

Xerox looks to make color printing more affordable

May 7 2009, By ANDREW VANACORE , AP Business Writer



Xerox ColorQube 9201

(AP) -- The economics of color printing in big offices are simple: A page of black and white costs about 2 cents per page, while color runs about 8 cents.

That's one reason why only 15 percent of the 2.25 trillion pages printed worldwide each year are in color.

Xerox Corp. is hoping to upend that math - and its competition in the printing business - partly with the help of new technology.

The company is unveiling a printer Thursday - the ColorQube - that uses a waxy substance resembling a huge crayon instead of ink or toner

cartridges. The technology previously had been used in smaller Xerox printers. And Xerox said that instead of the common setup of charging corporate customers 2 cents for black and white pages or 8 cents for color, the company will charge based on how much color a given printing job requires.

That will mean a 62 percent drop in the price of color printing, according to Xerox.

"There is a fundamental barrier that we were trying to break," says Ursula Burns, the company's president. "The world is in color, that's what our customers want."

Green is one color in particular Xerox is pushing with the new machine. The company says it produces less waste and less power than average [laser printers](#).

Coming out with such a printer carries risks for the Norwalk, Conn.-based company. After all, many of the color machines Xerox is looking to render obsolete are Xerox machines.

"The trick is to make sure that it doesn't just displace the laser jets," said Angele Boyd, an analyst with the research firm IDC. Xerox will have to try to appeal to a wider market and steal share from competitors, perhaps by touting its green credentials.

Hewlett-Packard Co., one of Xerox's main rivals, is skeptical. Tom Codd, an HP vice president, said the solid ink printers already on the market have produced images of lesser quality than standard laser printers; colors fade and leave a waxy residue on the page that's hard to write over. And because solid ink machines have to keep the ink heated, they have tended to use more power.

Xerox concedes that quality and power use have been problems in the past. But the company says it has smoothed out the kinks.

The ColorQube does indeed have to keep its ink heated, said Jim Rise, Xerox vice president in charge of solid ink. Some is kept in a "molten" state, which means using more power than a laser machine when it's idle.

But Rice says the [printer](#) more than makes up the difference by using less power while it's running.

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