

The Primary Platform

Why dealers need to take A4 more seriously

by: Rachel Dean, Keypoint Intelligence

In the workplace print environment, A4 devices have long been a staple — from personal desktops to shared spaces and across distributed locations. Today, however, the A4 platform is no longer defined by entry-level performance or limited capability; it is a sophisticated high performer that is an increasingly strategic part of workplace print.

The North American workplace laser market experienced a challenging year in 2025, with placements declining 10.3% year over year (YOY). This reflects a mix of economic pressures including tariffs and a market that is still adjusting after COVID-19 pandemic-driven volatility.

Despite broader market fluctuations, A4 continues to dominate workplace print. While single-function printers serve the home and decentralized workers, A4 MFPs account for many placements across laser and inkjet. In business inkjet, A4 MFPs represent as much as 95% of deployments, reinforcing their role as the default format.

Even within laser, A4 devices anchor volume across all major speed segments. Whether in entry-level environments or mid-sized workgroups, A4 remains the primary platform.

The Changes You Should Be Talking About

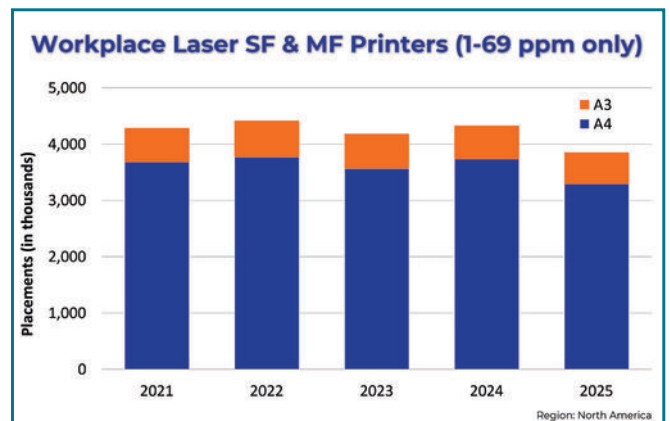
A4's importance has not changed, but what is expected of it has — and very much so. It is no longer a peripheral or entry-level device. It has become a core platform that now carries a significant share of the workload that once defaulted to A3. That shift has been driven by a combination of factors.

Distributed Environments

We have seen a broad shift in how workplaces operate. The reliance on centralized A3 changed as organizations adopted hybrid work models and distributed operations across multiple locations. Demand is shifting toward devices that can deliver performance closer to the user, and A4 devices are well positioned to step in with their smaller footprints, lower total cost of ownership (TCO) and ease of deployment.

Improved Performance & Changing Roles

One of the defining trends in the A4 market is the steady



shift toward higher performance, which we are seeing more of during in-house product testing here at Keypoint Intelligence. Entry-level print is no longer anchored in the 11-20 page-per-minute (ppm) range. Thirty-plus ppm is becoming the new baseline as lower speed segments continue to decline and midrange devices with higher duty cycles take on more workload.

This reflects a broader shift in usage. A4 devices are no longer primarily personal printers, but shared resources supporting small teams, hybrid workers and distributed offices. As a result, speed, durability and workflow capability are viewed as more critical than entry-level prices. As A4's role expands, expectations around reliability have also increased, with enhanced durability and remote monitoring helping to minimize downtime.

Increased Capabilities

Historically, A3 has offered centralized production capabilities through advanced finishing, better quality output and higher durability. That distinction is blurring as A4 ups its game and keeps incorporating features once exclusive to the A3 world: faster print speeds, enhanced scanning, stronger security and, at times, stapling and hole-punching.

This evolution does not mean A4 is replacing A3, but it does translate as a good alternative for a growing number of

use cases that previously required larger, more expensive systems.

Practically Speaking

Most workplace print jobs are still produced on standard A4 media. As A4 device capabilities improve, this creates a natural opportunity to rethink where A3 is truly required:

- Workflows that do not require larger paper sizes
- A4 performance is sufficient for small and mid-sized workgroups
- Finishing needs are often partially met by modern A4 devices

Advanced Scan Capabilities Supporting Digital Workflows

Scanning has become one of the most critical and most improved areas of A4 capability. Modern A4 MFPs offer high-speed scanning, often reaching from 40 up to 100-plus images per minute (ipm). Users can route documents directly to email, cloud platforms or business systems, reducing reliance on separate tools and enabling more efficient information flow. Scan quality has also improved, with better resolution and image processing delivering clearer, more accurate results. File flexibility is equally important, and there are an increasing number of A4 products offering support for scanning to searchable PDFs, editable formats like Word and Excel, and compressed or encrypted files for easier sharing and security.

Will A4 Ever Replace A3 Completely?

The short answer: No. A3 devices continue to play a critical role in environments where scale, advanced finishing and media flexibility are essential. Their advantage is not just

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finishing, it is also format. For example, professionally presented A4 booklets are produced from A3 media, something A4 devices cannot replicate. More complex capabilities such as z-folding and other multistep finishing, along with higher-volume output, remain firmly within A3's domain. Larger-format documents are also required for applications like spreadsheets, drawings and design work. That is why A3 continues to hold its place in envi-

ronments such as marketing, education and technical fields, where format and presentation are integral to workflows.

But here is where A4 could start to make a difference: As devices continue to evolve, further improvements from manufacturers in media flexibility and volume handling could truly shift the rules of the game. It will not eliminate A3, but the potential to shift more use cases into the A4 category will become a reality. For dealerships, it will open the door to new clients, more scalable opportunities and faster sales cycles. ■

Rachel Dean is a technical editor for the workplace team at Keypoint Intelligence specializing in A3 and A4 printers, MFPs and office hardware performance. She delivers research and independent testing analysis that helps manufacturers, dealers and buyers understand shifts in market dynamics, as well as real-world device performance. With more than 25 years in the document imaging industry, Dean brings hands-on experience from roles at Sharp and KYOCERA, offering practical insight into printer technology and the evolving office hardware market.

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