

Large Format MFP Buyer's Guide



Introduction

MFP

What is an MFP?

MFP is defined as a **Multi-Function Peripheral**, although it has also been explained as Multi-Function Printer, since many of the manufacturers of integrated MFPs are printer manufacturers. An MFP provides more functionality than a single dedicated device. Most commonly, this includes scanning, printing, and copying, but may also include other features such as email support or network file or print sharing.

Large format MFP solutions have become more and more popular in the past few years because they can provide more utility than a stand-alone scanner or printer at an attractive price. In many cases, buying an MFP means sacrificing on high-end features or specifications compared to buying separate scanners or printers. However, there are some solutions that can offer the best of both worlds – combining powerful scanning, copying, and printing into a single MFP solution.

Deciding on the right solution to fit your needs requires some evaluation of your needs for an MFP and how you expect your investment to improve your current workflow.

About this Guide

The purpose of this Buyer's Guide is to help you select the right MFP for your unique requirements. Whether you're a first-time buyer or an experienced user, if you're in the market for a large-format MFP solution there are many factors you should consider to satisfy your current and future needs. Here are the topics covered in this guide:

Defining requirements

- What an MFP can provide
- Choosing the right Scanner
- Choosing the right Printer
- Choosing the right Software

Why buy a Contex MFP Solution

- Advantages to owning a Contex MFP

Choosing the right MFP Solution for your needs

- SD4430 MFP
- HD3650 MFP
- XD2490 MFP

Defining Requirements

What can a large format MFP provide?

A printer can print. A scanner can scan. But an MFP can print, scan, copy, and more. Suddenly your business is more efficient – your staff is collaborating with just-revised color copies or reviewing drawing changes by email. In a copy shop, you're expanding your services to include high resolution color scanning and high speed digital archiving, while your printers finally operate at their full potential. Now you have an MFP.

In addition to the inherent business possibilities of owning a professional wide format multi-function solution, most customers shopping for an MFP are attracted by the two main benefits:

1. **Cost:** an MFP usually has a significantly lower cost than purchasing a scanner and printer separately. One powerful, centrally-located MFP can also replace several scanners and printers in a single department – making it the ideal wide format office copier. Often, scanners and printers designed for high levels of productivity are under-used because they cannot be shared with other users, or cannot be connected to offer more functionality. A good MFP solution is a much better investment as it solves many of these problems.
2. **Simplifying Workflow:** Moving files from workstation to workstation, or from scanner to printer can be a time consuming process. Add on the confusion of using separate software applications to drive each device and managing the flow of the documents over the network, and you can quickly see that an MFP can make your office more productive. Some solutions offer the ability to save floor space by combining a large format scanner and printer into a single "footprint." Others are designed to offer multi-function features to several printers, rather than a dedicated single printer. For some, a good MFP provides the means to easily collaborate both digitally – with scanned images – and with printed documents. For others, the ideal solution works with existing printers to provide high-volumes of copies.

For any business type, the right MFP solution will meet all of the above expectations, but it will look and function quite differently depending upon your application. It is best to begin by looking at your needs for **the three main components of any MFP:**



The Scanner:

To best evaluate your scanner needs, please see the [Large Format Scanner Buyer's Guide](#).

The addition of a wide format scanner is what transforms an ordinary wide format printer into a powerful multi-function device. So, choosing the right scanner is very important to the overall performance of the MFP. A few key questions you should consider:

What kind of documents will you scan?

Scanners are built upon different imaging technologies designed for capturing different types of documents. Most large format MFP solutions are designed for the largest number of documents existing – technical drawings and plans. **CIS-based scanners**, like the Contex SD series, are designed for these documents, as well as maps and data logs. Other MFP solutions offer more flexibility with media type, using **CCD scanning technology**. This allows the MFP to capture images from photos, artwork, thick mounted documents, or other documents requiring higher levels of color accuracy. For most customers in **Architecture, Engineering, Construction, Manufacturing, Government planning and Land Management, or natural resource and utilities companies**, technical drawings and maps make up 95-100% of their scanning requirements, so a CIS-based scanner is a good choice. Others involved in Reprographics usually need the ability to scan any kind of document their customers bring in the shop – in high quality. This is where a CCD-based scanner pays off.

