



# How to Choose the Right Banner Material Suppliers

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**A Guide for Sign Shops and Exhibit Groups**





## Introduction

A lot of work goes on behind the scenes before your customer ever sees their banner.

Your end-user usually doesn't consider everything that goes into making their banner though — the sourcing of materials, new print technology, design, formatting, etc. They either see the banner and think, “my print shop made this — and it's great” or they're disappointed with the end result.

When you have a poor supplier, it reflects directly on you and your business. And if you've had a bad experience with your supplier in the past, chances are you've learned this lesson the hard way.

How do you choose the right banner material supplier for your needs? A smart approach is to look at the products they offer, how they fit into your business, and what will create the best possible print quality for your customers.

We've assembled a quick checklist to make sure you get everything you need:





## What Makes One Material Better Than Another?

Some characteristics that make for a superior product are obvious — the way a material looks and feels are clues to its quality in many cases.

Equally important is knowing which material is best for the kind of banner printing you do the most. That means which one will perform the best with the technology you have, and which will stand up the elements the longest. When choosing a premium grade product, what features make one media exemplary and worth the extra expense? Here are some things to look for:





## Print Quality

Color correctness and image sharpness are big selling points for professional-quality banner producers. Choosing the right banner media for the job can matter as much as the quality of your printer — if you don't have the right vinyl material for your printer, the banner just isn't going to look right.

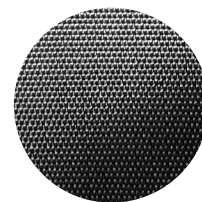
### Dot Gain

Texture is very important for determining image quality, especially for banners that will be viewed up close.

Vinyl material that isn't designed for modern inkjet printing will result in high dot gain. Dot gain refers to the spread of ink once it's applied to the surface of a banner material. Dot spacing must be exact for proper resolution; which means you need a surface that will keep ink in place. Coalescing dots create a visual effect that is darker than intended, which can mute vibrant images and make lines less precise.

Most cheap vinyl distributors sell a product that is designed for screen printing, not inkjet printers. Screen printing uses a smoother surface to allow overlaid color combinations to meld and create proper tones. For inkjet printers though, screen vinyl lacks the surface texture necessary to minimize dot gain and get clean, precise, color-correct prints.

If your supplier doesn't offer a textured vinyl media especially for large format inkjet printers — well, they don't have the kind of product you need.



*"Bantex's microtexture finish can increase resolution by up to 10% compared with the most competitive banner media manufactured with a very smooth surface."*





## Microtexture

A textured vinyl face is critical for ensuring proper sharpness and color correctness when printing on modern large format inkjet printers. However, most end-users don't want a banner that looks textured — banners are supposed to look clean and smooth, after all. That's where microtexture comes in.

Bantex designed its microtexture surface effect to prevent dot gain and increase resolution. It's barely perceptible to the eye, but it creates enough surface tension for liquid ink to hold onto while it dries. The results are stunning — a banner that is smooth and crisp with extra clean print resolution.

## HP Latex Certification

Latex prints are popular for their durability and color vibrancy. They will last up to three years outdoors when unlaminated or up to five years if laminated, and also come out of your printer ready to go, with no time set aside for degassing.

Latex prints come out of the printer HOT. The curing process for Latex requires direct application of high heat to ensure the Latex adheres to the media properly. Many cheaper latex products aren't designed to withstand high heat, which results in a whole range of problems — wilting, jamming, wrinkling — many of which can cause damage to valuable equipment.

HP, a major innovator in Latex printing technology, take the mystery out of which media is okay for Latex printing. They award a certification that tells buyers that the media is approved for use with their Latex printers. Most vinyl banner material manufacturers and suppliers do not produce or carry HP certified products. On the other hand, Bantex produces HP Latex Certified banner vinyl in multiple weights to suit your budget and aesthetic standards.

Been having problems with your Latex printer? Your vinyl media might be to blame. Screen vinyls are usually a soft hand material, which doesn't stand up to heat well at all. Bantex is heavier and designed for the elements — heat included.

# Durability

Durability is a broad category when it comes to vinyl banner media. To judge durability, you need to take into consideration the full life of the product from production to pickup and beyond. Good quality materials will make the printing process go smoothly and produce higher quality finished product every time to meet application expectations. How do you know if your supplier has media that's up to par?

*"Most imported vinyl banner media is screen grade, which means chances are good you aren't getting maximum performance from your large format printer.."*

## Stiffness

Having a soft hand effects more than just heat resilience. Limp and flexible screen grade vinyl media is not designed for roll-to-roll digital inkjet printers, which require good tensile resistance to achieve proper tracking across the print heads. Putting screen grade media into a roll-to-roll inkjet results in wrinkling, jamming, and head strikes against the surface of the banner from poor feeding into the printer.

