

RollDepot's

Guide to receipt printer selection

It is essential that you select the right type of receipt printer for your business as the incorrect choice could cost you money in the long run or even make you non compliant according to certain regulations. The article covers the types of printers available and the benefits of each type and how this relates to your business.

There are 3 main types of receipt printer

Thermal receipt printers

Thermal printers are now the most popular choice of receipt printer as they are often the most reliable and easy to use as they do not require any ink or ribbons. The technology relies upon chemically treated paper that is sensitive to heat. The printer heats the paper via holes in the print head to create text and graphics. Thermal printers are also regarded as the fastest type of receipt printer printing up to 250mm second making them very suitable to fast turnover environments such as supermarkets and high street retail.

Thermal receipts have one weakness due to their design as they fade very quickly in sunlight and can actually turn black if exposed to direct heat. This makes thermal printers unsuitable for institutions that require the receipt to last a certain time due to regulations such as banking and finance.

Dual colour can be obtained by some models at the higher end of the market with special paper but the results can be disappointing and the technology is rarely used at present.

Thermal receipt printers are generally recommended for high turnover/ general retail and hospitality front of house.

Impact receipt printers

This type of printer generally requires a ribbon which holds the ink like a typewriter and uses an impact mechanism that stamps the characters through the ribbon onto the paper. There are some models that can use paper that contain microcapsules of ink which burst upon impact and hence do not require ribbons but these are in small numbers and generally restricted to payment devices. Impact printers are easy identifiable as they are considerably noisier than other types of printer and are generally considerably slower than thermal printers. Impact printers are commonly the type that offers models with a two and three

ply paper or a second roll for audit purposes. In recent years and in most environments this type of printer has been superseded by thermal printers due to their speed and lack of a need for consumables other than paper.

In some markets however the impact printer still rules such as the banking and gaming industries. Impact printers also tend to be used in restaurant kitchens as thermal receipts are easily erased by heat. Some industries such as banking and gaming have regulations regarding certain types of receipts and about the length of time receipts are required to remain readable. Ink based receipts last considerably longer than thermal receipts and is therefore used by these industries as standard.

It is worth noting that ribbons come in different colours such as purple, black, red and dual red/black with the latter ribbon being used to highlight certain transactions types such as refunds in red.

Impact receipt printers are recommended for kitchens, banking, gaming, and low turnover retail and hospitality environments.

Inkjet receipt printers.

Inkjet printers are regarded as the successor to impact printers as they also use ink but they offer a superior printing quality. Most inkjet printers allow printing via ink cartridges in two colours with normally a mix of black, green, red and blue. Businesses spend a great deal of time and resources on brand recognition and using colour is a popular way of doing this. The technology can also be put to great use by printing colourful advertising or promotions on the receipt thus generating return visits from the customers.

In reality the take up of inkjet receipt printers has been minimal. This is thought to be due to a couple of reasons, firstly it is perceived that the changing of ink at the till point is tricky and time consuming and secondly the speed at which these printers operate is considered too slow for major retailers to adopt.

Inkjet receipt printers do however offer the same longer lasting receipts as impact printers making them suitable for most business types.

Inkjet receipt printers are recommended for low turnover retail, banks and gaming industry.

Manufacturers.

So what brand should I go for? This market is well serviced by numerous manufacturers with a wealth of choice and price range. As with many markets there is a huge influx of far eastern models at rock bottom prices. As with most things that you purchase, you get what you pay for and it is worth noting that with the major manufacturers you tend to get better products that last longer and receive better support if something goes wrong. Remember if your receipt printer stops working you will find it very difficult to trade. The general rule is

the higher turnover your business achieves the better the receipt printer you should invest in.

Anything else?

Remember that the receipt printer you choose has to work with the software and hardware that you are going to be using. Firstly check with the software supplier which brands and models the software supports. Also check that the printer you intend to buy has drivers for the operating system that you are going to be using. Lastly, ensure the printer has the right interface for the hardware that you are going to be using. These are usually serial (RS232), USB, parallel or Ethernet but rising up the ranks are wireless and Bluetooth.