

THE

ULTIMATE BUYING GUIDE

TO

# WIDE FORMAT PRINTERS



# Purchasing a Wide Format Printer

Are you in the market for a wide format printer,  
but you have no idea where to begin?

**You are not alone!**

There are a number of factors to consider when purchasing a wide format printer. Whether you are new to the wide format marketplace or an experienced buyer, the process of researching and comparison can be cumbersome.

Like purchasing a car, a wide format printer will be your vehicle of increased **production**, **speed**, and **quality** to ensure that you are printing the best images possible for your business and customers.

Acquiring a wide format solution is an important investment from both a monetary & productivity perspective, and the process deserves careful consideration.

We have created this eBook as your ultimate guide to purchasing a wide format printer. Each chapter outlines the different factors to consider when selecting your device so that you can feel confident in making a sound decision for you and the future of your business.



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# Chapter 1

## Color or Monochrome



**To start out**, think about the types of projects your team will be printing and whether those jobs require color or monochrome ink. Will you print in color often or a few jobs per month? What kind of graphics or images will you be printing?

The decision to purchase a machine capable of color printing versus monochrome should be based on the types of jobs you specialize in and print most often.

A wide format printer made for color can print in monochrome for approximately the same cost, especially if the machine prints at lower volumes.

**If you're printing technical documents, graphics, posters or presentations, then color is optimal for you.**

**If you're printing technical documents for construction that will be used on-site, your prints will need to be weatherproof. The ability to print color and black & white on different media will depend on toner or ink and choosing a printer that can print on special media.**

## Chapter 2

# Speed & Performance

When comparing the **speed & performance** of your wide format printer, think of it as a vehicle of production. Compare the speed specifications against a set of variables based on your actual need.

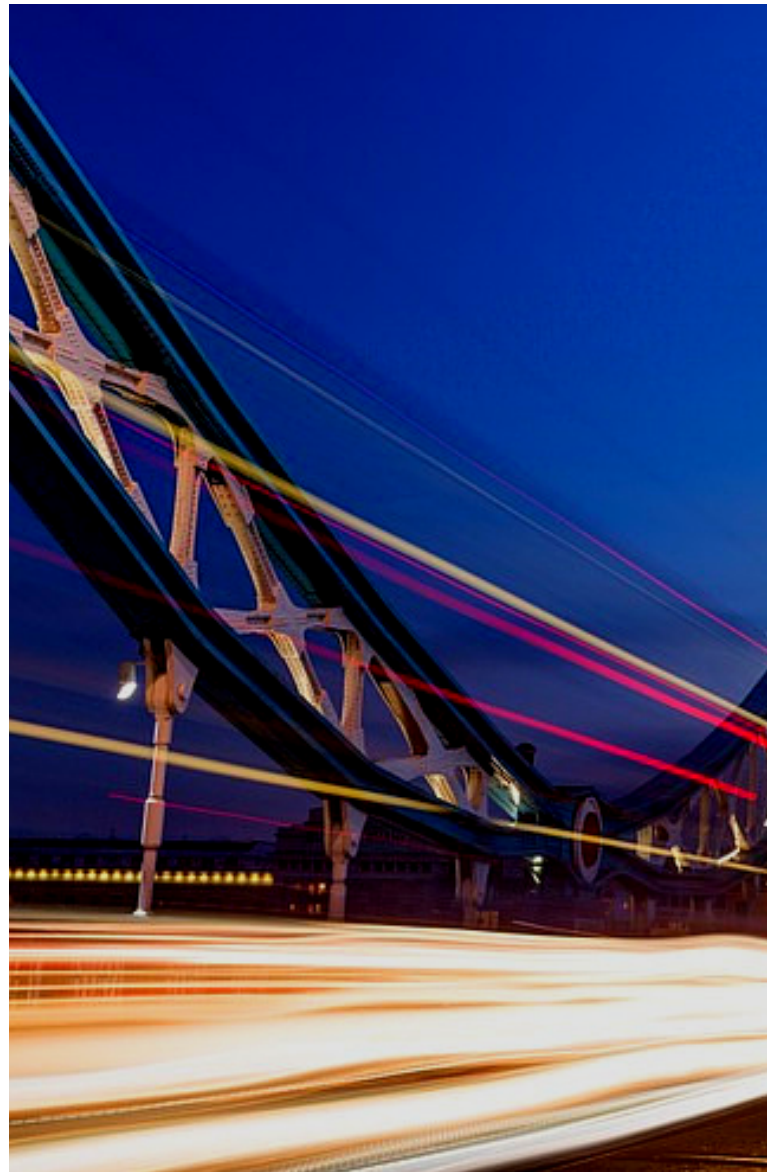
***How fast WILL I need to get my print jobs completed?  
How fast CAN I have my print jobs completed?***

