

WHITE PAPER

# How Quality Paper Impacts the Bottom Line



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## ***How Quality Paper Impacts the Bottom Line***

With a dozen major office paper brands and countless private labels making similar product performance claims, sourcing copy and printer paper for your workplace can typically boil down to one important factor – price. As with all sourcing decisions, getting a good price on paper is an important element to maximizing your total budget and provide value to your bottom line. But just like evaluating new technology options or purchasing equipment, price is just one component of the total cost of purchasing and consuming paper. Other factors that impact cost include performance, consistency, appearance, and manufacturer support.

These other factors are important because variations in quality and performance, while not easily seen by the naked eye, have a real and measurable impact on workplace output and employee productivity. These differences – not reflected in the upfront price of most office paper – become the “hidden” costs of purchasing inferior paper. It’s wise to think of the total cost of your decision and consider the long-term *value* the right paper will bring to your workplace.

In the following report, Boise Paper, the leading manufacturer of America’s top selling copy paper, outlines the efficiencies that selecting quality paper will bring to the workplace, the features and characteristics to consider when sourcing copy and printer paper, and how to source strategically to minimize cost while maximizing productivity and quality of output.

### **The Value of Efficiency**

No matter the workspace and output volume, paper jams are hugely disruptive to productivity. No one wants to start the day with a jammed printer or calls from disgruntled employees. While some are quick to blame faulty equipment, paper quality issues like curling and dusting or less-than-ideal temperature and humidity conditions can interfere with a printer’s operation.

And these instances are more than an annoyance. Paper jams are costing your company in a multitude of ways:

**Lost Employee Time and Productivity** – Each time an employee has to stop and resolve a printer jam, the result is time not spent on the actual job. Over time, these wasted minutes add up. The impact can be exacerbated by more complex jams requiring a “resident expert” or even a technical services call from your equipment repair provider.

**Equipment Overuse** – Instead of fixing the problem, employees experiencing an abundance of jams may direct their print jobs to other equipment rather than their main, assigned printer. Now, instead of having a balanced number of print jobs, that piece of equipment (whether it’s supplementary or belonging to another department) is being over-utilized, which could lead to quicker mechanical burnout, as well as a greater need for additional ink and toner.

**Equipment Failure** – Frequent paper jams may also cause significant wear and tear on equipment. The jam itself affects the mechanical operations of the printer, and the simple act of pulling out jammed paper can stress delicate parts like rollers and tractors. The cumulative effect from multiple jams can shorten the life of one of your most costly pieces of equipment.



With this information in mind, it's no surprise "jam-free" guarantees are among the most important to procurement professionals. Sourcing paper with a legitimate, tested, jam-free guarantee can have a significant impact on your company's business – as well as your own time. With proportionately fewer employee complaints, supplier back-and-forth, and service calls, you'll be able to focus on other pressing needs without having to revisit issues with the quality of your paper purchases.

And while many companies may make these claims, it's important to understand how the company supports them. A credible jam-free claim is back by documented verification of both internal tests for quality as well as additional independent testing by qualified third parties.

## The Value of Selection

Ensuring employees have the right paper for their various tasks is another way to uncover value in your paper sourcing.

If you aren't already, you should be conducting a bi-annual (more frequently for fast-growing or hyper-diversified companies) assessment of your company's paper usage. Within each work environment, you'll find an ideal ratio of paper classifications that meet each work group's unique needs. For instance, how often are employees printing internal documents versus external documents, like presentations or proposals? Documents intended for external use typically have more color and ink coverage, which requires a premium paper. However, if you're not stocked up on everyday copy paper, employees could be using a higher grade (aka -more expensive) than they need for internal prints. Gaining perspective on your company's paper usage can help you determine potential efficiencies and reduce cost or waste.

Once you know your company's ideal ratio of premium and everyday paper, the next step is developing evaluation standards for sourcing. Along with determining which claims are important and which aren't, you'll want to understand paper specifications like brightness, thickness, and shade.

**A Bit on Brightness** – The brighter the paper, the greater the contrast between the printed image and the paper. Basically, paper with a higher brightness makes colors more vibrant and appealing – giving graphics and images the appearance of "popping" off the page. Most North American office papers are between 92 and 98 on the GE brightness scale, and depending on the output, it's beneficial to source a range of papers with different brightness for your workplace. For instance, work environments that print colorful presentations or documents with color graphics – particularly for outside clients – are better served by paper that rates high on the brightness scale. On the other hand, higher brightness is not as important when printing for internal, everyday use, so 92 brightness is adequate.

