

4 Output devices – “Multi-function printers”

(Unit 8, task 4 – Extract from a consumer technology podcast a multi-function printers)

I: In the studio with me is John Kelly from “Text Print”. Mr Kelly, what exactly is a multifunction printer?

J: Well, essentially it’s an all-in-one device that can work as a scanner, a fax and a photocopier, as well as a printer.

I: These devices are becoming very popular. What the factors behind their success?

J: Basically, they’re cheaper and more versatile than standalone products. The printing and scanning components are well integrated and they come with an LCD screen, slots for memory cards and PictBridge connections.

I: What’s PictBridge exactly?

J: It’s a technology developed by Canon that lets you send images from a memory card in a digital camera or a camera phone directly to a printer. No computer is necessary. All you have to do is take pictures with your camera and connect it to a printer via a USB cable.

I: And what kind of things can multi-function printers print? Can they just print sheets of paper or do they print other things as well?

J: Oh, yes! They can print envelopes, labels and even transparencies.

I: Do multi-function printers have any downsides or disadvantages?

J: Yes. There are a lot of components in one machine. So, if it breaks down, you may lose all of its functions at the same time. Also, they can only do one thing at the time. For example, you can’t print the document and receive a fax simultaneously.

I: And what about software? Should I get any photo editing software if I buy a multi-function printer?

J: Well, they usually include a CD with the printer drivers, OCR and photo and image software. You can do some basic editing like adjusting brightness or removing red eyes, however if you want better results, you’ll need specialized software.

I: What would your advice be to someone thinking about buying one of these devices?

J: Only a couple of things, really. Bear in mind, that companies don’t make money from the printer, but from the ink. If you print a lot, you’ll spend a lot of money on cartridges. So, consider buying printers with cheap ink cartridges. Finally, if you’re a home user, you should go for an ink-jet based model, but for group works and businesses that need a high quality, low-cost per page output at large quantities, I recommend a laser unit.