**If you're evaluating a printer solution, don't just check out the specification details.**

Your decision should derive from a more comprehensive understanding of the device rather than solely relying on specifications.

There are four main areas of speed and performance to consider when evaluating wide format solutions: processing time, warm-up time, print speed and throughput.

**Be sure to compare the amount of warm-up time on the models you are considering.**



## Chapter 2

# Speed & Performance

### Processing Time

In this context, processing time refers to the amount of time it takes for a printer to access, create, and modify files and information within itself.

Before a job can be printed, the printer must first process the files. Depending on the capabilities and amount of memory, processing time can differ from machine to machine.

### Warm-Up Time

Warm-up time refers to the amount of time it takes for a printer to wake up from off position to operational.

Not every vehicle will move from 0-100 mph in 60 seconds. This must also be taken into account with your wide format printer. Warming up can take several minutes depending on the make and model. Unless in a production environment, most printers sit idle for an extended period of time, resulting in a warm-up period that can take a few seconds to a few minutes. Take this into consideration as it will play a role in productivity and energy costs.

### Print Speed

Print speed refers to the amount of time it takes for a printer to print out completed pages. It's commonly referred to as PPM, which stands for pages per minute.

Print speed can vary from job to job. If you're printing monochrome documents, then speed will be consistent between jobs. Alternatively, if you are printing a high-resolution document with a number of graphics, then print time will slow down. Speed can vary depending on if you are printing in presentation or draft mode.

### Throughput

Throughput refers to the productivity of a printer.

If you run a busy print shop, or you need to print a large number of prints for your clients, then consider the time that it takes for your printer to process new jobs. Some printers can save time by processing new jobs while continuing to print current jobs.

## Chapter 3

# Image Quality

The **Image quality** will have different implications based on your application. If you print documents with high resolution graphics, the resolution of the printer may be the most important factor to consider. Imagine you're printing technical drawings or fine art. A loss in image quality means a loss of important data, which in turn, means a loss of a job. Instead, focus on *how* the data is interpreted by the printer. Also, make sure that fine or dotted lines are represented clearly to ensure that all of your data is represented in your prints.

When scanning, make sure your machine is able to recognize the correct data, while suppressing errors and wrinkles. Weak information such as line thickness and pencil drawings must be maintained to ensure the quality of the document is transferred to the new print.



The media used will have some effect on the quality of the image for color prints, as some media materials are able to hold heavier sets of ink and toner.

For **monochrome documents**, there are also multiple media types available depending on your application.

## Chapter 4

# Usability

How much time will it take to set up jobs, add ink or toner, or load paper rolls?  
Will the user interface be understandable to anyone that is completing a job?

**Ease of Operation is a major factor to consider when selecting your wide format printer as it will directly impact productivity.**

**Consider the best solution for your business by evaluating your current operations.**

### Factors for Users:

Will there be one standard user or multiple users?  
Will the user-interface be easy to understand and use?  
Will there be a learning-curve associated with a new system?

### Ease-of-Access and Loading:

Is the loading system convenient and easy to operate?  
What are the possibilities to exchange ink and refill toner?  
Will media rolls be easy and convenient to exchange?

### Ergonomic Design:

Will the location of the printer impact production?  
Is the operation panel easy to access?  
Will prints and scans be easy to access?





## Chapter 5

# Advanced Solutions

**Advanced solutions** are a major investment into the future of your wide format printer. With technology rapidly advancing, the ability to keep up with the latest trends in solutions services can offer you a competitive edge.

