw is 15” wide, 16” deep and 15” high. Aside from the aforementioned changes, it has a 250-sheet input tray, a single-sheet bypass, duplex output, a letter-size scanner, and a 35-sheet simplex document feeder with scan speeds of 11.6 ipm for B&W and 7.7 ipm for color.

For \$50 more, the \$249 MF267dw adds fax with a 33.6 Kbps modem and 250 pages of memory. And for another \$50, the \$299 MF269dw switches to a 50-sheet duplex document feeder that has simplex speeds of 10.6 ipm for B&W and 8.0 ipm for color, and very sluggish duplex scan speeds of just 4 ipm for B&W and 2.4 ipm for color. ❏



The \$199 imageCLASS MF264dw is a 30 ppm, A4-size monochrome laser printer/scanner/copier. It is officially the least expensive laser MFP in Canon USA’s updated product line.

Canon’s Lowest-End Mono MFPs

Outside the US, Canon has launched two extremely basic A4 monochrome laser MFPs that fit below the new MF260 series. The MF112 and MF113w – which are called i-SENSYS models in EMEA and imageCLASS models in China and elsewhere – are 23 ppm devices (22 ppm for A4) that print, scan and copy. The MF112 and MF113w share the same engine and supplies as the \$99 LBP113w printer that Canon has launched in the US. That means they use a 1,600-page toner cartridge and a 12,000-page drum unit. Street prices in China are approximately \$170 for the MF112 and \$200 for the MF113w.

The MF112 and MF113w are nearly identical, except the MF113w has WiFi and twice as much memory (i.e., 256 MB). Otherwise, the 18-pound, all-black devices are the same. The compact, angular MFPs are approximately 15” wide, 13” deep, and 10” high. They have a tilting control panel with a 5-line text LCD. Paper-handling is relatively simple, with a C-shaped paper path connecting a 150-sheet input tray and a 100-sheet exit tray beneath the color scanner. There is no duplex support and no document feeder. And the shared connectivity consists of a USB device port and a wired Ethernet port.



After using this B&W laser platform that was launched in 2014 for two generations of products, Canon with the third-generation of models has switched from its usual all-in-one supplies cartridge to a separate long-life drum unit and toner cartridge.

HP: Reinventing Home Printing with a Quirky “Tango” ↻ ... from page 1

Over the past couple years, HP’s record with these new kinds of consumer printers and AIOs has been mixed.

In June 2016, HP launched the Deskjet 3755, a 3-in-1 inkjet AIO that was sort of a throwback, with its compact size but rather restrictive sheetfed scanner. The \$69 device is HP’s most expensive low-end Deskjet model in most markets where its sold, fitting in above the \$49 Deskjet 2655 AIO with a flatbed scanner and the \$29 Deskjet 1112 printer.

Then in September 2016, HP launched the \$129 Sprocket, a compact mobile printer that utilizes the ZINK inkless technology to print tiny but very pricey photos. The original Sprocket was joined in October 2017 by the \$149 Sprocket Plus, which prints slightly larger photos; and by the \$159 Sprocket 2-in-1, a digital camera with built-in printer. All three Sprockets continue to sell, and they have reportedly done well generating net new placements for HP.

But in September last year, HP launched the AMP 100, a kludgy \$129 device that paired a low-end inkjet printer with a low-end built-in Bluetooth speaker. Despite repeated price cuts, the AMP 100 bombed, and it was killed this spring.

And now there is the Tango, which was expected to be available in October from a very short list of stores. At least initially, HP says the two Tango models will be sold only at *hp.com*, Best Buy and Amazon. This is also how HP rolled out the AMP 100, but it then gradually added more outlets.

It can be confusing when HP refers to the “Tango Family” since there is really just a single Tango printer. The only difference between the \$149 Tango and the \$199 Tango X is that the latter has a soft fabric cover that wraps around the bottom, back and top of the printer. The wrap has the feel of a hardcover book. It is purely decorative and serves no particular purpose, except to disguise the printer on a shelf. It is not like the cover is designed to protect a portable device, since the Tango requires AC power and has no battery.

In fact, one has to manually open the cloth cover and flip the printer around 180 degrees so that the top of the cover then acts as an exit tray. In that regard, the cloth cover is really more of a nuisance. Nonetheless, HP says the cover provides “an aesthetic accent and paper landing zone.”

More importantly, the \$50 premium for the Tango X dramatically boosts HP’s margin and profit on the premium model. The two initial covers are Indigo Linen and Charcoal Linen, with one called Cork Currant coming later in the year.

The printer itself in both the Tango and Tango X models is identical functionally, although there appear to be some very subtle changes on the outside. Specifically, the \$149 Tango is “wisp gray” with a “dark gray” base, and the \$199 Tango X is “wisp gray pearl” with a “dark gray pearl” base.

