Product Reviews

Government Computer News
Print, scan, copy—effectively

The Xerox WorkCentre C2424 stands above other multifunction devices

BY JOHN BREEDEN II | GCN STAFF

The Xerox WorkCentre C2424 is aptly named, because its many features and ease of use will likely make it the center of your work environment. It's an advanced multifunction device that combines a copier, scanner and printer in one well-integrated package. But unlike some other multifunction devices, the WorkCentre excels in everything it does.

PRINTERS

The WorkCentre is surprisingly small at only 24 inches tall and 21 inches wide, which makes setting it up particularly easy. You simply attach the bottom of the scanner to the printer base by

a little alcove on the side of the system. Since the plug only goes one way, it's a lot harder to connect than it probably should be, although this is a minor point.

Once the hardware is together, setting the system up on a network is also easy. Using the included software, the printer practically sets up itself. You can then install the software on client systems, which will automatically detect the printer and allow users to access it and its enhanced management functions. You can also use the printer in stand-alone mode by simply attaching the USB cable to the computer you want to use.

The compact WorkCentre C2424 performs like a champ and doesn't take up excessive office space.

> **Far from being cobbled together like multifunction devices of old, the WorkCentre C2424 is a seamless system in which each component complements and supports the others.**

sliding it across a track. Then you drop plastic support columns for the top of the scanner into two holes, which secures it.

In fact, the most difficult part of the setup is plugging it together. You have to attach two cables to tie the system together. The first, near the top of the unit, is easy to reach, but the second is very difficult. The cable gives you very little room to work with, and you have to twist the head and get it to plug into

Solid performance

The lab tested each component of the multifunction minitower, starting with the printer.

The printer, which makes up the base, is of the solid-ink variety that Xerox picked up when the company bought Tektronix. This is a great choice for a printing component, because the solid ink offers incredible color reproduction that almost no toner-based printer can

match. Considering most users are going to want perfect copies of whatever they scan, the solid ink works well.

Speed on demand

The printer is also very fast, depending on the software-based quality settings you choose. Thanks to single-pass print technology, it prints at the same speed in both color and black and white. The WorkCentre comes with 256M RAM, expandable to 1G, and a 500-MHz processor.

In our testing, the printer was able to

achieve 22 pages per minute when it was set to fast color mode. The WorkCentre is rated at 24 pages per minute, but our test document is very complex.

The printer can also be set to a standard, high resolution, which dropped our tested speed to 19 pages per minute but puts a lot more color on the page.

The printer also offers enhanced and photo modes. In photo mode the system slows to seven pages per minute, but the output is near-photographic quality. In fact, output quality is high in all modes, including fast color mode. And in standard mode, color printouts are as good as those from all but the most expensive toner printers.

We tested the printer with several different papers and found it was able to faithfully print everything from envelopes to business cards on card stock, which looked fantastic with the solid ink. The WorkCentre is rated to handle up to 215-grams-per-square-meter paper, which is anything up to the heavy cover-stock type.

As a scanner the WorkCentre does something very innovative. Remember back in the setup phase when we installed software on different clients? When you scan a document, the WorkCentre looks for those clients on the network and will let you send documents to them. So you can scan a document, select your workstation, a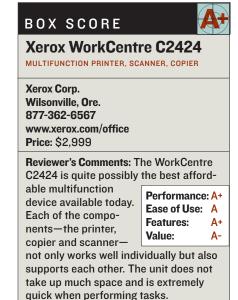nd have it ready to edit or use by the time you return to your desk. You can also send scanned files to any application with a TWAIN driver, which makes it compatible with most programs.

The system is also fast as a copier because it combines a quick scanner with a speedy printer. The maximum copy resolution is 600-by-600 dots per inch.

The WorkCentre C2424 comes standard with a 40G hard drive, which proves handy. Almost all other multifunction devices we've tested either did not have a hard drive or had to be upgraded with a hard drive add-on.

The hard drive opens up the WorkCentre to a lot of possibilities that more multifunction device vendors should explore. Say, for instance, someone is standing at the system using the scanner when a print job comes in over the network. The print job can go ahead and begin printing without stopping the person using the scan-to-desktop feature or having to wait until the local user is finished.

The hard drive also allows more documents to be stored locally and printed later. You can even assign a code to the document so nobody else can print it. The secure printing feature is very valuable for agencies that deal in sensitive information. Documents can be sent to the printer and then released for printing only when an authorized person with the right code is standing there watching.

What's yours is yours
You can also use this feature without a code to hold your documents till you arrive, thereby eliminating the chance that your papers will get mixed in with someone else's—a common problem on a shared device.

Far from being cobbled together like multifunction devices of old, the WorkCentre C2424 is a seamless system in which each component complements and supports the others. It would make a great addition to a shared work environment for producing high-quality output and keeping users from stepping on each others toes. ∎