

Understanding the Value of Genuine Printer Supplies



Before purchasing supplies, buyers would do well to remember the words of Warren Buffett, a man who knows a little about buying smartly: “price is what you pay. Value is what you get.” The point is simple: it’s not the initial purchase price that ultimately matters, but rather the value delivered by the purchase. This is particularly true when it comes to printer supplies.

Genuine printer supplies are designed by OEM engineers and qualified with the printer itself as part of the research and product development process. They are developed to precise specifications, so that they perform with the printer at a consistently high level, time and time again.

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Only genuine supplies:

- Are engineered in conjunction with the printer for superior quality, performance, and reliability.
- Fully protect your hardware investment.
- Keep warranties beyond reproach.
- Benefit from an OEM’s years of operational experience in the market, and with specific applications.
- Mitigate risk of downtime due to printer failure.

Genuine supplies typically bear the imprint or endorsement of the OEM clearly on the packaging. Consulting the OEM or a recognized OEM channel partner is a sure way of verifying whether the supply you have in hand is genuine.



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right by our customers.

Beware the Alternatives ■ ■ ■

Aftermarket supplies are part of a legitimate industry that competes with genuine OEM suppliers. They are often marketed as “compatible,” but are never endorsed by the OEM. “Aftermarket products cause build-up on original equipment,” says Ann Iten, senior product manager for printing supplies at Datamax-O’Neil. “For example, aftermarket thermotransfer ribbons will build up ink onto the printheads of thermal printers, and cut short the life of the printhead. So you’re saved a few pennies up front on the supply and ended up purchasing hardware parts as a result.”

More insidious and rapidly growing “alternatives” are counterfeit supplies: those designed to appear as if they were genuine, but are not. They are trying to trade off the brand equity of the OEM, illegally, and in doing so undermine the brand they are trying to leverage. Counterfeit supplies may result in poor printer performance, low yields, inferior print quality, high failure rates, greater energy consumption, and increased equipment downtime.



Application Expertise ■ ■ ■

One area where genuine supplies have a towering advantage over aftermarket alternatives is in supplies designed for specific applications, where OEM experience and research capabilities are key components in safe and effective product development. Specific applications show this clearly, including:

- Asset tracking
- Direct store delivery
- Electronic components
- Healthcare
- Postage
- Transportation and logistics

In asset tracking, printer labels cannot be removed without leaving clear evidence of tampering; they can never be transferred from one product to another. Among the characteristics that should be built in: waterproofing, tear-resistance, grease-resistance, and imperviousness to temperature fluctuation.

In direct store delivery, mobile printer users may encounter a wide range of environments. Suppliers should provide a variety of paper grades, from standard and premium through specialized ones for high temperature or all weather environments, so users can choose the appropriate grades for their routes. Genuine suppliers have developed a range of papers based on experience, research, and environmental test and typically do not approach the market with a “one size fits all” strategy that can be seen in some aftermarket providers.

Printer supplies for electronic component application often need to withstand harsh manufacturing processes at the outset, then continue to perform flawlessly over the life of the products. Genuine suppliers have done extensive research to support this market, developing polyimides, polyesters, self-laminating films, and anti-static materials.

Healthcare applications support barcode technology to ensure privacy, reduce errors, and improve patient safety for hospitals, clinics, labs, and pharmacies. Many of these supplies are developed to meet HIPAA requirements under strict regulatory oversight from the FDA.

In postage applications, genuine thermal labels enable users to print shipping labels and postage that meet or exceed the standards established by the international postal, parcel, and mailing industry. Providing a quick and cost-effective way to print postage compatible with

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Priority Mail, Express Mail, FedEx, UPS, and other systems used around the world, these labels should also be suitable for use in redirecting of mail, registered post, mail sorting, postal order, and sorting bin applications.

Supply chain efficiencies from end-to-end are enhanced by the correct combination of label and ribbon products. Designed specifically for use in the sometimes-punishing transportation and logistics environments, certified genuine supplies can provide enhanced efficiency, increased visibility of the flow of goods and shipments, and enable superior handling and inventory management processes.

“What distinguishes genuine supplies in these and other application-specific usage is the research and engineering done up front by the OEM,” explains Iten. “Take, for example, freezer grade adhesives. These are thicker label adhesives, and you can be certain the printer manufacturer has certified the adhesive for performance. Aftermarkets, knockoffs, and counterfeits often cause a rubbery build up in these applications, because they have been manufactured without benefit of the experience or science invested by the original manufacturer. Thus the disparity between genuine supplies and the others.”



Know What You Do ■ ■ ■

We began this paper with a quote by Warren Buffett; it seems appropriate to close with another: “risk comes from not knowing what you’re doing.” Because their manufacturers know what they do in a deeper and more comprehensive way than their competitors, genuine supplies mitigate risk while aftermarket and counterfeit supplies encourage it. A printer manufacturer like Datamax-O’Neil has literally had millions of linear inches of supplies tested and qualified by engineers before any go to market. Can off-brand or aftermarket suppliers say the same?

In summary, there are a number of benefits in choosing genuine supplies over competitive products:

- Lower total cost of ownership
- Better asset protection
- Higher productivity, less downtime
- Consistent print quality

Know what you do when you purchase supplies and you’ll purchase genuine supplies. There will be no second thoughts or anxious moments to haunt you after the fact.