Absent the cover, the Tango is a relatively compact, squat, rectangular printer. It weighs just 6.8 pounds, and the footprint is about the size of a legal-size sheet of paper (8.1” deep and 14.8” wide). The printer is only 3.6” tall. However, because of the straight paper path and the hinged top that has to be flipped back manually in order to access the input

tray, the vertical space required when the Tango is printing is significantly greater. Moreover, the input trays holds just 50 sheets of regular paper, 20 sheets of photo paper, or five envelopes. And the paper has to be removed whenever the lid is folded down to store the Tango. Pages exit in front into a 20-sheet tray that pivots to swing forward. There is no duplex support, and the exit tray is eliminated on the Tango X in favor of using the cloth cover for that purpose.

The Tango has a modest duty cycle of 500 pages per month, with recommended usage of just 100 to 300 pages.

What’s New or Different? From a technical and operational perspective, HP describes the Tango as the world’s “first smart home printer.” And HP

has provided a somewhat cumbersome three-part definition for this new product category. HP says a smart home printer must: (1) be designed exclusively for use with mobile devices and driven by an OEM printer app; (2) use both local WiFi and cloud cell phone data connectivity for a two-way connection with the OEM app to control the printer and get device status; and (3) offer voice support for Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant, and Microsoft Cortana.

Beyond these criteria, HP focuses more on the big picture of what the Tango promises, rather than what the printer truly does, or how it does what it does. As a result, it is important to point out several unique aspects of the Tango.

The first thing to understand is that the Tango is a single-function inkjet printer. This may seem like an obvious statement, but it is actually quite important and relatively easy to miss. And it makes the Tango exceptional in an inkjet market long been dominated by AIOs. In HP’s own product line, the only other single-function consumer inkjet printer is the \$29 Deskjet 1112. HP’s other single-function inkjet printers are pricier Officejet and PageWide models that are designed either for office workgroups or for mobile workers.

The lack of built-in multifunctionality is also important for users to understand since HP tends to obscure that simple fact. HP talks about how the Tango enables “amazing scanning and copying, now on your smart phone.” And the way HP explains how this pseudo-multifunctionality works may well confuse quite a few shoppers. That is because HP tells users they get “high-quality scanning and copying to easily print and share using the cloud or e-mail, from virtually anywhere.” Moreover, the Tango specs indicate the printer can “Copy and Scan using HP’s Smart App.” More on that below.

Second, the Tango device is the first document printer and the first inkjet printer that has no physical ports for connectivity. Instead, it has an embedded web server that works with dual band WiFi and WiFi Direct. No USB connection is

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HP \$149 base Tango “smart home printer” does everything the one-third more expensive Tango X model does. It just doesn’t have the wraparound cloth cover, which is actually more of a nuisance than anything else.

The Tango is the first document printer and the first inkjet printer to have no physical ports for connectivity. Instead, it has only dual band WiFi and WiFi Direct.

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needed to set up the WiFi wireless networking, and there is also no support for Bluetooth. And while one might get the impression from some of HP's marketing materials that the Tango has built-in cellular connectivity, that is not the case.

Third, the Tango has no user interface. Instead, there is a strip of 15 LEDs along the exit slot in the front of the printer. They light up in various colors and patterns to indicate printer status. There is also an amber LED for each of the two ink cartridges that flashes when the ink in that cartridge is low.

All user-provided input and control of the Tango printer is via the free HP Smart app, which is available for iOS, Android and Windows 10. HP emphasizes that the Tango requires no drivers. While that is true when printing from a smartphone, the Windows 10 version does actually install a print driver on the user's PC. Moreover, the HP Smart app is limited to printing JPG photos/images and PDF documents. It lacks the ability to print other types of files, which in effect renders the Tango a very incomplete home printer.

Additionally, the HP Smart app is neither new nor unique to the Tango. It debuted more than a year ago as a rechristened version of the HP All-in-One Printer Remote app that had been around since 2014 (*The MFP Report, Aug 17*).

The HP Smart app is used to "set up, scan, print, share and manage your HP printer." It is compatible with nearly any HP inkjet or laser printer, AIO or MFP launched since 2010. In addition, the app helps a user "share documents and images through e-mail, text messages and popular cloud and social media services ... as well as monitor and order supplies." The Android version has over ten million installs.

Fourth, the Tango devices ship with voice-activated printing that works with Amazon Alexa, Google Assistant and Microsoft Cortana, although Cortana support is limited to the US. But this feature is also not exactly new, and it is not nearly as useful as the average customer might assume or be led to believe by HP's promise to "deliver a hands-free printing experience." We noted the same concerns last month, when Canon announced similar voice support on several of its new PIXMA inkjet AIOs (*The MFP Report, Aug 18*).

HP had already proclaimed early this year in a technical blog post that it was the "first printer company to enable intuitive voice commands on leading smart speaker platforms" (*The MFP Report, Jan 18*). As with other compatible HP printers, voice operation for the Tango requires an Amazon, Google or Microsoft smart speaker. It is not like HP has built a smart speaker into the Tango, although it could have.

