



**Double A**  
Double Quality Paper

# Future Trends

for Purchasing Bulk Office Supplies



## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Current Market Snapshot	4
Industry Perspective from Experts	5
Technology Areas Needing Improvement	6
Future Trends to Watch	7
Supply Management Insights	8
Resource Critiques	9
Analysis of Suppliers	10
Conclusion and Future Developments	11



## Introduction

Office supplies are always in demand and in this world of instantaneous gratification, people expect to have a never-ending supply of everything their office needs to function. As business evolves and machines facilitate more efficient professional practices, it is exciting to predict how the industry might change over the coming years.

To supply customers with the essential office supplies they need, within the timelines they require, the industry continuously changes and evolves to respond to the trends and expectations of their consumers. There is more to the system than simply keeping up with demand. These days sophisticated buyers expect responsive technology to facilitate their buying process.

Throughout this eBook, the future trends of office supplies will be made clear. While the future of office supplies has been a long-time coming, there are many different areas which this industry must continue fighting to stay relevant. Notable, there are also other areas that are extremely profitable.

If the office supply industry can find a happy medium between the two, indications are that the future is secure.



## Current Market Snapshot

An overall snapshot of the market shows it is currently in flux. The digital age has literally thrown out the physical book, while orders continue to pile up. The transformation between the age-old catalog and internet ordering has given the market a little bit of an issue—since this was a big change to the way the entire industry conducted business.

Office supply dealers like Bulk Office Supply are using innovative marketing and technology to accelerate their growth online. Meanwhile other companies continue to wield a concierge-like sales team to attend to client needs and humanize the business. The most effective sales organizations are the ones who can balance both.

According to OPI, The State Of The Industry Report for 2017 is steady. Not much has changed in recent years statistically— though there are many dramatic interruptions that have taken place within the industry.



### Monthly Sales

Elements of seasonality guide the industry sales volume through waves. According to Printing Impressions, sales were up 47.9% in October, but hit a low of –23.1% in December, with an eleven-month average of 10.8%. Sales are consistently steady, without having a major influx in a few years.

*“This has forced a situation where product margins are difficult to maintain,” says Rick Black, president/CEO of Reliable Corp, “Everyone in the industry has to focus on operating efficiencies.”*

On a positive note, industry distributors have noticed a higher sale of products in alternate categories, such as facilities supplies and promotional products, according to [The View From the Top](#).



### Profits

According to [IBIS World](#), the current revenue for the office supply industry is \$43bn but has been on the decline in the past few years. The report from this industry indicates a -0.1% annual growth rate.

However, that doesn't come as much of a surprise, since most of the companies who were previously successful in this market are going through the industry-wide transition.

Trying to break into this market now, considering the profit growth rate would not be optimal.



## Industry Perspective from Experts

Fortunately, the industry experts do not seem worried about the transition, or the future of the industry.

Many industry experts are giving the advice to expand company offerings and advertise to the market. While office supplies were an exclusive staple for decades, there was a time where it wasn't and that was when business owners were tasked with getting creative.

*“There has been a major change in the product mix over the past five years,” Bruce Nelson, president/CEO of the **Viking Office Products** said to this point, “In the past, writing instruments, loose-leaf binders, and related supplies were the dominant sales categories. Today, the fastest-growing product segments are computer ink, LaserJet paper, and other computer supplies.”*

Basically, the main consensus is that the industry is going through a cycle, not unlike one it has gone through before and survived.

This might be a new age, with new products, which come with new challenges, but ultimately, it is the same cycle that the industry has seen before. The strong and the inventive will persevere.

All industry leaders need to do now is focus on giving their customers what they want, until they can settle into their place in the industry, once all the transitioning is completed.

## Technology Areas Needing Improvement

For many office workers, choosing an office supply vendor is considered a “necessary evil.” This is because they generally base the whole process on price, lead time, and product assortment. Why aren’t they considering technology as a factor on a broad scale? This could simplify reordering, ease communication, and facilitate efficiencies that lead to better pricing.

The use of technology can benefit both sides of the office supply transaction. Since suppliers are using technologies to manage inventory, the same tool on a smaller scale could link directly to the reordering capabilities of a site. Being able to review previous orders and easily select items for reorder would also benefit the customer. Chances are, they are referencing past receipts to find out the exact product number of their printer toner, so give your customer the tools to make a swift and informed purchase.

There are two types of people in the world—those who yearn for more personal connections and those who consistently choose tech interventions. In any case, we live in a world where both exist and the line blurs as people jump back and forth choosing an alternative route of communication based on a particular need. For these reasons, we have to meet our customers where they are. Having a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) tool in place that aggregates and records all these connections is critical. Knowing that a customer was sent an automated email and then abandoned a shopping cart can be a great time to reach out over the phone for a follow up that will almost surely lead to a sale.

