

# The Whole Story Behind Keypoint Intelligence DTF Testing & Awards

Keypoint Intelligence launched a new direct-to-film (DTF) test program in 2023. The service is proving to be a great hit with some of the biggest names in this fast-evolving space, keen to seize the unique opportunity to showcase their product performance and be seen as open to independent scrutiny.

While some buyers of DTF equipment may be seeing the Keypoint Intelligence (and/or Buyers Lab) brand for the first time, the same is not true for the major blue-chip vendors in the market, many of which have worked with Keypoint Intelligence for many years. (Just search “BLI Pick Awards” to see how vendors love to boast about winning our awards.)

For over 60 years, Keypoint Intelligence has built a globally respected reputation by delivering independent, trusted testing programs across a range of digital imaging equipment categories. These include everything from desktop office printers to production presses and wide format signage equipment.

THE  
**Formula**

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Keypoint Intelligence test programs are designed using a straightforward and methodical approach

**A**

**Analyze** if a market has a need for an independent benchmark testing program

**DTF – An emphatic yes**

**S**

**Speak** with buyers, resellers, and vendors to establish the most valuable testing criteria

**DTF – Speed, image quality, ink consumption, and washability**

**S**

**Set up** testing protocols to cover these criteria

**DTF – Completed after months of development and trial runs**

**E**

**Establish** partnerships with leading substrate/media partners to ensure every product is placed on a level playing field

**DTF – Secured Next Level as our global partner for all t-shirt supplies**

**S**

**Set up** test visits with vendors, typically at no cost, or at most, asking for out-of-pocket expenses to be covered

**DTF – Brother, Mimaki, Polyprint, Ricoh, Roland, STS, and more brands already tested or booked for tests**

**S**

**Subscribers** can access comprehensive, user-friendly test reports

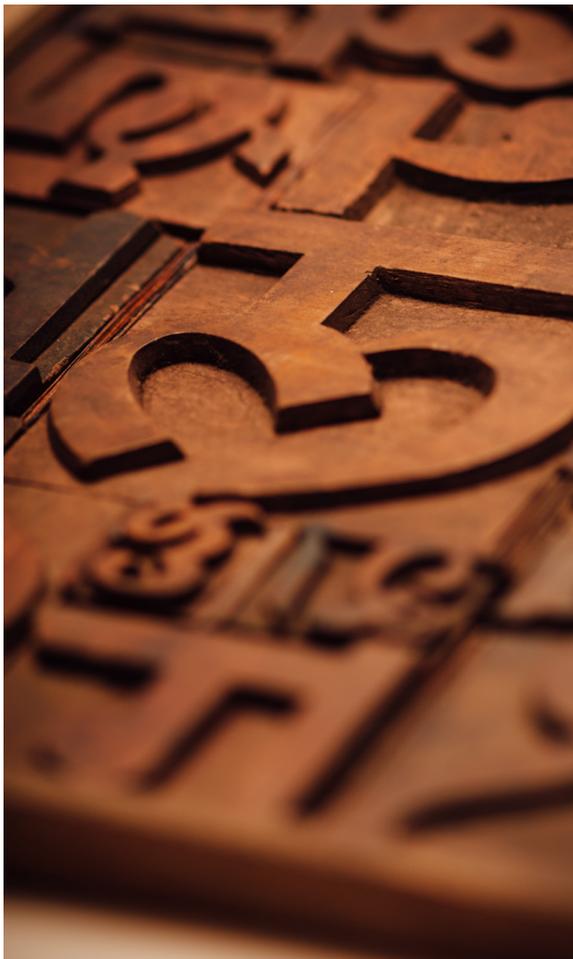
**DTF - First batch of test reports due to be published on our site in Q1 2024**

# THE Setup

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## Pre-Planning Is Essential

Tests are conducted at the manufacturer's facility over a two-day period. Vendors are provided with the test files and sample t-shirts (Next Level 3600 white and black 100% cotton) so they can establish optimal performance conditions.