The features available in the so-called "printer skill" for each smart speaker platform differ slightly, but the capabilities are equally rudimentary and do not in any way replicate most personal printing tasks today. And less device information is available with voice commands than is accessible via the HP Smart app. Moreover, there is no a voice-enabled way to set up the printer. Instead, one must type the e-mail address of the Tango device on the screen of a smartphone.

So consider what a user with an Alexa smart speaker

and a Tango device can actually print. Keep in mind, Alexa is the most popular smart speaker platform today. One can tell Alexa to print a shopping list; a to-do list; coloring book pages; three games (*i.e., Sudoku, Bingo, word search*); or a few stationery items (*e.g., ruled paper, graph paper, calendar*). And one can also utilize a short list of hard-to-find IFTTT ("*If This Then That*") applets (*The MFP Report, Aug 18*).

Understand that one cannot tell Alexa to print a document or photo from a mobile device, a computer, or an online account. Nor can one ask Alexa to check the paper level or ink supply, or order more ink. So it's mostly a gimmick.

A Key Business Difference. The other thing that is new and unique about the Tango is a major modification to HP's Instant Ink supplies subscription program. For the past year or so, HP has offered four Instant Ink monthly membership tiers: 15 pages free; 50 pages for \$2.99 (*6¢ per page*); 100 pages for \$4.99 (*5¢ per page*); and 300 pages for \$9.99 (*3.3¢ per page*). At each level, HP makes no distinction between color or monochrome pages, the size of the pages, or how much ink is actually used on each page.

All four Instant Ink membership options are available with the Tango, but there is also a new feature that is unique to these products. Tango customers with any paid Instant Ink membership can print an unlimited number of photos (*up to 5" x 7"*) from any mobile device at no charge. In other words, those photos are not counted as part of the customer's 50, 100 or 300 pages per month deal. One would tend to assume there must be some fine print or caveat that protects HP, but we could find no such thing. So for customers who want to print lots and lots of photos, this new benefit is a great way to save money using an otherwise pricey printer.

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FREE

Tango customers with any paid Instant Ink membership can print an unlimited number of photos (up to 5" x 7") from any mobile device at no charge. Those photos are not counted as part of the customer's 50, 100 or 300 pages per month deal. So for customers who want to print lots of photos, this is a great way to save by using the otherwise pricey Tango printer.

Canon Touts "China Red" AIO

On August 31, Canon announced in China a special lucky "China Red" PIXMA E568R printer/scanner/copier that is targeted at Chinese students starting the new school year.

The new PIXMA E568R in China is equivalent to the three-year old PIXMA MG3620 that Canon sells in the US. In China, the E568R lists for ¥919 (*\$135*), but it sells for as little as ¥699 (*\$100*). In the US, the MG3620 is officially priced at \$79, but Canon USA is currently selling it for \$49.

The main difference between the Chinese model and the US model is the ink. The E568R in China comes with an 800-page black ink cartridge and a 300-page tri-color ink cartridge, while the MG3620 in the US ships with a set of black and tri-color ink cartridges that print just 180 pages. Even the high yield cartridges available in the US for the MG3620 print 600 black pages and 300 color pages.

Otherwise, the AIOs share the same ISO print speeds (*9.9 ppm black/ 5.7 ppm color*), and the same scan and copy features. ☒

The new \$135 PIXMA E568R in China is the same as the three-year old PIXMA MG3620 Canon now sells in the US for \$49.



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However, for customers who do not opt to use Instant Ink, the cost per page to buy ink on a transactional basis is very high. The Tango ships with 64-series starter ink cartridges. Thereafter, HP sells two sets of cartridges. The regular 64-series cartridges are \$16.99 for 200 pages of black ink and \$21.99 for 165 pages of color ink. And the 64XL-series cartridges are \$37.99 for 600 pages of black ink and \$41.99 for 415 pages of color ink. These result in page costs of 8.5¢ or 6.3¢ for black, and 21.8¢ or 16.5¢ for color.

So How Does It Work? Despite the updated industrial design and the lack of ports or a UI, the way the new Tango handles mobile printing is pretty much the same as with any other HP inkjet device sold in recent years. Surprisingly, HP does not do much to help explain that fact.

Aside from using the HP Smart app to operate the Tango, the other critical thing to know is that using the Tango requires one to sign up for a free HP Connected account. And yet again, HP does not say this in its marketing materials.

HP Connected was launched five years ago (*The MFP Report, Jan 13*). It replaced the original ePrintCenter HP created when it shipped a second generation of web-connected AIOs back in 2010. Those were HP's first devices to support the ePrint cloud printing capability, as well as downloadable "printer apps." Those printer apps proved to be a big failure and were later dropped, but ePrint has quietly continued.

