

Oki Slashes Large-Format Color Printing Costs

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Offices that require tabloid-size color printing should take note of this promising and relatively inexpensive (both to buy and run) solution.

Oki Data Americas today announced a color LED printer - the equivalent of a color laser printer - that promises to make color printing on paper up to tabloid size (11 by 17 inches) much more affordable.

In the world of tabloid size printers, \$3,000 is generally considered a low price. The Oki Printing Solutions C8800 series is being introduced at an estimated street price fully \$600 below that, at \$2,399 for the least expensive model. (You can find color tabloid printers for about the same price or even less, but they are typically older printers, often nearing or past the model's end of life).

The C8800 is also smaller than most printers that can handle tabloid-size paper, at 13.4 by 19.1 by 23.2 inches (HWD) and 76.5 pounds. Oki Data says that its footprint is "up to 47 percent" smaller than comparable printers. Part of the reason is that most printers which are nominally for tabloid size printing can actually handle paper that's a little larger than tabloid size, typically up to 12 by 18 inches or even 13 by 19 inches.

The super-tabloid sizes are useful primarily for graphic artists who need room for printing a full 11-by-17-inch image plus extra room for crop marks, registration marks, and other information that they might need for producing a final result. For business purposes, the 11-by-17-inch size is the standard, and very helpful for things like large spreadsheets.

The C8800 can also print banner size images, on paper up to 11 by 47.25 inches.

Oki Data also claims reasonably fast performance for the C8800, rating it at 32 pages per minute (ppm) for black and white printing and 26 ppm for color (based on letter-size pages). It also claims a reasonably low cost per page, at 1.5 to 2 cents for a monochrome page, and 9 to 10 cents for a color page. The cost per page in particular is worth noting, since it promises the printer will not only be inexpensive to buy, but inexpensive to run.

The three models in the series are the C8800n (with networking) for \$2,399 (street), the C8800dn (which adds duplexing) for \$2,689 (street), and the C8800dtn (which also adds trays, boosting the input capacity from 400 pages to the printer's maximum 930 pages) for \$3,079 (street). Oki Data says that all three models in the C8800 series will be available in June.

Oki Data says the combination of 1200 by 600 dot-per-inch (dpi) resolution, microfine toner, and multilevel LED print heads (meaning they can print each color in multiple shades rather than just full on or full off) lets the C8800 produce "photo-like" quality on plain paper.

If true, it's a shame that the printer is limited to a maximum 11-by-17-inch paper size, since high-quality output would be of particular interest to graphic artists who would need super-tabloid-size paper. Even so, the C8800 promises to make tabloid-size color printing much more affordable for small offices on tight budgets, which makes it a potentially exciting printer.

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