## Consistency in Print Settings Demanded

Tests are conducted in both production and highest quality modes to demonstrate a device's performance in a typical day-to-day operation mode—and when at its absolute best. The vendor selects the settings for these two modes. Importantly, the same settings are consistently applied (when assessing the mode) across all four key criteria (productivity, image quality, ink consumption, and washability). Too often we see messaging around productivity, image quality, and cost of print (ink use) that is impressive individually, but you know it is not based on the device printing in the same mode. This inconsistency can leave readers to guess the true relationship between mode and performance soundbite.

# THE Testing

## Speed

For single sheet devices, we use a 320 x 350 mm vector graphic. Timings are taken from when the printhead starts to print on the film to when the printhead finishes printing. For roll-to-roll devices, we use a 540 x 450 mm target image with the printhead set to travel the entire width of the film.

## Image Quality

Evaluation covers many areas of IQ including gamut size, spot color matching, fine line and font detail, and halftone/vector graphic reproduction. Color gamut and spot color matching are measured using XRite spectrophotometers and profiling analysis software. Fine lines and fonts are assessed using a magnification loop. Halftones and vector graphics are judged by two lab analysts in D50 light conditions, at a viewing distance of two feet.

## Ink Consumption

We use a standard 320 x 350 mm graphic. Ink consumption data from the RIP is recorded when printing in both speed settings in white and black t-shirt mode. We also test waste ink consumption when conducting printhead maintenance routines.



Measuring gamut size



Washer/Dryers in EU lab



Ink Consumption target

## Washability

Wash tests are conducted using household washing machines and heat pump tumble dryers operating at 30°C and 800rpm, with the heat pump tumble dryer set to hang dry sensor setting. Color gamut shrinkage, color drift, font break up, and halftone degradation are assessed over 20 washes using both single-press and two-press (using silicone sheet) preparation.

## OUR

# Reports

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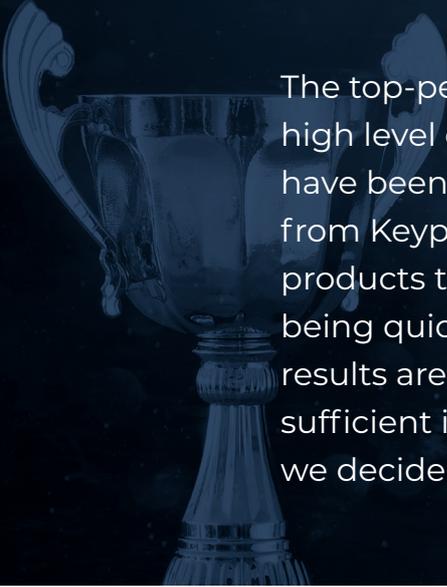
Each device tested receives a detailed 12-page report, which contains all the data gathered over the course of testing. [Reports are published on our site](#) for our global subscriber base to read. Since this is the first year of testing, the reports currently do not include overall competitive scores for each criteria area. Instead, they focus on the actual device performance as a standalone product. Over time, as the volume of tested devices increases, this will change. Future reports will be updated to reflect how well each device performs against its competitive group.

Although the reports do not assign scores to each device, we have meticulously examined the performance of all the devices tested to date. We have analyzed the spread of results, from the best to the worst, for each area.

OUR

# Awards

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The top-performing devices, which deliver a consistently high level of performance across our challenging test criteria, have been honored with a Buyers Lab (BLI) Pick Award from Keypoint Intelligence. This award type is reserved for products that excel across the entire range of our tests—being quick is not good enough on its own if the wash results are poor, just as outstanding wash results will not be sufficient if the quality of output is substandard. That is how we decide on our Pick award winning devices.

[Want to learn more about our DTF Testing & Awards Program?](#)

## About Keypoint Intelligence

For over 60 years, clients in the digital imaging industry have relied on [Keypoint Intelligence](#) for independent hands-on testing, lab data, and extensive market research to drive their product and sales success. Keypoint Intelligence has been recognized as the industry's most trusted resource for unbiased information, analysis, and awards due to decades of analyst experience. Customers have harnessed this mission-critical knowledge for strategic decision-making, daily sales enablement, and operational excellence to improve business goals and increase bottom lines. With a central focus on clients, Keypoint Intelligence continues to evolve as the industry changes by expanding offerings and updating methods, while intimately understanding and serving manufacturers', channels', and their customers' transformation in the digital printing and imaging sector.