The original plan in 2013 was for HP Connected to provide users with "print applications, cloud storage of printed documents, and other printing related offerings." But as *HPconnected.com* exists today, it really has just two main functions: to enable HP's ePrint mobile printing service; and to create an Instant Ink subscription for an HP device.

It is ePrint that HP relies on to enable mobile printing on the Tango. When a user creates an HP Connected account, the printer gets a unique but customizable e-mail address. Then when the user goes to print something from a mobile device using the HP Smart app, the file is sent as an e-mail attachment to the HP Connected cloud. The file is rendered in the HP Connected cloud, and then sent to the Tango as a file that is ready to print. When the file is printed on the Tango, a confirmation is sent back via the HP Connected cloud to the sender's mobile device. That information is conveyed to the user via the HP Smart app. If the file is not

printed, ePrint also sends a notification to the HP Smart app.

If this all sounds familiar, it should. It is basically the same mobile print process HP ePrint has enabled since 2010. The same is true for the Tango's core inkjet print features, which are comparable to those of several current HP ENVY, ENVY Photo, Deskjet and Officejet AIOs. Those products are priced from \$49 to \$199, but they are AIOs that also include a scanner for real image/document capture and for copying.

HP presently sells three AIOs that use the same ink cartridges as the Tango. These models are the \$129 ENVY Photo 6255, the \$149 ENVY 7155 (*on sale for \$89*), and the \$199 ENVY Photo 7855. However, these three AIOs all have faster ISO print speeds than the new Tango. Their B&W print speeds range from 13 to 15 ppm (*vs. 11 ppm*), and their color print speeds range from 8 to 10 ppm (*vs. 8 ppm*). The Tango's maximum print resolution is 4800 x 1200 for color output and 1200 x 1200 dpi for B&W output. And the Tango can print borderless photos measuring up to 5" x 7".

Prospects for Tango? The really big question for HP and for the broader consumer printing market is whether the Tango will be the next Sprocket or the next AMP?

On the plus side, the Tango is a relatively attractive printer that seeks to leverage the trends toward printing from mobile devices and the popularity of smart speaker devices in the home. In addition, HP seems to be putting at least some effort into launching and marketing the Tango, which is something it never really did for the AMP printer/speaker.

On the negative side, the wraparound cloth sleeve is pretty stupid. It has no real visible or functional value; it is more of an overpriced (*\$50!*) nuisance than anything else. The lack of a built-in scanner invites very unwelcome comparisons with a plethora of AIOs from HP and other vendors that are priced much lower. One would have thought HP would have wanted the Tango to have everything in its existing consumer AIOs, plus more. And the complete reliance on the HP Smart app limits the usefulness of the Tango to printing only PDF documents and JPG photos and images.

In addition, the Tango's mobile printing features are no different from what HP has already been providing on many other consumer AIOs that have more features and are faster. And the lack of a USB port makes the Tango inappropriate for many shoppers with PCs who want a local home printer.

Similarly, the support for voice commands is also no different than what is available on other HP AIOs. More importantly, the smart speaker support is largely a gimmick.

In other words, the Tango is really a second printer that supplements a home AIO. And it is arriving at a time when many consumers are skeptical of the need for any printer.

At the end of the day, the Tango will live or die based on how many consumers — who no longer print a lot at home — will pay a premium price for a Tango that does less than more economical AIOs from HP, Canon, Epson or Brother. Interestingly, the biggest potential draw and the main wild card for the Tango is likely to be HP's promise of unlimited free photo printing from any phone. Ironically, those users may also take the profitability of the Tango for HP. ❏



The Tango is really more of a second home printer that supplements an existing family AIO. And it is arriving at a time when consumers are skeptical of the need for any printer. So at the end of the day, HP's new Tango will live or die based on how many consumers — who no longer print a lot at home — will pay a premium price for a Tango that does less than more economical AIOs from HP, Canon, Epson or Brother. However, HP does seem to be putting some effort into launching and marketing the Tango, which is something it never really did with last year's failed AMP printer/speaker device.

Epson's EcoTank Pop-up Store

On August 30, Epson UK announced it will open a so-called EcoTank Pop-up in London's prestigious Covent Garden. The ad hoc store and coworking space will be open from September 3 through the end of October. The pop-up store is aimed at introducing "freelancers, bloggers and other remote workers to the rich features and economical operation of Epson's broad lineup of EcoTank AIOs with refillable ink tanks. Epson will also run a series of expert-led workshops at the pop-up featuring topics such as invoicing, branding, privacy and crafts.

Epson Brings a New Face But Few New Features to \$199 5-Color AIO

On September 20, Epson America announced its latest consumer inkjet AIO. The \$199 Expression Premium is a wireless 5-color “small-in-one” print/scan/copy device that is “designed to deliver superior photo quality and versatility.” The same product debuted in Europe on August 30.