How many documents will you scan per day?

The productivity of the MFP while scanning or copying depends heavily on the scanner's capabilities. Wide format scanners and MFPs are often specified in different speeds – usually provided in inches per second (ips). This specification is *not* a good indicator of productivity, as it measures only the maximum speed under ideal circumstances on a small document. A more accurate measurement of productivity is documents per minute or per hour. Keep in mind that most wide format printers are not as fast as the scanner – so having an ultra-fast scanner that is used only for making copies to a single printer could be wasteful. Many customers purchase an MFP expecting to use the device primarily for making copies, only to find that they often need to archive existing drawings or plans, or email drawing changes (mark-ups) between offices. Many large projects may include 20 or more pages of drawings in a set – which may need to be shared or archived. For **copy shops and reprographics service providers**, having a fast and reliable scanner that can handle

large volumes of documents is critical to keeping their printers and their business running at full speed.

What about color?

More and more MFP solutions are including color scanning – even when integrated with a monochrome printer. Why? Because even black + white technical drawings are often amended with change notes and other mark-up in color – maybe in red ink or with a highlighter pen. These drawings also frequently need to be copied, shared, or archived – which requires a color scanner. Highlighter color is especially challenging to capture as it is often too light for most CIS-based scanners to recognize. **Only high-quality 48-bit color capable scanners, like the Contex SD and HD series, can accurately capture this kind of color detail.**

What size documents do you have?

Most large format MFPs on the market capture documents up to 36-inches wide (A0 or E-size). There are advantages in both productivity and flexibility in choosing a wider scanning area. For example, an ANSI E-size document can be rotated and scanned in landscape orientation on the 44-inch wide SD4400 series scanners – included in the SD4430 MFP solution. The latest technical document printers from manufacturers like HP and Canon also standardize on 44-inch paper width, so for 1-to-1 copies, the scanner width must match or exceed the printer's width.

The Printer:

The printer is usually considered the core technology behind the MFP solution. It is true that most MFPs are used primarily as printers, with scanning, copying and other functions performed somewhat less frequently – depending on the application. So, choosing the right printer is crucial to the utility of the overall MFP system. Many wide format MFPs integrate low-end monochrome printers or printers with several features removed to justify lower prices on the total solution. Sometimes these features can be added – but only as an additional purchase option. Prices are usually advertised with basic features only, so make sure you know what is included in the price when comparison shopping.

These days, technical document printers are not just monochrome. Color inkjet printers have steadily improved in speed and resolution to rival the performance of Laser or LED monochrome printers – and usually sell for much lower prices. For the first time, inkjet printers are a cost-conscious and viable choice for printing both graphics and technical documents in virtually all industries. Where high-volume production is



required – at Copy Shops, Repro-houses, and other Printing Service Providers (PSPs) – a wide array of LED-based monochrome and inkjet-based color printers is required for offering a full range of services to customers.

Here are a few key questions to consider before choosing the best printer for your MFP:

Is the right printer the one you already have?

If you are shopping for a wide format MFP, chances are you are either supplementing an existing wide format printer (or two) or you are looking to replace the old with the new. A full MFP solution can be costly – especially if it is an integrated solution with scanner and printer built-in. The better value for many customers is to add an MFP solution that adds a scanner and multi-function software to their existing printer (or network of printers). This is a great way to save on equipment expenses and get new life out of your favorite reliable printer.

How many documents will you print/copy per day? How many are in color?

As an example, a large construction project generates lots of prints and copies. Most of these copies may come from the local Reprographics shop. Much of the daily review/changes to those documents will be scanned and copied on-site by the general and sub-contractors to collaborate over a hard copy. The larger volume of printing performed at the copy shops requires faster printers printing mostly monochrome drawings, while the secondary mark-up and review process is usually less demanding and requires only moderate printing speed – but probably with color. Choose your printer based not just on the speed, but your needs for color as well.