By choosing a banner media that's explicitly designed for roll-to-roll digital inkjet printers, you can avoid all of these costly and headache-inducing issues. Digital grade media — such as Bantex — is designed with a stiffer hand to evenly pull through roll-to-roll feeding systems, to eliminate tracking and feeding issues associated with this process. Even lighter weight digital grade vinyl will hold stiffer during processing than a heavier screen grade vinyl. Of course, Bantex can also be used for screen printing, too.

## Shelf Life

One key indicator as to the quality of vinyl media comes from its expected shelf life. Some product only lasts a month or two, other brands offer no guarantee or indication of how long their product will stay viable.

Vinyl is produced using plasticizers to make it highly flexible and prevent cracking over time. This composite blend starts to come apart on a molecular level with age, heat and humidity, and the plasticizers migrate away from the compound. When that happens, it will create a layer on the surface of the material that is less receptive to ink. Poor quality vinyl is made with fewer quality controls and less meticulous processing, which causes this process to happen really fast — sometimes a matter of months or even weeks.

Shelf life matters a lot during the regular cycle of being very busy and being slow that all print shops go through. Say you have a major banner project that gets delayed due to a backlog or some client-side issues. If the vinyl banner material shelf life is too limited, it can expire before you get back around to the project — at which point you're left with low quality results or a total loss on materials you've already purchased.

Bantex is made using a proprietary vinyl blend and a high quality manufacturing process. Another reason why Bantex is the highest quality digital grade media on the market today.



## Versatility

Print shops need to be ready to take on whatever banner project that comes their way. Different print looks require different tools, which for banner printing means a vinyl media that can hang with them all. How versatile is the vinyl your supplier offers?

Do you need to keep different rolls in stock for different projects, always managing the best-by dates and moving stock around your shop to get the job done? Maybe it's time to find a supplier whose material can do it all.

### More Printers Than You Can Shake a Stick At

There are a multitude of printers and inks on the market. This can make it very difficult if you don't have a versatile material that can accommodate a wide range of printers, sizings, and inks. Large format printers can range in size from 54 inches wide up to 75 or 80 inches wide for specialty models. They can use one of a half dozen different ink configurations — solvents, eco-solvents, UV curable inks, latex — each which requires its own special considerations.

### Material Diversity

Sometimes, your clients want you to source materials that aren't commonly used for signage. Eco-conscious consumers may want to get their signs made on organic materials, such as wood or woven cloth. This can present a lot of difficulty, not only in finding a supplier, but also choosing an effective printing method — most large format inkjet printers aren't designed to accept wood or cloth or sheet metal.

In this instance, Bantex is not the right supplier match for your needs. Nature can create the finest organic products, we're sticking to high grade vinyl ourselves.



*"Most suppliers only carry a limited range of vinyl banner products. Bantex carries something for every banner project you can dream up."*





## Logistics

A few other considerations come into play when choosing a supplier — some of the most important ones, at that. Supply, packaging, and price are big factors that will likely lead to your final decision. Here's what to know:

### Shipping Reliability

It's a tale as old as time — a big order comes in on a tight deadline and you need fresh materials in order to fulfill it. Of course, your supplier can't get what you need in time, because of shipping issues related to two dozen factors — none of which have a thing to do with your shop. That's you, left in the lurch.

Most vinyl banner material suppliers today manufacture their product overseas. That often results in quality control issues related to the product itself, as well as its packaging. It also adds a lot of travel time to its journey from the factory floor to your printing press. When your supply chain starts halfway around the world, a lot can go wrong.

Bantex is produced in beautiful York, Pennsylvania, right along the main corridor which connects the whole eastern seaboard. When you need more vinyl product, it can be delivered quickly — often overnight — from our Distributor Locations.

Everything Bantex does is in-house, from manufacturing to packaging to fulfillment, which means that we've got an eye on quality assurance every step of the way. That means your product will show up in pristine condition — guaranteed!



## Packaging

Product packaging will influence the ease with which you can operate your print shop.

Damaged packaging can lead to damaged, unusable product. Even if your supplier has a good warranty, that's still product you need to wait on before you can proceed. Small disruptions can throw off the whole workflow, causing delays for other clients.

Beyond the potential for damaged product, there's ease of use. Poorly packaged product can have many issues causing a multitude of printing issues. Of course, this slows down production and leads to more headaches than its worth.



*"One solution to make things  
easier: choose a stateside supplier  
for your banner material."*

## Price

Price is usually the first or the last question every shop owner asks their supplier. Selling banners is as much an art form as making them. Determining a price for your product requires a lot of deft calculations — and in many cases, some hard decision making.

Selling product for less is one way to get more customers, but it creates a race-to-the-bottom that rarely benefits shops in the long term. On the other hand, companies that create premium product can charge premium prices for that product — so long as their market can sustain those rates.

Bantex is a product that costs more than cheap imported competitors. Those costs are paid back in full by the numerous advantages Bantex banner vinyl offers shop owners, in the form of improved print quality and ease of use.

If you're looking to pay bottom dollar for your banner vinyl, Bantex is not the right choice. However, if you're interested in finding ways to streamline your operations, improve your overall product quality and increase your profit margin, Bantex can help.

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