The XP-7100 replaces the nearly identical XP-830 as the top model in Epson’s very slim range of Expression Premium 5-color inkjet devices. The XP-830 was launched three years ago, and it had been selling until recently at the same \$199 price as the new model (*The MFP Report, Sep 15*). And the only other 5-color AIO Epson America sells in the US is the \$149 XP-6000, which shipped this past spring.

Recall that in Epson’s product naming, Expression Home means 4-color printing, Expression Premium means 5-color printing, and Expression Photo means 6-color printing.

Despite the passage of three years, almost nothing of substance has changed in the new XP-7100 versus the old XP-830. And the only thing that had separated the XP-830 from its predecessor was a new set of ink tanks. But with the new XP-7100, Epson has not done even that. It still uses the same 410-series Claria dye-based ink tanks.

So what has Epson changed? We spotted just three things. First, Epson has boosted the ISO simplex black print speed 13%, from 14 ppm to 15.8 ppm. Second, Epson has redesigned the document feeder, but the new flat-top design has the same functionality as before. And third, Epson has switched to a CIS color scanner with a lower optical resolution (*i.e.*, 1200 x 2400 dpi vs. 4800 x 4800 dpi).

In every other tangible way, the new Expression Pre-

mium XP-7100 is the same as the old Expression Premium XP-830. That also means the XP-7100 is the rare Epson AIO that does not use PrecisionCore printheads.

The XP-7100 ships with five standard 410-series ink tanks that sell for \$12.99 apiece. The black ink yields 250 pages, and the color inks yield 300 pages. For more economical operation, the \$24.99 410XL black ink prints 500 pages, and the \$18.99 410XL color inks print 650 pages. The resulting page costs are 5.2¢ or 5.0¢ for black output, and 18.2¢ or 13.8¢ for four-color document printing.

The Expression Premium XP-7100 is an attractive 21.5-pound rectangular AIO with curved vertical edges. The black and dark blue device is just over 15” wide and 13” deep, and it is not quite 8” high. The new AIO has a C-shaped paper path that connects a 100-sheet upper paper tray and a 20-sheet dedicated photo paper tray to a 30-sheet output tray, which are all in front. And there is also a dedicated tray below the other two input trays for printing directly onto special inkjet-compatible optical discs. Duplex output is standard, the scanner is letter-size, and the simplex document feeder holds 30 sheets of paper. And the titling control panel has a 4.3” color touchscreen.

The slightly faster 15.8 ppm black ISO print speed is paired with the same 11 ppm ISO color print speed. And the 12 seconds it takes to print a 4” x 6” borderless photo is also unchanged. Likewise, the ISO speeds for copying remain the same: 11 ppm for monochrome and 8 ppm for color. Epson still does not quote any speeds for scanning.

In terms of connectivity, the new AIO has USB device and host ports, WiFi, WiFi Direct, Gigabit Ethernet, and a memory card slot. But there is no NFC or Bluetooth support.

The XP-7100 provides mobile printing via all the usual means (*i.e.*, Mopria, AirPrint, Google Cloud Print, Epson app). And it also has various PC-free photo printing features. These include auto-correction of photos; cropping rotating and enlarging photos; and passport and ID photo printing. Additionally, the AIO prints certain canned types of stationery, such as graph paper and ruled paper. And the new AIO has Epson’s usual array of scanning and copying features.



Epson’s \$199 Expression Premium XP-7100 is nearly indistinguishable functionally from the three-year old Expression Premium XP-830, which can easily be found for less and uses the same supplies.

Will There Be More “Kodak” AIOs?

It has been a surprisingly busy few months for announcements of new inkjet AIOs from the top vendors. But that has made the dearth of any new Kodak Verite AIOs from Japan’s struggling Funai all the more noticeable. After manufacturing lots of Lexmark’s AIOs for many years, Funai acquired the remnants of Lexmark’s money-losing inkjet business and outdated inkjet technology for \$100 million in April 2013.

Funai launched its first Lexmark-derived AIOs under the Kodak Verite name in June 2015. Those products have only ever been sold in the US, Canada and the UK. And after an initial flurry of new — albeit largely very similar — models debuted in 2015 and 2016, the pace of announcements slowed appreciably. The last new general purpose AIOs Funai shipped were the Kodak Verite 50 Eco and 640 Eco in April 2017. And the last new AIO of any type from Funai was the niche-oriented Kodak Verite Craft 6 in July 2017.

Meanwhile, Funai reported for Q1 (*April-June*) of FY2018 that it had achieved inkjet revenue of ¥1 billion (*only about \$9 million*). That was up 37% from FY2017, but it still accounted for less than 5% of Funai’s total sales in Q1. And it is also not clear how much of that year-over-year increase was attributable to the Kodak Verite product line.

Updates & Amplifications

In our story in the August issue on “Faxploit” and the issue of fax security, we mentioned that a few vendors had not yet by the end of August made any official statements about the security of their various personal, SOHO and small business fax-enabled MFPs and AIOs. But additional vendors did provide further information in September.