What kind of documents will you print/copy?

Like choosing the right scanner, choosing the printer also depends heavily on the types of documents you need to print or copy. Obviously, monochrome printers are best suited for quickly printing technical drawings and plans, but lack the ability to capture or reproduce color information. Color inkjet printers are available in several speeds and levels of image quality, but are not quite as productive as LED printers that can print from 4 to 12 or more A1/D-size documents per minute. This is why copy shops often have a wide range of printers to support their customers. Buying an integrated system with a monochrome LED-based printer will limit the usefulness of the system, unless you have no need to capture color information. Most customers looking for a good in-house all-purpose solution to supplement their reprographics needs purchase an inkjet MFP solution. This is because it is fast enough for their low-volume needs and flexible



enough to handle color and monochrome documents with comparable or equivalent quality to what they can get from the copy shop – all at a lower price than a monochrome MFP that has color scanning.

The Software:

Often overlooked in the MFP buying decision is the software. It is easy to get caught up in looking at detailed specifications of hardware and forget the importance of the multi-function software that will drive the whole system.

What is “Multi-Function” for you?

Most MFP systems offer printing and copying, but what other functions do you need to handle your existing jobs and improve the way you work? Many MFPs offer different option packages on the same basic system, turning on options as you pay for them. This may include anything from basics (like scanning to file, or just scanning in color) to specialized accounting or cost-recovery add-ons. Not every feature is right for every application, but consider how often a feature would be used against the price you will have to pay. Many integrated MFP systems offer low prices, until you add the cost for all the options to get just the basic MFP features. Often the prices begin with basic monochrome copying – with no scanning or networked printing. Key features to look for when shopping for more functions in your multi-function system:

Single application/user interface: Avoid solutions that require multiple applications to achieve all functions. Scanning, copying and printing should be in one easy-to-understand user interface.

Wide range of supported printers: Having built-in native printer driver support provides efficiency by letting you make changes to print settings without adjusting the Windows printer driver settings.

Image enhancements: Many documents that must be copied or scanned are in poor condition – either old or faded and difficult to read – like an old blueprint. Others require different levels of clean-up depending on the contrast of the information and the document background. Look for a solution that can make adjustments to these copies *before* printing, to minimize paper/ink waste and make copies that look better than the original.

Presets for common documents: Lots of adjustments are nice, but who wants to set 12 different settings individually before every copy or scan? Look for software that has built-in presets for common document types like maps, CAD drawings, Photos, etc. Good MFP software will also have the ability to customize

and save their adjustments into their own list of presets for later use.

Batch scanning/copying: When scanning sets of documents, a “batch” mode allows you to scan continuously without pressing buttons between documents. A good additional feature is to have automatic file naming that lets you choose the syntax and file counting method that works best for your archive.

Color calibration options: A good color-copying MFP solution offers a choice of either Closed-Loop or ICC color calibration, as well as the ability to run without color calibration for quick copies. Closed loop offers easy and reliable calibration by printing a color chart that is scanned and analyzed to make a correction factor that is used when color copying. ICC is used by color professionals who create their own “profiles” for each input and output device, using special equipment.

Scan-to-Email: Using PDF, JPG, and other compressed formats, communicating large format documents is easier than ever. Look for software that allows you to integrate with your email client, so you can send and track communications the way you want.

Device sharing: Most MFPs provide the ability to share the printer on the network, but very few allow you to share the scanner. With this feature, anyone on the LAN can operate the scanner over the network – just as if it's connected directly to their own workstation.

Touch-screen operation: Although some users may prefer the control of a pointing device and keyboard, most users prefer operating an MFP with only their finger. The problem is that most MFPs come with a very small screen and a user interface that is both difficult to navigate and too small to see image adjustments (if they offer viewing at all).

Why buy a Contex MFP Solution?

What advantages can Contex offer over other MFP solutions on the market?

