



FIVE KEYS TO MOBILE PRINTING SUCCESS

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FIVE KEYS TO MOBILE PRINTING SUCCESS

Business has gone through an unprecedented level of change in the last three years. Cloud-based technologies now support workers in the office and in the field, and there is an increasing number of choices for handheld devices and operating systems. Consequently, mobile technologies are maximizing productivity like never before.

As technology has evolved, much of the discussion has been about a paperless business environment, but the reality is that nothing could be further from the truth.

In several fields, such as healthcare, pest control, and public safety, onsite documentation is more critical than ever. Pest control technicians, for example, must leave detailed, printed reports at the time of service. Home healthcare workers need to leave reports, medication instructions, and similar printed documentation after a call. Other businesses need receipts or other documentation in a printed format.

According to VDC Research, the global market for mobile printers is expected to expand at a high single-digit compound annual growth rate through 2017. VDC also predicts that mobile printer adoption will grow across retail, transportation and logistics, commercial services, industrial/manufacturing, government, and healthcare industries. Yet printing is often an afterthought when a company evaluates mobile technologies.

As the workforce becomes more mobile, it is more important than ever that companies carefully consider the following five factors when choosing mobile printing solutions.



CHOOSE ONLY MOBILE PRINTERS

REASON

1

Since total Cost of Ownership (TCO) is among the top considerations when choosing a printer for mobile deployment, some purchasing managers still look at inkjet or laser printers as a potential solution. But even the smallest printers designed for the home or office environment aren't truly mobile. They may serve the needs in a stationary environment, but they will not hold up for long in the field, even if they go from home to home or from office to office. Vital parts of these consumer-grade devices do not have the stability to be moved numerous times a day. Just because a printer fits in a car or truck doesn't mean it is mobile.

A careful examination will show that thermal printers will cost less than their inkjet, laser or dot matrix cousins because thermal printers are less susceptible to component breakage due to fewer moving parts. Additionally, paper is the only regular consumable for a thermal printer. There are no ink cartridges, toners, drums, etc., to replace. Fewer replaceable parts also means less opening and closing, another point of failure for inkjet, laser and dot matrix printers.

Thermal printers have several other advantages as well. Even "mobile" inkjet printers do not hold up that well when being moved from location to location. Dot matrix printers are large, loud, slow, and noisy. Some manufacturers have shrunk the total size of their inkjet devices to make them more attractive to the mobile workforce. But even these smaller inkjet printers are not truly portable. They work best in a stationary environment like an office or home. The internal components such as paper trays, rollers, drums, etc. can easily break during movement. The mobile environment is subject to extreme heat like Arizona summers, cold like Minnesota winters and humidity in coastal and Great Lakes regions that all cause inkjet nozzles to clog and ink to expand, contract, and leak. Thermal printers do not use ink, but instead use precise temperatures and contact with thermal paper to precisely place tiny printed dots on a page.

Additionally, thermal printers work in a variety of orientations — flat on a table, mounted on a side, upside down, or at any angle in between. Inkjet and dot matrix printers work properly only in an upright mode.