Brother informed us in late September, “As part of our ongoing security testing, we confirmed that all Brother multifunction printers are not impacted.” And similar formal statements on fax security were released in Japan, respectively, by NEC on September 4, by Epson on September 5, and by Toshiba TEC on September 7.

Ricoh Refreshes the Least Expensive A4 Laser MFP It Sells in the US

In early September, Ricoh quietly released modestly refreshed versions of the least expensive laser MFP and laser printer it sells in the US market, although it does sell additional less expensive models in some other geographies.

The 34 ppm SP 330SFN MFP multifunction device and SP 330DN single-function printer replace the closely related 30 ppm SP 325SFN and SP 325DN, respectively, that Ricoh had just shipped last year (*The MFP Report, Feb 17*).

That is an exceptionally fast turnaround for upgrading these low-end A4 devices, given the lack of many new A3 office MFPs coming out of Ricoh over the past year or more.

In Japan, Ricoh announced the equivalent SP 3700SF MFP and SP 3700 printer on September 5. In addition, Ricoh in Japan had concurrently announced the more economical SP 2300SFL MFP and SP 2300L printer (*see sidebar*). All four of the new models have a 32 ppm A4 print speed. The platform for all of these products first shipped back in 2013.

In the US, Ricoh will continue to sell two other models that share the same engine as the new 34 ppm SP 330SFN and SP 330DN. The 30 ppm SP 377SFNwX MFP and SP 377DNwX printer were launched last year alongside the now discontinued SP 325SFN and SP 325DN, but the SP 377SFNwX and SP 377DNwX had a few more features, higher hardware prices, and lower page costs; and they are generally sold only by Ricoh dealers and branches.

Ricoh's new 34 ppm SP 330SFN SP 330DN are priced the same as the 30 ppm SP 325SFN and SP 325DN they replace. The official prices are \$305 for the MFP and \$195 for the printer, but the actual street prices are more like \$260 for the MFP and \$160 for the printer, or even less.

Ricoh has improved the new MFP in terms of its print speed, controller and user interface. As noted, the print speed has been boosted from 30 ppm to 34 ppm. In the controller, the processor has gone from 360 to 400 MHz, and the memory has been doubled to 256 MB. At the same time, WiFi is now a \$44 option rather than standard, which is a step backward, and there is no support for WiFi Direct or NFC. And the 4-line text LCD on the MFP control panel has

been replaced by a much more useful 4.3" color touchscreen.

Ricoh has also made changes to the industrial design and the consumables, but these changes have no real or appreciable impact on either economics or functionality.

The exterior of the SP 330SFN has been tweaked (*e.g., a handle has been added to the paper tray*), and the color scheme is also new. The dark gray accent color is now limited to the control panel and part of the document feeder. The 40-pound MFP is a couple pounds heavier, but the exterior measurements are basically the unchanged (*i.e., about 16" wide, 15" deep and 17" tall*).

Ricoh has created a new all-in-one toner cartridge for the SP 330SFN, but the price (*about \$101*) and yield (*3,500 pages*) are the same as for the previous model, and hence so is the 2.9¢ cost per page. Ricoh has boosted the monthly duty cycle from 30,000 to 35,000 pages, and it has added a recommended monthly page volume (*5,800 pages*) on the datasheet.

The new MFP still has a front-facing, C-shaped paper path with a 250-sheet letter-size paper tray, a 50-sheet bypass tray, a letter-size color scanner, a 35-sheet recirculating document feeder, duplex output, and a 50-sheet internal exit tray. A second 250-sheet paper tray is about \$140, bringing the total paper supply to 550 sheets.

Aside from the aforementioned changes in the controller, the connectivity and MFP functionality have not really changed on the SP 330SFN. It still has Ethernet and USB device and host ports. For printing, there is PCL emulation but no PostScript or PDF printing, and there is support for the typical mobile print features and platforms (*i.e., Mopria, AirPrint, Google Cloud Print*). There is a basic range of scanning features, and Ricoh quotes simplex scan speeds of 13 ipm for B&W and 4 ipm for color. And there is also a 33.6 Kbps non-JBIG fax modem with 2 GB of memory. ☒



With an official price of a \$305 and a street price closer to \$260, the new 34 ppm A4 monochrome SP 330SFN is the least expensive MFP Ricoh sells in the US market.

Ricoh's SP 2300SFL for Japan

Ricoh in Japan launched its least expensive A4 monochrome MFP on September 5. The SP 2300SFL shares the same platform and 32 ppm A4 print speed as the SP 3700SF there, which is comparable to the new SP 330SFN in the US. The SP 2300SFL sells for around ¥25,000 (\$220). It replaces the 30 ppm SP 2200L that Ricoh launched in Japan in May 2017. The main difference is the entry-level SP 2300SFL, as compared to the SP 3700SF, is that the less expensive SP 2300SFL has a 4-row text LCD on the control panel, instead of a 4.3" color touchscreen. The SP 2300SFL also cannot be equipped with a second 250-sheet paper cassette. But otherwise, Ricoh's new pair of 32 ppm A4 monochrome laser MFPs in Japan are identical.

