

Smart printing strategies help save small businesses big money

South Florida Business Journal - by [Jeff Zbar](#)

**South Florida
BUSINESS JOURNAL**

When the recession began several years ago, Bob Bloom saw people visiting his retail store who'd never ventured there before. They were asking about how they could save money with everyday home office and small business printing.

"The average business was down 30 to 40 percent, but at the same time, businesses got smarter," said Bloom, VP and COO with **Ink & Toner USA** LLC in West Palm Beach. "They were asking, 'How can I run my business better?' People paid attention to the expense side."

Expense-side awareness included printing. Printers are necessary for most businesses. Yet, expensive supplies often come in tow – and drag on a company's bottom line. Along with costly components are bad printing practices that consume materials and sap a company's profits. Such practices include printing in color on high-quality paper when black on recycled paper will suffice, or using manufacturer-made ink or toner cartridges instead of refilled models.

Bloom hears people complaining about the cost of printer ink and toner, how frequently they have to replace cartridges or how the printer seemed like a good deal at the time. Today, he finds himself advising visitors and callers about smart printing practices – hopefully before they make the purchase, he said. The problem is that the total cost of ownership of a printer has little to do with the hardware itself.

"Most people buy machines based upon the machine price, not the ink cost," said Bloom, whose business supplies manufacturer-made and refilled cartridges to a growing number of clients – including the School District of Palm Beach County, whose business it won this spring. "The Sunday advertisement is no way to buy a printer."

Manufacturers have heard the complaints, too. A marketing campaign from **Kodak** currently touts the company's low-cost, high-performance ink. The potential savings: \$110 a year based on four printed pages a day, said Susan Polizzotto, Kodak's worldwide future product manager. The company's XL cartridges – and high-capacity paper trays – are available across its product line, she said.

"Home offices and small businesses don't want to continually replace black," she said.

Today's printers also feature sensors that determine whether, for example, photo-quality paper is in the tray when the user is sending a standard black-ink document for printing, Polizzotto said.

Among other strategies to keep printing costs down:

- Opt for recycled or refilled ink and toner cartridges. The cost is lower, and recycling keeps metals and plastics out of the landfill. When a cartridge is empty, inquire if your local office supply store or ink retailer will refill it or take it in exchange.
- Reset the printer's default print properties to "draft" mode and gray-scale printing. This reduces the amount of ink used. Some print applications also allow printing in black ink only, which reduces or eliminates the use of more expensive color ink.
- Keep reams of recycled, multipurpose or lower-quality paper around for draft or low-quality printing. Reserve premium paper for letters, presentations or high-value documents. **HP's** Everyday Photo Paper is an affordable and recyclable glossy photo paper designed for value-conscious customers.
- Print on both sides of the page. Some printers come with attachments that allow for automatic, two-sided printing. Also, recycle old paper by printing draft documents on the unused side.
- Format and preview your output. Expand the margins of draft documents and use smaller point sizes to get more content on each page. Also, preview documents – especially when printing Web pages – to ensure the printed page will include all the content.
- Buy and use laser printers. If the business predominantly prints documents in black, a laser printer is generally more efficient. As with any printer, research the model before buying to price the cost of replacement cartridges.
- Print only when needed. As the e-mail signature says: "Consider the environment before printing this e-mail."

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