



HOW KNOCK-OFF SUPPLIES COULD PERMANENTLY DAMAGE YOUR PRINTERS AND LEAVE CUSTOMERS IN A LURCH

Bargain hunters may find the price of non-original printing supplies attractive, but the downtime, service calls and damage can end up costing you more.

By **Andy Binder**, Vice President and General Manager, HP Inc.



Imitations. Compatibles. Knock-offs. Anyone looking to save money when purchasing printing supplies can easily find bargains such as these when they start shopping. The big question: will those bargains ending up costing them more—sometimes much more—in the long run?

At HP, we want everyone who uses our printers to use Original HP supplies because evidence shows that knock-off cartridges (also known as imitations) can lead to performance issues and could ultimately damage printers.

For our partners, being knowledgeable about the potential effects of knock-offs is vital. The risk of selling and recommending these cartridges can have unintended consequences beyond just damaging your customers' printers. It could lead to serious reputational damage for you and your business.

With more knock-offs available than ever before, the risks have never been greater. Here's what our partners should know about how printing supplies bargain hunting could turn south:

When Saving Money Gets Messy

Consider the experience of the [Fred Hutch/University of Washington Cancer Consortium](#) research center in Seattle. Eager to maximize every research dollar and reduce costs wherever possible, the institute [switched from Original HP supplies to knock-off toner cartridges](#). While seemingly a smart decision at the time, it led to a host of problems just three months later.

Indeed, the consortium quickly found the page yields of knock-off cartridges were inconsistent and often less than the vendors' promises—from one-half to three-quarters of expected yields. Print quality also suffered, with smearing and smudging ruining pages that were supposed to look professional. Leaking toner, meanwhile, damaged the machines. On one occasion, a cartridge even exploded inside a printer just as the team was trying to meet a grant application deadline. Although repairs were included in the service contract, the printers wore out faster, lost performance quality and had to be replaced sooner. Nine months later, Fred Hutch returned to Original HP supplies.

Notes from the Field

Is the Fred Hutch experience unusual? Unfortunately, no. To prove that printers work best when they are equipped with supplies specifically designed to work with them, we went into the trenches and [surveyed 150 HP ServiceOne Partners](#)—the people who actually do printer service calls. The feedback we heard from them was compelling:

- **91 percent** said they recommended Original HP toner cartridges over non-HP toner cartridges because they have the best print quality, are the most reliable and require less service.
- **94 percent** said using Original HP cartridges helps reduce service costs associated with cartridge issues and service calls.
- **95 percent** said HP LaserJet printers using non-HP toner cartridges required more cleaning, repairs and replacements than those using Original HP cartridges.¹

To analyze performance even further, HP recently asked [SpencerLab to perform a study](#) comparing the reliability and page quality of Original HP monochrome toner cartridges with non-HP imitation cartridges sold as substitutes in North America. The goal was to determine the performance of Original HP toner cartridges relative to imitation cartridges. The testing revealed:

- Original **HP toner cartridges yielded no problem cartridges**, whereas 100 percent of non-HP imitation cartridges exhibited some type of reliability problem, such as “dead on arrival” or low quality.
- HP cartridges had the largest percentage of external use print quality samples at **99.9 percent**, whereas tested non-HP imitation brands exhibited only 2 percent external use print quality samples (meaning only **2 percent** were good enough to send externally to customers).²

Any partner, reseller or end user can easily convert these findings into dollars. But service calls, poor performance and printer damage aren’t just expensive; they can also lead to reputational damage for any provider that ends up associated with performance problems like the ones our ServiceOne Partners described.

Sustainability is another big reason why Original HP supplies are better for business. Customers know we make the recycling of HP products easy and free with the [HP Planet Partners](#) program, which is available in more than 70 countries and territories around the world.³ Manufacturers of knock-off supplies, on the other hand, do not. According to studies from 2007 to 2018, most imitation only collect a [small fraction](#) of their own products, and up to 97 percent of imitation cartridges end up in a landfill.⁴

At the same time, imitation cartridges can be harder on the environment than you think. These cartridges can use up to 42 percent more pages than Original HP toner cartridges to get the same job done.⁵ It’s worth noting that knock-offs are often made using cheap, substandard components and toner that put the safety of consumers at risk and can fail to meet local indoor air quality standards.⁶

Sticking with What Works

Printers are not the only thing that could be damaged from imitation cartridges. For channel partner, you very well might be putting your neck on the line by recommending imitations to customers. The data shows: these knock-off cartridges generate more calls and complaints, can damage equipment and lead to more downtime and lost productivity. No one in the business of reselling or distributing printing supplies can afford those kinds of problems.

On HP’s part, going forward, we’ll plan to do even more to protect the users of HP printers from knock-off supplies that simply aren’t worth the trouble they cause.

¹HP Technician Study, NA-2018, January 2019. More at: <https://escalent.co/hp/NA-Technician2019.pdf>

²SpencerLab, Monochrome Cartridge Reliability Study, 2019: HP LaserJet Toner Cartridges vs. Non-HP Clone Brands in North America. More at: <http://www.spencerlab.com/reports/HPReliability-NA-NBC2019.pdf>

³Program availability varies. See www.hp.com/recycle.

⁴InfoTrends, 2018 North America Supplies Recycling study, commissioned by HP. Findings are based on average results of interviews with 7 remanufacturers, 2 NBC manufacturers, 3 empty collectors and 3 distributors. For details, see www.hp.com/go/NA-2018InfoTrends.

⁵2019 Four Elements Consulting LCA study, commissioned by HP, compared Original HP 26A and 55A monochrome toner cartridges with a sample of NBC alternatives across nine environmental impact categories. Study to be published July 2019, visit <http://www.hp.com/go/NA-LJLCA-NBC-2019>. The LCA leverages a SpencerLab 2019 study, commissioned by HP, comparing Original HP LaserJet toner cartridges with two brands of NBC toner cartridges sold in NA. For details, see <http://www.spencerlab.com/reports/HPReliability-NA-NBC2019.pdf>

⁶For more information, see: <https://www8.hp.com/us/en/cartridge/clone.html>