



the Value that Merchants Bring to their Customers:

Supply chain management and logistics are integral in running any efficient operation. But these should not define the operation or its mission. Rather, our organizations are strengthened when we focus on how our product can benefit those we serve. Howard Schultz, chairman and CEO of Starbucks, says it well in his book *Onward*, articulating that they did not invent coffee nor coffee shops but, like any good merchant, they spun a life around coffee and added large doses of community to enhance their brand. The same can be said of paper merchants.

While paper was invented by the Chinese in 105 A.D., merchants quickly became an integral part of its history, bringing paper making to other parts of the world and helping to develop its variations and uses. From beautifully crafted invitations and hand written notes on luxurious paper, to complex printed pieces using specialty inks and finishes, paper continues to bring joy to peoples lives. And paper merchants continue to tell the story. We are largely responsible for promoting this rich heritage. We can embrace the idea of “spinning a life around paper and adding large doses of community to enhance our brands.”

1. Merchants have a deep understanding of the product and application of that product.
2. Merchants can supply samples with which both a printer and his client can make the correct choice of color, weight or texture of paper for a project.
3. Merchants provide local inventory so printers can turn their job in a timely fashion.
4. Some paper merchants offer converting services, allowing customers to get special sheet sizes almost as quickly as standard sheet sizes.
5. Merchants help solve problems when their customer runs into difficulties concerning performance on and post press.
6. Often, merchants are responsible for managing their customers' inventories.
7. Merchants traditionally have strong relationships with their supplier that can be leveraged to help customers when they run into complications with pricing and delivery.
8. Merchants can negotiate on behalf of their customer to help them secure new pieces of business.
9. Merchants can expose their customer to new products, printing techniques and creative ideas.
10. Merchants provide education in the form of paper school to help their customer understand the differences in paper and how to distinguish quality from price.
11. Many merchants have stores, which can be a conduit to the smaller-end user and retail community. These stores also provide a just-in-time solution to the creative community at affordable prices.
12. Merchants can act as a storage and fulfillment service for customers with limited space.
13. Merchants actively promote both the power and sustainability of paper and print to the local community.
14. Merchants support local industry groups like Printing Industries of America (PIA), American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) and American Advertising Federation (AAF).
15. Merchants fill the communication gap between end user, printer and mill to distinguish paper as not just a product, but a message.