Rugged Jet™



PocketJet™

CONSIDER THE USE SCENARIO

REASON

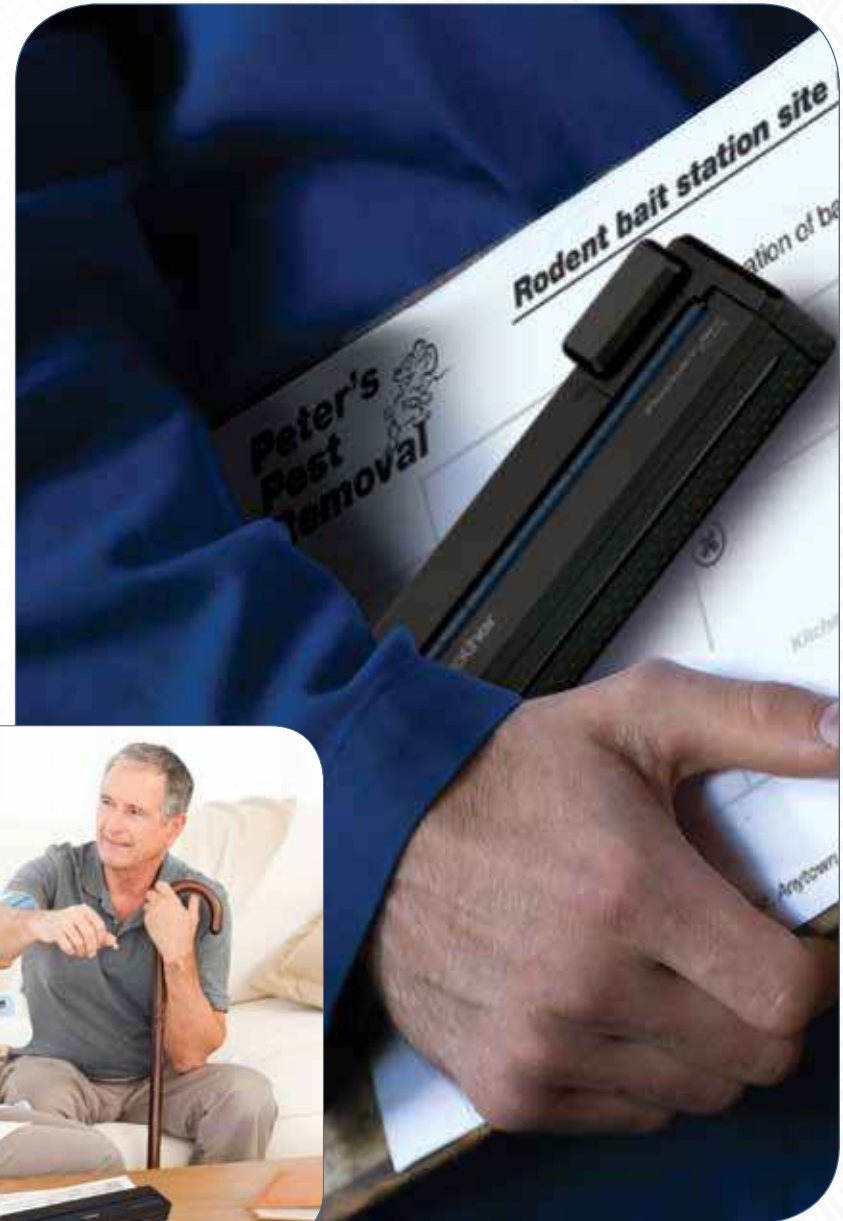
2

Printers used in home or office environments (e.g., home healthcare, building inspectors, etc.) tend to be operated on flat surfaces. Law enforcement, ambulance, and other public safety scenarios require printers that can operate in a small space, at different angles, and can be mounted for most efficient use. Field technicians even might need a wearable device. Thus, always select the print form factor that best fits the environment.

Mobile printers that will be used in particularly harsh environments should be “ruggedized” to protect against extreme conditions like dust, vibration, and temperature extremes. Users working in more stable mobile environments like offices can choose less expensive “semi-rugged” printers.

The size of the printer also must mesh with the user’s mobile needs. Full-page (8.5x11) printers make sense for reports and other printing scenarios that include large amounts of detail. But they still need to be truly portable so the user can carry the printer in a briefcase or tool bag. Some ruggedized models come with the printer and paper in a sturdy case no larger than a briefcase. Today’s full-page, thermal devices can print up to six pages a minute, an important consideration for users printing reports and other materials as their last step in completing a transaction or service call.

Smaller, three- and four-inch printers make more sense when the footprint is an issue, such as in police or emergency vehicles or when a field technician needs a wearable device. The smaller devices will also consume less power. The full-page and smaller devices come with a variety of mounts to fit a user’s needs.



CHOOSE A PRINTER WITH LOW POWER CONSUMPTION

REASON

3

As anyone who has ever used a smartphone knows, a mobile device's battery power is critical. So the printer's amperage draw needs to be minimal for its use. A mobile printer may need to operate in the field for as much as an entire shift before recharging. So, you should choose the printer that will operate the longest without the need to recharge and that can recharge quickly via an AC or DC (typically in a car or truck) outlet.

