

Digital Imaging Review

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OFFICE IMAGING PRODUCTS 1999/2000: BLI'S PICKS OF THE YEAR

During the testing period for the 1999/2000 awards, which included all of 1999 and continued through the spring of 2000, more than 22 million impressions were produced and more than 100 tested office imaging products were considered, most of which were digital copier/printers, fax-based multifunctional products, copier- or printer-based multifunctional products and facsimile machines. The remainder of the tested models were newly introduced analog devices. All units were subjected to BLI's rigorous in-house evaluations, which are designed to help compare such critical factors as reliability, misfeed frequency, copy and print quality, copy and print productivity and efficiency, ease of use, economy and computer connectivity issues, such as ease of configuration and administration on a network, utility and ease of use of print drivers, and multitasking.

While there were a number of products that received less

than recommended ratings from BLI this past year—more so than in any recent year—there were also many that performed well overall. Of this group, there were a number that stood out from the rest as clearly superior to their competition. Each year, with its "Pick of the Year" awards, BLI singles out for special recognition in each category the products that provided the most outstanding performances in the laboratory, as well as the vendor whose overall product line was demonstrated to be the best by virtue of its cumulative test results (of course, only units tested by BLI in its controlled environment are eligible to win awards). This year, for the first time in six years, we are also giving special recognition to a product that clearly stands out among all the others regardless of segment, as well as to an OEM version of the product that was also tested and turned in a similarly outstanding performance. The purpose of these awards is to better guide equipment buyers in their acquisition decisions and this issue of *Digital Imaging Review* is dedicated to highlighting the winners.

Muratec MFX-1500

Fax/Copier/Printer

Outstanding Fax-Based Multifunctional Product, 1999/2000

Muratec America, Inc.
6400 International Parkway
Plano, TX 75093
972-364-3300
www.muratec.com



The Muratec MFX-1500, in its standard configuration, effectively combines the capabilities of a fully featured mid- to high-volume fax with those of a low-volume platen-based 400-dpi digital copier in a \$2,995 (suggested retail price) unit. Strengths that led to this Energy Star-compliant system being awarded an "Outstanding Fax-Based Multifunctional Product, 1999/2000" BLI "Pick of the Year" award include excellent multitasking capabilities and a competitive per-page supply cost of 3.95¢ (based on BLI's tested yield for the toner cartridge and Muratec's suggested retail price for the toner and



Muratec MFX-1500

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drum cartridges). Based on a 12-ppm LED print engine, the Muratec MFX-1500 also supports optional 400-dpi Windows GDI printing. Tested as a three-in-one multifunctional device, the Muratec MFX-1500 proved to be a good overall performer, operating without malfunctioning throughout BLI's three-month 13,500-impression test, requiring no service calls and experiencing no misfeeds. In addition to demonstrating reliability, the Muratec MFX-1500 was easy to program and use, thanks to a well-designed, uncluttered control panel with dedicated keys that eliminate the need to scroll through menus.

In addition, numerous options offer an impressive upgrade path, specifically, expanded paper capacity, fax memory, a second telephone line, PC and LAN printing, PC and network faxing and scanning (with user-supplied Class 1 software) and, something not seen as an add-on, fax encryption. Maintenance, which involves replacement of toner and drum cartridges, was also judged to be good.

In contrast to comparably equipped multifunctional products tested in this class, which typically offer 150- or 250-sheet standard paper supplies, the Muratec MFX-1500 offers a 400-sheet letter- or legal-size paper drawer standard. A single-sheet bypass feeder supports copying and printing onto special media (e.g., transparencies). One or two optional 200-sheet drawers can be added, for a maximum on-line paper supply of 800 sheets, with paper replenishment via convenient front-loading paper drawers. Internal fax document memory can also be expanded, from the standard 2 MB to up to 10 MB in 2-MB increments. And whereas one-hour battery backup is not uncommon among multifunctional products tested, the memory in the MFX-1500 is protected by a 100-hour battery backup in the event that power to the unit is interrupted. To further boost productivity, the Muratec MFX-1500 can optionally be equipped with dual phone lines, the second of which utilizes a 33.6-Kbps modem.

The Muratec MFX-1500's standalone *fax* features include a 14.4-Kbps modem, 50-sheet automatic docu-

ment feeder, multi-access (Muratec calls this capability "QuadAccess"), MH/MR/MMR and proprietary compression schemes, confidential transmission/reception (up to 10 electronic mailboxes), department codes, polling (secure, database, continuous), ITU-T subaddress routing, BLI-tested scan-to-memory speed of 3.16 seconds per page and remote diagnostics. A unique fax feature is the Muratec MFX-1500's ability to scan an outgoing fax from both the ADF and the platen, and transmit the images in one, versus multiple, transmissions, for added time and money savings.

As a Segment 1 *copier*, the Muratec MFX-1500 provides digital scan-once/print-many operation, and the platen offers added flexibility, such as copying of non-standard size/weight documents. In addition, the platen cover is hinged so that larger originals (books or other bound documents) can be opened freely on the glass. Copying via the unit's 50-sheet (letter-size) ADF is also supported. The BLI-tested copy speed is 9 cpm, which is comparable to that of some standalone low-volume copiers. When making sets, copies are printed from memory one set at a time, in correct-page sequence. Reduction/enlargement settings range from 50% to 200% in 1% increments (presets include: 200%, 129%, 100%, 78%, 64%, 50%). Particularly noteworthy is that output quality, in both copy and print modes, was rated as "good" for text, line art and solids. The only exception was for halftones, which received a "fair" rating in print mode (halftones in copy mode received a rating of "good").

As a standalone Windows GDI *printer*, the Muratec MFX-1500 also performed well, producing output at a rate of 9.43 ppm at 400 dpi, using BLI's Test Original (with 6% page coverage).

Testing also revealed that the MFX-1500's multitasking capability as a combination fax/copier/printer exceeded that of most other multifunctional products tested. In fact, there were no multitasking limitations in these areas when performing concurrent operations. In addition, the unit has good procedures for transmitting from memory after a failed communication.

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