Sindoh OEM's Lexmark Color MFP

In September, Sindoh launched in the domestic Korean market its latest A4 color MFP sourced from Lexmark. Sindoh's 38 ppm C431 is a rebadged version of the CX625ade that Lexmark launched earlier this summer at an official price of \$1,199 (*The MFP Report, Jun 18*).

Sindoh's new networked 4-in-1 has a 7" color touchscreen but no hard drive or solutions support. The C431 replaces the C402 and C403 in Sindoh's relatively small A4 product line. Both of those color MFPs were based on earlier models that Lexmark has already discontinued. In addition, Sindoh continues to sell in Korea an A4 color MFP called the C210, which is the only product it sources from OKI. ☒

Sharp Refreshes Its Fastest and Oldest Monochrome Office MFPs

On September 6, Sharp announced the US launch of two updated models that replace the fastest and oldest monochrome office MFPs in its A3 product line. The 65 and 75 ppm MX-M6570 and MX-M7570 utilize the so-called “Taurus 2” platform. They are both Advanced Series models. Unlike most of the rest of Sharp’s A3 product line, these MFPs are not available in economical Essential Series versions. The same models were announced in Japan on August 24.

At its last dealer meeting back in November 2017, Sharp had described the new pair of Taurus 2 MFPs, although it did not demonstrate the devices or even show them. At the time, Sharp said they would ship in the US in late 2018. So if anything, the new MFPs have arrived a bit early.

The 65 ppm MX-M6570 and 75 ppm MX-M7570 replace the same speed MX-M654N and MX-M754N “Taurus” models that debuted a cleansheet design and shipped in the US almost four years ago (*The MFP Report, Dec 14*). The new MFPs are priced slightly less than the preceding models. The MX-M6570 is \$22,500, and the MX-M7570 is \$27,650. Those prices are \$1,125 (or 4.8%) lower and \$700 (or 2.5%) less than the MX-M654N and MX-M754N.

The main enhancement is bringing the CR4 controller that Sharp first launched for its midrange color MFPs in late 2015 to the upper end of its monochrome MFP product line. But except for the addition of WiFi as a standard feature, Sharp did not really say anything specific or clear about what exactly it has changed or improved in the controller.

However, it turns out Sharp has changed a few other hardware specs on the controller versus the prior MFPs. The multicore processor is slower (1.4 vs. 1.8 GHz) and Sharp has dropped the \$835 hard drive mirroring kit, but there is more memory (5 vs. 3 GB) and a larger hard drive (500 vs. 320 GB). Other than the new bundled WiFi, the device connectivity is the same, with Gigabit Ethernet, front and rear USB host ports, and a rear USB device port. And there is still a hard drive commercial data security kit for \$420.

Likewise, the multifunction features have for the most part not changed on the MX-M6570 and MX-M7570, but there are some exceptions. Sharp has upgraded its application platform support from OSA 4.5 to the latest iteration of OSA 5.0, but linking data to scanned documents still requires the \$365 OSA Application Integration Module.

The network print function still includes PCL emulation and Adobe PostScript 3, and Sharp still sells a \$625 barcode printing kit. However, Sharp has dropped the old XPS option, and there is new DirectOffice support from Qualcomm for printing Microsoft Office files via the front USB port.

The key change to the scan function is the addition of built-in OCR, but all of the various scan destinations are the same. And Sharp still bundles a single-user license for its Sharpdesk PC desktop software. A single-line 33.6 Kbps JBIG fax kit is available for \$1,360, and Internet fax is \$570.

Meanwhile, none of the supplies have changed on the new Taurus 2 models; they are shared with the original Tau-

rus models. The toner prints 83,000 pages; the developer yields 800,000 pages; and the drum unit is also rated at 800,000 pages. Sharp has not mentioned a monthly duty cycle for the new MFPs, but it is likely the same as the half-million pages Sharp had quoted for the previous models.

On the outside, the dimensions for the Taurus 2 models are no different (about 26” wide, 31” deep and 48” high), and the industrial design and color scheme remain the same, although the 362-pound weight is nominally lighter. The somewhat customizable tablet-like user interface that is presented on the 10.1” color touchscreen looks to be the same, and a retractable keyboard is still included with the MFP.

In terms of paper-handling, the only change is that Sharp has replaced a pair of 4,000-sheet finishers that had 50-sheet stapling with a new pair of 3,000-sheet finishers that have 65-sheet stapling. The base finisher is still \$3,050, but the \$6,000 saddlestitch version now costs 25% more than before. Both finishers require a \$445 paper pass unit, and they can be equipped with a \$735 hole punch unit.