Better scanners, of course! Contex has been manufacturing large format scanners for over twenty years, and has established itself as the worldwide leader in sales, customer satisfaction, and innovation. In fact several major printer and MFP manufacturers rely on Contex to supply scanning technology for their own branded products.

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Lower costs: You don't have to buy a whole MFP solution if your budget doesn't permit. In most cases, you can add a Contex MFP solution to the printer or printers you already own, without fear of compatibility issues or software support. You can still purchase a Contex MFP Solution together with virtually any new wide format printer and a controller PC with two times the performance for **less than the price of an integrated MFP**. And with almost no maintenance costs, your total cost of ownership is also minimal.

Works with your existing printers: Whether you have a shop full of printers from various different brands, or a single large format inkjet printer you purchased 10 years ago, it's likely that Contex MFP solutions already support printing not just to one, but virtually all of them.

Better performance: With up to 1200dpi optical resolution, speeds up to 12 inches per second, and scalable controller options, integrated MFPs can't compete with the performance or the price of a Contex MFP.

Solutions for individual needs: Whether you need a space-saving wide format office copier, or a versatile and compatible scanning engine that will keep all your shop's printers running overtime, Contex makes an MFP solution that meets your requirements.

More powerful software: The choice of either Nextimage or JETimage multi-function software ensures you get a full-featured MFP solution right out of the box – no need to purchase options or add-ons. And both software options offer several more features for improving the image quality and productivity of the system compared to integrated MFP solutions.

Scalable, upgradable: Each component of the MFP can be replaced or upgraded at any time to improve functionality over time – for example, adding a faster printer, or more powerful controller PC with more storage capability.

Copies better than the original: Even when the document is old and faded, the intelligent and automated adjustments in Nextimage and JETimage software can clean out noise and dark backgrounds, while accentuating fading pencil lines and light mark-ups to provide copies that bring old documents back to life.

Color-matching down to a science: Providing users the choice between Closed-Loop or ICC color calibration and media profiling, including grayscale calibration, Contex can produce color copies to virtually any media type that are indistinguishable from the original.

We don't sacrifice power for ease-of-use: Good multi-function devices offer all the necessary features and adjustments in a

user-friendly interface that is easy to navigate and control. Contex accomplishes this by manufacturing both the scanning hardware and the software to work together seamlessly.

Ergonomics: Both integrated and modular MFPs have their design flaws. Bundled MFP solutions for other manufacturers position the screen and PC in a workstation configuration to the right-hand side of the printer and scanner. To operate, you have to move between the scanner and workstation, stepping over the printer legs in the process. This also increases the overall footprint of the MFP.

Contex designed the SD4430 MFP solution with the screen mounted just above the scanner, at eye level, facing the center of the workspace – providing access to both scanner and operator panel from one standing position. This also minimizes the footprint of the MFP, adding no width to the scanner or printer. The HD3650 MFP solution is also designed so that the user stands directly in front of the scanner and uses the center-mounted touch-screen – adjustable to any viewing angle.

Choosing the right MFP solution

Which solution is best for your individual needs?

If you have read this far in the Buyer's Guide, you now understand that different companies have different needs from an MFP solution, and that those needs are based on many different factors. Even the same type of industry may use different solutions because of differences in document media type. Let's take a closer look at the solutions Contex has to offer:

Contex SD4430 MFP Solution

What is it?

An affordable, space-saving, wide format office copier solution.

Who is it for?

Customers in Architecture/Engineering/Construction, Government, Manufacturing, Utilities and Energy companies and anyone else working with large format technical drawings and plans, data logs, maps, or other technical documents who need a solution for on-demand copies, prints and scans.



Does this sound familiar?

"My office space is valuable, I need to make the best use of the space I have."

The SD4430 MFP is designed specifically to address these needs. The space-saving single footprint stand takes up no more room than a wide format printer.

"Most of my copies are done at the reprographics provider, but I need some prints/copies on-demand, without waiting for them."

Powerful enough to handle multiple copy jobs and archive batches of drawings, this MFP solution is designed to reduce your dependency on the copy shop by handling the "in-between" jobs of making copies of small design changes for quick distribution, or fast presentations for potential customers.