The latter feature is especially important since some printers run on only AC power, which makes them unusable in many mobile environments where there are few or no available power outlets. Of course you could use an inverter to run an AC-powered printer from a vehicle, but you would then have the additional expense of buying a power inverter.

Remember that batteries are consumables; at some point they will no longer recharge. You don't want this to occur in the field, particularly when a user needs the mobile printer for extended use. Work with your printer vendor to develop a management plan for replacing batteries on a schedule that provides a maximum cost/benefit ratio.

BATTERY YIELD*

PocketJet®

-A 100% charged battery will yield 100 pages

RuggedJet™ 4030 & 4040

-Up to 2000 4" x 6" Receipts/Labels

RuggedJet™ 3050 & 3150

-Up to 5300 2" x 1.25" Labels

-Up to 6600 3" Receipts

*Performance statistics are based on controlled environment testing. Field results will vary.



LOOK FOR EASE OF USE

REASON

4

The best mobile printers will be easy to set up and use. Look for printers with an intuitive setup process and simple interfaces so mobile employees can use them in their daily work without the regular need for technical support. The interface and the connectivity should ensure that the mobile worker can easily connect the printer to a variety of handheld devices and with mounts in vehicles, as used in law enforcement and emergency vehicles.

Mobile printers need to be easy and lightweight without sacrificing reliability because field technicians may have a cell phone, the printer, and other equipment to carry.



RuggedJet™ RJ-4040

The first printer in its class to be AirPrint™ certified.



MAKE SURE THE PRINTER IS “FUTURE-PROOFED”

REASON

5

The pace of technology change is faster than ever and will only accelerate. Technology like iPhones, iPads, etc., debuted just a few years ago. Mobile workers are continuously leveraging new technologies.

Until recently, the majority of enterprises were working with legacy Windows® operating systems in the field, but in the last few years firms have added smartphones, tablets, and iOS® devices like iPads. Thus, the printer interface becomes an important consideration. Printer manufacturers are scurrying to support today’s devices and tomorrow’s, but many cannot guarantee their products can work with Android™, iOS®, BlackBerry®, and Windows® platforms — all of which might be used by a field force because many companies have adopted a bring-your-own-device (BYOD) strategy.

Future-proofing also means being able to work with a variety of connectivity choices and sometimes inter-changeably. The best connectivity option obviously varies by the environment in which the mobile worker spends most of their time, which could also change as handheld technology evolves. Some balance between Wi-Fi and Bluetooth® will need to be struck, but a choice may need to be made to use multiple connectivity options at the same time.

So the best mobile printers need to work with the variety of wireless and physical connections, including the 802.11 b, g, and n “flavors” of Wi-Fi, Bluetooth®, serial and USB 2.0 options. Today’s mobile printing requires more throughput than ever before, a scenario that is expected to grow as companies add more detail, logos, and other graphics to reports. So, mobile printers need to have expandable memory, a robust SDK library, and the versatility to change as technology evolves.

By taking these five keys of mobile printing success into consideration, companies can select the printer that provides the best reliability, the most efficiency, and the lowest cost for their needs.



BROTHER MOBILE SOLUTIONS

Brother Mobile Solutions is a premier provider of mobile printing solutions for workforces on the go. The growing product lineup includes compact, mobile thermal full-page and small-format thermal receipt and label printers; handheld and desktop laminated label printers; and wide-format, desktop thermal paper label printers. Brother mobile products division serves a variety of industries including field services, route, public safety, transportation, oil & gas, retail and healthcare workforces – all through its network of authorized resellers. Products include the legendary Brother PocketJet® Series full page mobile printer, new rugged carry and vehicle mount cases, plus the RuggedJet™ Series label and receipt printers in 4" and 3" formats with advanced features and rugged functionality.



Pj-6 Plus



Pj-673

Full-page mobile thermal printers



RJ-4030



RJ-4040



RJ-3050



RJ-3150

Mobile receipt and label printers



TD-2130N



TD-2130N
with TDU

Mobile desktop label and receipt printers

See the complete product lineup at www.BrotherMobileSolutions.com.

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