Otherwise, paper-handling on the Taurus 2 models is the same as on the original Taurus series products. The MFPs come with dual 500-sheet ledger-size trays, a 2,100-sheet tandem letter-size tray, a 100-sheet bypass tray, duplex output, and an internal exit tray. A 150-sheet single-pass duplex document feeder is standard. It scans in color or B&W at 100 ipm in simplex mode and 200 ipm in duplex mode.

The paper supply can be expanded up to 6,700 sheets with the addition of a 3,500-sheet letter-size deck for \$1,570, or with a 3,000-sheet universal deck for \$3,050. And there is also a \$210 long paper feeding tray that handles banner paper.

Aside from the two new 3,000-sheet finishers, several other finishers are available for the MX-M6570 and MX-M7570, starting with a 50-sheet internal finisher for \$1,885. There are also two 4,000-sheet finishers with 100-sheet stapling. The base version is \$7,550, and the saddlestitch version is \$10,720. Both require a \$1,140 curl correction unit, along with a \$445 paper pass unit, and each of these finishers can be equipped with a \$945 hole-punch kit. In addition, the saddlestitch version can be configured with a \$6,700 trimmer unit.

On top of these, a two-tray inserter is \$3,860. It requires a \$1,140 relay unit, unless it is being used with the \$15,700 multifolding unit, which can be paired with any of the four floorstanding finishers. If no finisher is selected, customers must add an \$80 center exit tray, and they can then also add a \$160 exit tray to the right side of the machine. **■**



With a base price of \$27,650, the updated 75 ppm MX-M7570 is Sharp’s fastest and most expensive monochrome MFP that is aimed primarily at the general office market.



Nuance Software Available Via Staples Technology Solutions Program

Nuance Communications Announced on September 11 that its three leading document imaging solutions for MFPS and printers are now available from Staples Technology Solutions, a relatively little-known IT services arm of the now privately-held office supply superstore chain.

Staples Technology Solutions was established in 2010

and is now part of the Staples Business Advantage contract operation for the US and Canada. The focus is on providing IT-related e-commerce and web-based delivery services to both SMB accounts and Fortune 1000 customers. The offering initially was largely an outgrowth of Staples' \$4.4 billion acquisition of Corporate Express in July 2008 and its purchase of Thrive Networks in 2006.

MPS has been a core Staples Technology Solutions offering from the start, along with customer data center services, IT and desktop technology products, and network services. The unit has since expanded to offer mobility services. In addition, Staples Technology Solutions provides post-sales support, installation, and professional services.

In the case of Nuance, Staples Technology Solutions is now offering the full range of Equitrac, AutoStore and Output Manager applications. The software has the advantage versus most vendor-specific solutions of being compatible with a broad range of printer and MFP brands.

On the other hand, it is not clear that Staples has had much success with the MPS portion of its Staples Technology Solutions business, either in the context of its own revenue and profit, or in impacting the broader MPS market.

Likewise, Nuance has not enjoyed tremendous success with its own past efforts to expand distribution and sales of its office imaging applications beyond direct and indirect sales from MFP and printer vendors. For example, Nuance's long-time distribution agreement with Cranel Imaging – which targets the ECM, document capture and storage markets – has never lived up to either company's expectations.



STAPLES®

MPS has been a core Staples Technology Solutions offering from the start in 2010, but it is not clear Staples has had much success with the MPS portion of that business, either in the context of its own revenue and profit, or in impacting the broader MPS market.

YSoft Revenue Reaches \$45 Million

YSoft announced on September 13 its worldwide revenue in FY2018, which ended on June 30, grew 45% to about \$45 million, from around \$31 million in FY2017.

YSoft attributed some of the growth to the continuing success of the SafeQ 6 product platform it shipped in March 2016. YSoft also pointed to nearly a 7% increase in its customer base to 16,000 accounts in FY2018, with 34% of those customers in the Global Fortune 500. More specifically, YSoft said it saw significant growth in document workflow software, which it added as an adjunct to SafeQ 6. Workflow sales accounted for 5% of revenue in FY2018, or about \$2.3 million, and generated 15% of its revenue growth in FY2018. Lastly, YSoft saw a 400% increase in SafeQ SaaS sales, from a relatively tiny base in FY2017, to account for 8% of revenue in FY2018, or roughly \$3.6 million.

On a geographic basis, however, YSoft remains very much a European company. Western and Central Europe still accounted for 69% of its customers and 61% of its revenue in FY2018. In contrast, the Americas accounted for just 7% of YSoft's customers last year and 14% of its revenue.

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Contact: Brian Bissett
 Publisher & Editor, **The MFP Report**
 Bissett Communications Corporation
 11888 Los Alisos Circle
 Norwalk, CA 90650
 Tel: (562) 929-8800
 E-mail: bbissett@mfpreport.com
www.mfpreport.com

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