

Sharp earns outstanding achievement award from BLI

Independent testing by Buyers Laboratory, Inc. recognises the latest innovations in Sharp's newest colour MFPs

Hamburg, February 2009. Sharp has won another award from respected independent office-equipment testing lab Buyers Laboratory, Inc, (BLI) for the innovative design of its new multifunction printers (MFPs), including the high performance MX-2600N and MX-3100N models. The 'Outstanding Achievement Award' award adds to a large collection of accolades from BLI that Sharp has gained over a number of years.

"Sharp is extremely proud to be recognised by BLI for our innovations in both design and functionality," said Keiichi Katsuta, President of the Division Sharp Information Systems Europe, commenting on this latest award.

In addition to the time-tested standard features that BLI has previously praised, such as exceptional scanning functionality and Sharpdesk™, Sharp's intuitive document management software, the lab cited a number of new design initiatives as important in making its final decision. One of these is the industry's first retractable integrated QWERTY keyboard.

"Sharp's QWERTY keyboard is the next step in its MFP evolution to provide users with all the functionality they need from the control panel of its MFPs," said BLI Assignments Editor George Mikolay.

Other makes of MFP can sometimes be equipped with an optional plug in keyboard but, according to BLI, this approach is unsatisfactory because of the need for an adjacent work surface. It is also an improvement on the use of touch-screen keyboards.

"As the scanning capabilities of MFPs are utilised more and more, the entering of e-mail addresses and longer, more secure passwords is made much simpler with this keyboard compared to the touch-screen keypads typically found on competitive MFPs," explained BLI Manager of Laboratory Testing, Pete Emory.

"Because it makes it easier for users to enter index data, the QWERTY keyboard also helps to make these Sharp devices more functional with integrated software applications, while also making documents easier to retrieve later," he added.

The integrated software applications are possible thanks to Sharp's Open Systems Architecture (Sharp OSA®) which allows third-party software providers to create applications that add extra functionality and automate routine office tasks, such as scanning documents directly to an existing workflow: a purchase invoice to an accounts package, for example.

Researchers at Buyers Lab were also impressed by the contemporary looks of the new machines (they both have an attractive, grained exterior and rounded edges, that's in keeping with modern office environments) and the Remote Front Panel Utility.

The Remote Front Panel Utility makes life easier for administrators by letting them remotely view and control the MFP's control panel, direct from any networked PC, just as if they were standing at the machine in person.

Keiichi Katsuta pointed to Sharp's focus on customer satisfaction as a key driver in the new design. "Sharp remains committed to providing customers with enhanced functionality that enables them to increase their productivity, and this award for innovation is a testament to our commitment," he said. "Advancements such as the retractable keyboard, remote front panel and the aesthetic design are a result of the direct feedback from our customers on how we can provide them with the best possible user experience."

About Buyers Laboratory

BLI gives awards to products that demonstrate superior performance in their respective categories. Each product is subjected to rigorous tests in a number of critical performance areas, including reliability, copy and print image quality, copy and print productivity and efficiency, ease of use and economy.

Since 1961, Buyers Lab has been the leading independent office-equipment testing lab and business consumer advocate. In addition to publishing the industry's most comprehensive and accurate test reports on office document imaging devices, each representing months of exhaustive hands-on testing in BLI's US and UK laboratories, the company has been the leading source for extensive databases of specifications and pricing on copiers, printers, fax machines and multifunctional products. The company's databases cover over 10,000 products and have a long-standing reputation for being the industry's most trustworthy and complete source for global competitive intelligence.