"I have several PCs, printers, and employees that need to work properly with the multi-function system. I can't spend more money on setup, integration and training."

As a wide format scanner manufacturer, Contex strives to support a wide range of printers from all major brands, not just one dedicated printer from one brand. If you already have a large format printer, the SD4430 MFP probably supports it. With an award winning easy-to-understand user interface, built-in network device sharing, and plug'n'play compatibility with network printers, this MFP is ready for work from day one.

[Read more about the SD4430 MFP](#) and decide for yourself if it's the right MFP for your needs.



Contex HD3650 MFP Solution

What is it?

A versatile, color reprographics system – including a powerful scanning engine that distributes copies to a wide range of printing equipment.

Who is it for?

Copy shops, Reprographers, printing service providers, and other companies looking for a fast way to archive, copy, or share a wide range document types.

Does this sound familiar?

"All of my equipment must pay for itself in a short time – my business depends on it."

The HD3650 MFP was designed to do more than just copy. So you can expand your services to include high speed digital archival and high definition color scanning and copying – and earn a faster return on investment.

"I have several inkjet and LED printers that each use different software, servers and systems. I need a common front-end that works with them all."

The 48-bit 4-channel CCDs in the HD3650 scanner make this MFP solution versatile enough to capture and clean-up both monochrome and color documents for distribution to all types of printers – at higher quality than they can provide with their own scanning hardware (if present). And the list of supported printers and systems keep growing as we continue to build in support for the latest technologies.

"My business depends on keeping my printers productive. I need a scanner that can distribute copy jobs and keep the pace."

With high speed xDTR technology and on-board image processing, the HD3650 MFP is fast enough to keep up with the busiest of copy shops – making sure you keep up with customer demands.

"My customers have all kinds of documents to copy or scan. I need a single scanner that can handle them all."

The flexibility of the HD series scanner built into the HD3650 MFP makes it possible to scan thick, thin, flat or folded, wrinkled or dirty, color or monochrome documents of all types. From posters, photos, and artwork, to CAD drawings, old blueprints and maps, this MFP gives you the ability to always answer "yes" to difficult jobs.

[Read more about the HD3650 MFP](#) and decide for yourself if it's the right MFP for your needs.



Contex XD2490 MFP Solution

What is it?

Affordable, durable wide format MFP designed for archiving, copying, and communicating with documents up to A1/D-size.

Who is it for?

AEC, Government, Education, and others needing to digitize their documents for archival or collaboration – either via printed hardcopy or electronic sharing.

Does this sound familiar?

“I spend too much time communicating changes to plans, and keeping all my team members on the same page.”

Improve workflow and efficiency by minimizing the time and resources needed to collaborate with your team. Scan-to-email or to the network to send and track drawing changes quickly and accurately.

“Wide format scanners are just too expensive for us. We only need to scan a few documents per day, but outsourcing this job can be expensive and takes time.”

The XD2490 MFP has a ground-breaking entry-level price for such a powerful MFP solution. You will save time and money with an affordable wide format MFP solution that will pay for itself quickly.

“I don’t have time to train my staff or team members how to use new complicated equipment.”

Plug-n-play interface, included software with user-friendly GUI, and one-touch operation makes it easy to get started scanning immediately. It’s easier to use than the office copier – anyone can setup and use the scanner in minutes, not days.

“I have a document management solution in place. I don’t want to change my existing setup just to add a scanner.”

The XD2490 MFP works with your existing network, software, and printers – right out of the box. Included TWAIN drivers work with most EDM software and hundreds of built-in printer drivers in Nextimage ensure tight integration with existing workflows.

[Read more about the XD2490 MFP](#) and decide for yourself if it’s the right MFP for your needs.

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Where to Buy

For a free quote on the Contex MFP solutions, or to find the Contex Authorized reseller in your area, just [click here and contact our sales team](#). We will be pleased to assist you. In addition, you can contact us directly at one of our corporate offices listed below.

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