When given the choice between purchasing one ream of paper each month for five months, or saving by purchasing a whole box at once, chances are the customer will chose the savings. Few buyers know though that these kinds of efficiencies exist for almost any product. By managing purchases over time and looking for trends, both the dealer and customer can come to terms that help them reach the best possible sale rate.

It’s clear that technology plays a pivotal role in the emerging trends of purchasing bulk office supplies. As new tools develop, it is critical to keep in mind the primary goals of the buyer such as value and customer service.



## Future Trends to Watch

There is an abundance of future trends to watch in this market, as the digital age compels the office supply industry to forsake their very foundation, while still providing an opportunity for the strong to rise.

Here are a few trends that will drive the success and growth of the industry throughout the next few years:

### Increased Competition

The wave of eCommerce sites that appeared over the past two decades originally posed a threat to brick-and-mortar operations. However, commitments to customer service kept relationships strong and bolstered the sales until traditional companies could evolve with the technology trends. New businesses continue to enter and exit the market. Now, an online presence is less of a differentiation factor because most businesses utilize ecommerce.

### Technological Advancements

Technological shifts such as advanced mobile and web applications are making it easier than ever for customers to buy products. Not only do they facilitate the point-of-sale transaction, but they also incentivize it with rebates and other customer relationship programs. Social media is changing how office supplies are marketed and sold to consumers. For example, one creative business showcased a “March Madness” bracket competition of office supplies. More and more businesses are taking to social channels to serve up video content that motivates consumers.

### Successful Companies Molding to Fit Customer Demands

Business buyers are now looking for value-added services, not just high-quality office supplies. “Omnichannel” services are now expected of most B2B companies – not just B2C companies.

### Price Reduction with an Increase in Purchasing Bulk Office Supplies

One way that B2B companies are hoping to compete with B2C supplies is by offering large discounts on bulk orders to corporate customers. In this regard, B2B sellers still have an edge, as they are usually able to get better wholesale prices for their products, and they can transfer these savings to their customers. Smart producers will not only look for efficiencies in packaging, freight, and logistics, but they will deploy robust technology to guide the intricate details for a lean business.

### Sustainability

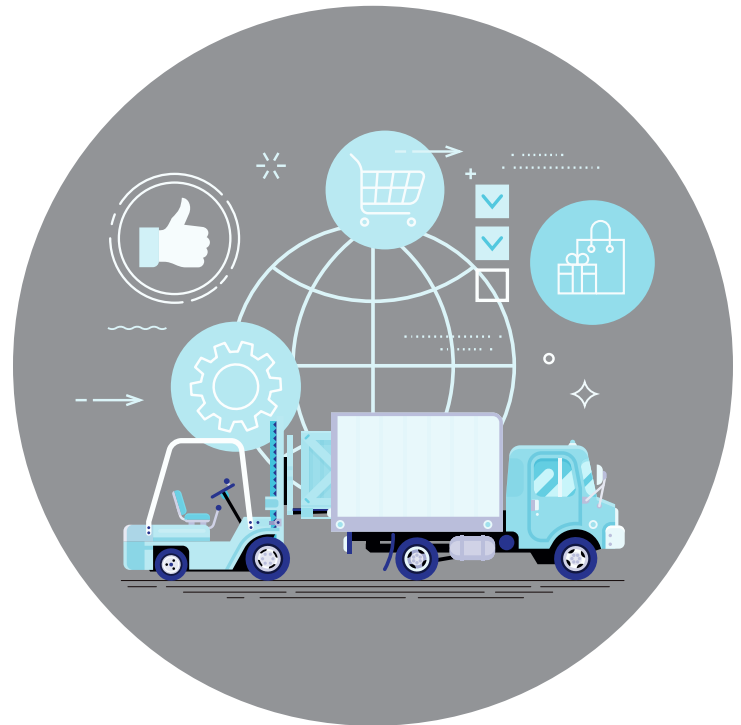
As the population continues to grow and research demonstrates the impacts of merchandise on our environment, an environmentally focused business cycle will continue to revolve. Conscious buyers use their purchasing power to send a message to producers that they want products that are eco-friendly. In response, corporations will produce items that meet these standards and invest in the continued development of products that tread lightly on the planet.

## Supply Management Insights

Experts in procurement understand that the smoothest business transactions wouldn't be possible without effective service. When a sales team deploys state-of-the-art technology for account management and sourcing, it facilitates a memorable transfer of goods that doesn't leave any questions. In this world, where everything happens in an instant, relationships are key. Finding a supplier who can deliver what and when they promise will always be a timeless value.

The bottom line is shrinking further and further. Generally the first line item reduced on a budget is an office supply. When tasked with cutting costs, look into efficiencies and value. Reaching out to a supplier for a cheaper paper won't always bring value to the company, especially if it clogs the printer and results in down-time or repair costs. Instead look for products that give the most value for your dollar.

Of course we know that packaging around a product impacts price and other business considerations. But what about a package or group of products? When we buy more we are used to incentives like free shipping or percentage off. In the future, technology will allow businesses to respond more specifically to consumer needs and address them with promotions.







