

## Buyers' Guide to Printers



### Introduction to Printers

When it comes to business efficiency, choosing the right printers plays a pivotal role in perfecting your operations within warehouses, logistics, and IT departments. At Cobalt, with years of experience providing barcoding solutions to companies, and with specialists in providing a diverse array of equipment tailored to meet the unique requirements of businesses, we've created this guide to run you through the options available with both industrial and desktop options available.

## Understanding Industrial and Desktop Printers

If you're looking for a new printer, it's important to make the distinction between industrial and desktop printers to make sure that you're getting the right equipment for your needs. At Cobalt, we'll help you specify the right printer to make sure that you aren't over-specifying, but to give you an understanding, we've pulled together a simple introduction.

Industrial printers, engineered for high-volume and high-quality label and barcode printing, serve as robust workhorses in demanding environments.

When you need a printer that can handle a 24/7 operation and deliver labelling to a high standard every time, an industrial printer is what you're looking for.

On the other hand, desktop printers, characterised by their compactness and user-friendly operation, cater to businesses with lower to mid-volume printing needs. If you're looking to make the step up to a commercial-grade printer from a consumer bit of kit – especially if you run a smaller to mid-sized company, a desktop printer might be precisely what you're looking for.

## The Advantages of Desktop and Industrial Printers

Transitioning from to specialised barcode printers has proved to be a strategic move for businesses seeking efficiency gains, time and time again. We've worked with countless clients to deliver printer solutions over the years, and we've found that when done right, upgrading to a commercial-standard printer has delivered the results that our clients are looking for.

Key advantages include:

### 1. Efficient Printing:

Desktop and industrial printers optimise printing processes, significantly boosting overall efficiency. A commercial printer can be linked to your ERP system to automatically create barcodes that deliver the right labels when you need them.

Smaller businesses benefit from a seamless transition to more suitable business-grade options, reducing errors in the printing process.

### 2. Quality Labels:

Specialised printers, such as Zebra's ZT series, ensure the production of high-quality labels, crucial for accurate tracking and identification. Couple that with an appropriate barcode verification system, you can be sure that a bad label is never sent out again.

### 3. Ruggedness:

Warehouses and production environments are rarely places that are wrapped in cotton wool. Equipment needs to be tough and hard wearing. Industrial printers in particular are built to withstand knocks, bumps and harsher operating conditions.

### 4. Ease of Printing:

Desktop and industrial printers provide user-friendly interfaces, simplifying the printing process for increased ease of use. While the type of printer ordinarily found in an office or even at home might be more familiar and comfortable for your staff, with training delivered on Zebra printers, you'll find that a commercial option will speed up the whole process in no time.

## Meeting the Needs of Businesses

Smaller enterprises often encounter challenges when relying on printers that are not built for commercial or industrial settings. Issues such as limited print capacity, frequent print head replacements, and regular breakdowns necessitate a shift to more robust solutions. Desktop commercial printers or industrial printers emerge as the ideal options, offering durability and enhanced performance.

Connectivity is unlikely to pose much of a problem these days with printers offering a variety of connection types for Bluetooth, USB, ethernet and WiFi. However, not all printers have all connection types so do your homework and choose what works for you.

Size is another factor to consider. Industrial printers have a larger footprint than desktop printers so if space is a consideration, think about where your printer will be in your facility.

If you have multiple printers, then there are additional things to consider. Can your range of printers use the same type of labels/consumables? Minimising the stock you have to hold at any one time brings consistency and reduces costs.

If you do have multiple printers and they are spread out across your estate, how do you manage them? Zebra LinkOS-enabled printers can be connected to centralised management software, Visibility IQ to provide a comprehensive overview and help make decisions. For example, it might show that one printer is being used to print hundreds of labels per day in one part of your business while another only prints a few labels per week. With this information, you can prioritise maintenance tasks or even switch them around to ensure equal distribution of wear and tear to extend the life cycle of the machinery.



## Options for Businesses: Zebra ZD and ZT Series

### Zebra ZD Series (Desktop Printers):

- The ZD411, ZD421, ZD611, and ZD621 models cater to low to mid-volume printing needs. This range is ideal for smaller companies looking to make the step up to a commercial printer.
- Compact, user-friendly, and versatile thermal transfer and direct thermal options are available to suit every budget and price point.

### Zebra ZT Series (Industrial Printers):

- The ZT400, ZT510, ZT600, ZT231, ZT100 and 220Xi4 models address medium to high-volume industrial label printing requirements. For “always on” factories and companies that require the ability to print large amounts of high-quality labels.
- Built to endure the most challenging manufacturing environments, these industrial printers ensure superior print quality and speed.

## Real-Life Applications of Commercial Printers

### Desktop Printer in a Small Company:

- Scenario: Printing barcodes for products before shipping.
- Integration with an ERP system streamlines barcode generation, reducing errors and saving valuable time for staff.

### Upscaling Operations with an Industrial Printer:

- Scenario: Handling increased volume during business expansion.
- Industrial printers offer 24/7 printing capabilities, higher durability, and increased efficiency for scaling operations.



Selecting the right printer is a strategic decision that profoundly impacts the efficiency and effectiveness of business operations. Cobalt supplies the full range of Zebra printers, from desktop to industrial, provides tailored solutions to meet the diverse needs of businesses across various industries. We're here to help you make the right decision when it comes to choosing your next printing solution, and we can work with you to figure out what grade printer your business requires.

Get in touch for a consultation and find out how Cobalt can help you make the next step.