

With Customers

Developing Products with "Customers First" in Mind

A Framework for Quickly and Comprehensively Reflecting Customer Feedback in Our Products

Conducting various surveys to identify potential needs and embodying them in products

All of the Brother Group's business activities are driven by feedback from customers. Opinions and requests are solicited at various times and compiled into a database.

In the planning phase for a new product in particular, those in charge of planning and development visit customers, organize group interviews, and conduct web-based surveys. These extensive, in-depth surveys are designed to identify the environments in which products are used and to analyze impressions and requests so that potential needs -- which even customers are not aware of -- are identified and reflected when developing the next models.

This process helps to ensure that the functions, sizes, designs, and prices of products perfectly match customers' needs. This is all part of the Brother Group's commitment to providing customers with new values and satisfaction.



Framework for reflecting customer feedback in product development

How Brother Developed the MFC-J6710DW, an A3 Color Inkjet Multi-Function Center

The concept of next-generation models emerged from feedback from global customers

In 2008, Brother released the MFC-6490CN, the world's smallest A3-capable color inkjet multi-function center*. We had little information about how this newly developed product was being used by customers, so to get their feedback we conducted interviews by visiting them as well as questionnaire surveys worldwide. The surveys revealed that customers have different needs in different regions. For example, customers in Japan highly valued the compactness (significantly smaller than conventional A3 copiers) and reasonable price, while customers in the U.S. liked the unique A3 printing/scanning features but wanted better basic performance such as speed, image quality, and reliability.

*: Comparison in size in the category of A3 color multi-function centers (as of March 2008); based on our survey.



MFC-J6710DW, a new product



Gathering and analyzing feedback from purchasers of A3 color multi-function centers

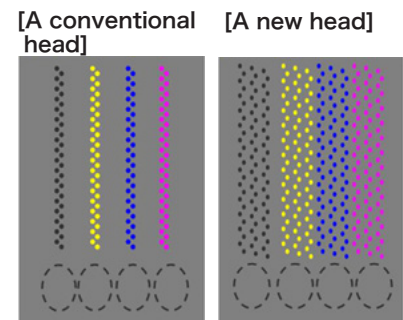
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Creating a compact A3 color inkjet multi-function center that meets business users' needs

Through this process, a vision for the next model started to emerge. A project was begun to reflect feedback from customers and create a compact A3 color multi-function center that is easy to use in small offices (including SOHOs) with significantly improved performance as a business machine, such as printing speed and ink capacity, while keeping the size and price unchanged.

However, the technical hurdles to be overcome were highly challenging. For example, to speed up printing, it is necessary to increase the number of ink jet nozzles and cover a large space in a single printing process. This requires a large printing head, which cannot fit in a body of a specified size. Meanwhile, ink droplets need to be controlled in picoliters (one trillionth of a liter) to ensure vivid images and sharp characters at higher speeds. Under the slogan of "never give up," the project team steadily overcame the challenges one by one through numerous simulations, experiments, and prototypes.



A new head mechanism with double the resolution and number of nozzles, to increase the printing speed and ensure image quality

More than double the printing speed of previous models, with excellent performance in automatic double-sided printing & scanning

From 2010 to 2011, we launched new A3 color inkjet multi-function centers with a high-speed printing engine for the business market.

The printing speed is more than double, and yet the body is almost the same size as that of the previous models. To reduce the running costs, the ink capacity is also significantly increased (about 2.5 and 1.6 times for black and color, respectively) compared with Brother's previous models. The stronger upper and lower paper trays can accommodate a total of 500 sheets of paper. The new models feature a number of useful functions for business users in terms of efficiency and economy in large-volume printing, such as automatic double-sided scanning (MFC-J6910DW) and automatic double-sided printing. Eco-friendly performance is also enhanced, with the CO₂ emissions in use (five-year power consumption) 12% lower than those of the 2008 models.

The Brother Group will continue to carefully listen to feedback from customers to enable us to manufacture products that make customers say, "This is exactly the A3 color multi-function center I wanted!"



Delivering high productivity with significantly increased black/color ink capacity and a large-capacity paper tray

*: The numerical values for ink capacity and power consumption are based on comparisons with previous models in Japan.