## Resource Critiques

Lack of resources is another issue that is facing the industry. With many established companies exiting their operations, it is becoming harder to get the office supply resources businesses require.

Plus, the office supply industry faces political, environmental, and economic roadblocks in terms of obtaining their material, which is becoming a constant struggle.

**Harvard Business Review** suggests that purchasing these supplies, to fuel the industry's production must become a supply priority. Unfortunately, obtaining the resources needed to continue production continue to get more difficult.

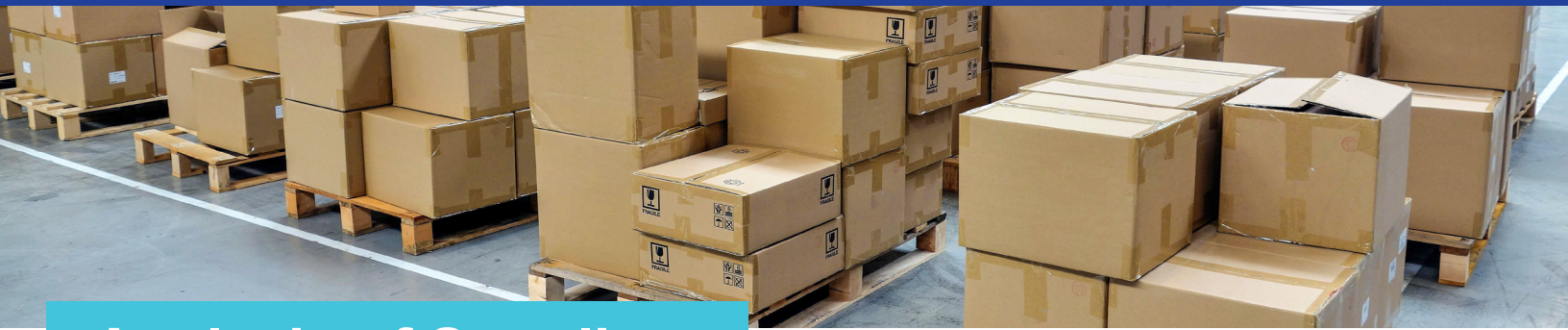
However, since the demand for the supply is still prevalent throughout the world, the industry shouldn't worry about being dealt a lethal blow from this.

If the companies focus on tasking this out throughout supply management, this issue shouldn't become more than an aggravating hoop that the industry professionals must jump through.

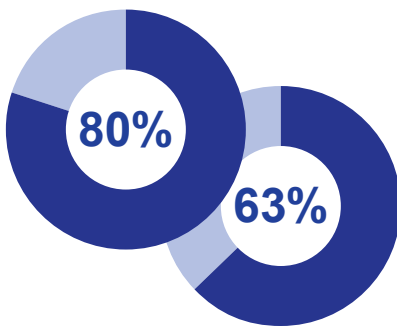


## A Sustainable Sourcing Solution

**At Double A, we integrate a unique form of resource management to grow our own Paper-trees on khan-na unused lands in Thailand. By renting the space surrounding the rice paddies from farmers to grow the trees, we provide the community with benefits that are both economical and eco-friendly. When the trees mature each 3-5 years, we buy them back from the farmers and use the pulp to make our ultra-smooth paper.**

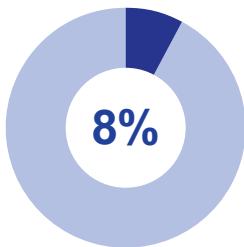
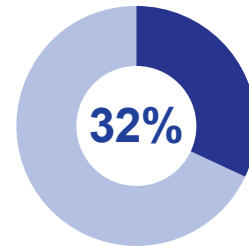


## Analysis of Suppliers



The growth rate for some suppliers, such as Amazon and Internet Only office supply companies has grown eighty and sixty-three percent, according to The State of the OP Industry brochure.

More traditional office supply dealers and sellers, as well as B2C markets, have also had continued growth, with both markets seeing a thirty-two percent increase.



However, another once popular strictly online supplier, eBay has only seen an eight percent growth increase, which is an interesting statistic, considering the trends of the current industry.

## Conclusion and Future Developments

Despite all the issues and transitions that the office supply industry is going through, the ultimate forecast for the industry is strong.

*“There may be only a few major catalog companies left in office products, but the market is healthy,” says Dan Binder, retail analyst for the New York-based investment banking firm Brown Brothers Harriman.*

It is clear to the entirety of the industry that to survive, the way for these companies is paved through web-based transactions and technology.

If you are interested in more industry secrets, and for all your paper needs check out Double A paper.

Double A prides itself on manufacturing high-quality paper that is responsibly sourced. We grow our own trees on unused strips of land to produce the best available pulp. We pride ourselves on creating the most environmentally friendly paper, without compromising a leaflet of quality.

us.**DoubleA**paper.com



**THE RIGHT CHOICE,  
THE BEST CHOICE**