**Determining Durability** – Both the caliper (thickness) and weight of a sheet contribute to the overall durability of the paper. While the caliper to weight ratio can vary among similar paper types, a general rule of thumb is: as weight and caliper increase, so does the durability, stiffness, and opacity of your printed material. On the lighter side, you'll find 20 lb paper – where opacity and stiffness are less important – is ideal for internal documents like drafts and memos. Heavier weights are almost

*One important way to cut through the noise is to look for claims backed by independent third-parties, like Buyer's Laboratory, Inc. (BLI), a division of Keypoint Intelligence.*

*As part of their work, they test and rate the performance of printers, scanners, and copiers from major industry brands, including Xerox, Ricoh, HP, Canon, Brother, Konica Minolta, Kyocera and Toshiba.*

*In order to perform these tests, BLI contracts with paper manufacturers to supply millions of sheets of paper each year. The paper is graded against strict standards for misfeeding, image quality, dusting, and curling, and manufacturers use those grades to support their performance claims.*

*In 2019, BLI tested 796,000 sheets of Boise® X-9® Multi-Use Copy paper through 28 different machines from 9 different manufacturers. The results were used to validate Boise Paper's 99.99% Jam-Free® Guarantee on X-9, the top-selling brand of office paper in the U.S.*

always preferred for workplaces producing external documents like brochures, proposals, and marketing materials. However, you may find employees who frequently print two-sided prefer a heavier paper, even for everyday use. In fact, double-sided printing can reduce overall paper use, thus increasing efficiency and reducing overall cost.

**Don't Shrug Off Shade** – Interestingly, two papers with the same brightness can vary widely in appearance due to another important feature – shade. All white office papers fall into one of three categories based on their primary tint. Paper with more blue looks brighter and whiter to the human eye, while paper with more yellow leaves a softer, creamier impression. The balanced white, with neither more blue nor yellow, presents a more neutral look. These differences don't affect the brightness numbers, but shade can affect the appearance of your final product. Depending on expectations and personal preference, a bluer shade instead of a brighter sheet might be a better fit for your job and vice versa.

Finally, print testing is a must when it comes to paper selection. All reputable suppliers are happy to ship paper samples in the quantities you need to conduct your internal tests. Compare your finalists side by side – both printed and unprinted samples – and solicit feedback from employees. Sometimes what looks like it meets your needs might not be the best option once you run it through your equipment.

## The Value of Consistency



Quality branded paper provides another benefit over cheaper white box or private labels – consistency. Sheet-to-sheet and project-to-project, your company wants their output to look consistent. Variations to the published paper specifications may seem insignificant, but can have a negative impact when printing multi-page presentations, documents, and manuals. Avoiding the waste and inefficiency of “bad batch” reprints can have a noticeable impact on your budget.

One way to limit the risk of variation is to purchase a mill branded paper produced by a single manufacturer that controls 100% of its operations. Mill branded papers are most frequently made on the same machines run-to-run, and are held to higher production standards. Generic white box paper, and some private labels, can be made with

varying material inputs, on an assortment of machines in different locations, and sometimes by different manufacturers' altogether.

## The Value of Support

Once the ink dries on your contracts, you don't want any surprises, so carefully selecting vendors you trust is a top priority. You expect them to have a reliable delivery network and responsive customer service, but not necessarily a paper expert. Make sure they are working with an experienced paper manufacturer – preferably in the USA – who can provide an elevated level of service and support.

Not surprisingly, domestic manufacturers are more responsive and accessible when issues arise. They frequently employ technical experts with years of experience, who can quickly diagnose and solve

problems to get your operation back up and running. They also offer programs and solutions to educate your workforce and ensure your company gets the best results from their products.

## Summary

Paper is one of the most utilized pieces of equipment in today's workplaces, and likely a large percentage of your office products budget. While price is often the driving factor when making sourcing decisions, it's important to weigh other factors to ensure you get the most value.

- Look for credible, verifiable performance claims to ensure efficiency.
- Source the right mix of paper by:
  1. Conducting a regular assessment of paper usage and needs
  2. Maintaining specification evaluation standards based on your assessed needs
  3. Sample testing before you switch or add paper types to your mix
- Choose quality mill brands, preferably made in the USA, to achieve the highest levels of product consistency and responsive support.