This is not say that purchasing the newest model with the most innovative functions will lead you to overall success. Be sure to infuse your vision of your business's future along with its current capabilities. Upgrading as your needs evolve is always a viable option as well as adding advanced solutions to your current wide format printer should the technologies be compatible.

Evaluate the ever-evolving landscape of solutions associated with efficient printing capabilities:

- Scanning
- Archiving
- Mobile Printing
- iCloud
- Email



## Chapter 6

### Cost

Although cost jumps to the forefront of every consumer's mind, do not allow it to be the primary factor in this decision. A higher priced printer may induce apprehension, but selecting the features most aligned with your needs will produce a return on investment which will offset the immediate cost. This reinforces the importance of realizing how profoundly the present decisions you make will affect your future success.

When selecting your vehicle for the highest production possible, select the solution that best suits your day-to-day business processes.



#### Initial Investment

The initial investment will directly tie into the cost of the machine combined with delivery. This is the amount you have to pay before your wide format printer is installed in its new home.

#### Cost of Doing Business

This is a running cost associated within your contract and secondary purchases such as media, consumables and service.

#### Hidden Costs

These are the costs that are not immediately obvious with new purchases, but that should be considered such as printing errors, production downtime, energy use, etc.

## Chapter 7

# Space Requirements



The physical measurements of the wide format printer can be found in the product specification sections of any provider catalog or user guide.

Space requirements are an important element of purchasing any piece of equipment. The physical space that the equipment will live in will directly affect workflow, ergonomics, work efficiency and environmental standards.

However, there are greater implications to spacing than just the 3-dimensional size of the product. When selecting the location to install your wide format printer, you must ensure that you are considering every possible factor that may be affected.

## Chapter 7

# Space Requirements

### Mapping

Map the process and physical requirements of getting the equipment into the building and to its final location of operation. Factor in every detail from the clearance in the hallways to the size of the elevator. And make sure not to forget to ensure you have enough clearance in your doorway to allow the equipment to pass through. It is also vitally important that your equipment provider is aware of any stairs necessary for the machine to ascend as well as the presence (or lack) of a loading dock.

### Unpacking Area

Generally when delivering a wide format printer, there must be ample clearance to allow for the delivery team to unpack the printer. Consult with your equipment provider to find out the approximate space required to unpack and setup the printer.

### Production Spacing

Factor in the amount of room needed for your production team to work efficiently. Your team should have insight into the amount of space needed to allow for scanning, printing, folding, etc. You will also need to consider where the paper is loaded and allow enough clearance for easy access. Additionally, if you are placing the printer in close proximity to staff, you will want to investigate the noise, heat and emissions levels.

### Footprint

Consider whether the printing solution has a single or dual footprint that allows for optimal spacing and efficiency. This will have an implication on your production, efficiency and sustainability as well as have an effect on your wallet.



## Chapter 8

# Security

Data security is vital in today's business landscape as information is shared over various devices and systems. With the internet expanding and as data is shared across multiple networks instantaneously, security has become a more prominent issue. Viruses and system breakdowns open the floodgates for potential losses in valuable data and even intellectual property.

Consider the type of printing services that you will be providing. If you will be printing intellectual property of your own or that of your client's, you must consider taking extra security precautions to ensure the safety of the data being handled.



**Data deletion does not equal a complete erasure. You must evaluate the security features of the device(s) you are considering.**

## Chapter 9

# Sustainability

A business' sustainability standards are an increasingly important aspect of its corporate culture. Everyone produces a carbon footprint and has a responsibility to create a plan of action to reduce it.

A great way to achieve this is to have a sustainability program put into practice. Conduct a complete evaluation of the equipment's environmental impact to ensure that you are keeping a sustainable carbon footprint.



A sustainability program rewards you and your business, not only because of the environmental aspects, but there are also cost savings and **tax incentives** benefiting companies **reducing carbon emissions.**

### Waste

How much waste is being created?

### Recycle

What in your production facility can be recycled?

### Energy Consumption

How much energy does your printer consume?  
How long is your printer in sleep mode?  
How much energy does it consume to warm-up?  
How often is your printer actually in use per day?  
How much energy is used to offset the heat from the printer?  
Is your printer in a safe location with a secure power source?

Are you looking to expand  
your business with a new  
Wide Format solution?

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