

A little rebellion can be a good thing

By Bruce A. Love

This week, I committed what once might have been considered an act of rebellion against the establishment. So formidable were the warnings against performing this deed, that although I had considered doing it numerous times, my fear of the consequences, if caught, forced me to reconsider these thoughts of nonconformity. I probably would have been satisfied doing things the way I have always done them had it not been for encouragement from my wife to do otherwise. And so, just as Eve persuaded Adam to taste the forbidden fruit, my wife persuaded me to refill a depleted printer cartridge rather than buy a new one.

Forgive my melodramatic introduction. I finished reading "Nineteen Eighty-Four" this week, and the shadow of "Big Brother" is still hanging over me. In the past, refilling printer cartridges voided printer warranties, and the practice was denounced by all of the major printer manufacturers. Today, probably after lawsuits challenged the strong language used by the manufacturers, my current printer manual specifically states that the use of refills will not affect the warranty, but that any damage caused to the printer, attributable to use of refills, will be billed standard time and material charges if servicing becomes necessary. This softening of warranty language, combined with personal testimonials from close friends, was enough to encourage me to give it a try.

The refill kit contains everything you can possibly require to perform the task at hand. It even contains plastic gloves to keep your hands from getting stained. Since cartridges vary by make and model, the universal refill kit contains some accessories that you will not use. The most critical items for my operation were syringes, ink bottles, and a jig to hold the cartridge.

After inserting the cartridge into the jig, I used one of the 4 syringes (WITHOUT the needle) to extract the residual ink from the depleted

cartridge. Next, I attached a long metal needle to the syringe, extracted the appropriate amount of black ink from a bottle contained in the kit, REMOVED the needle, and slowly forced the new ink back through the print head and into my cartridge. Mission Completed!

A day later, when my color cartridge showed signs of running dry, I prepped for surgery. Surprisingly, the process of refilling cartridges differed significantly between black and color. Refilling the color cartridge did not require the jig, but did require the use of a screw tool (provided) to punch through existing plugs at the top of my cartridge for each of the three primary colors. Next, with skill equal to that of a seasoned phlebotomist, I injected the prescribed amount of appropriately colored ink into each of the 3 reservoirs. Once again, success!

The kit costs about \$20 dollars at Sam's Club. It contains enough ink to refill about 7 black cartridges and 5 - 8 tricolor cartridges. To put this in perspective, a new black or color cartridge for my HP Deskjet typically runs about \$30. The \$20 kit saves me from purchasing cartridges that would cost a total of \$360 - \$450!

After my apparent success refilling printer cartridges, I decided to see what others were saying about their experiences with refill kits. Most comments on the Internet indicated that purchasing one cartridge, and refilling it 2 - 3 times usually produces acceptable printing results. More refills than that, will probably produce noticeable degradation. If you frequently use your printer to print photographs, or other color graphic images, you may want to refill less frequently to maintain optimal results.

Thomas Jefferson once said, "A little rebellion now and then is a good thing." This is especially true if such rebellions can save a few Franklins!

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