



## Smart Media Decisions for Your Wide Format Printer

### **MATCH MEDIA TO APPLICATION AND ENHANCE YOUR PRINTER'S OUTPUT**

If you're seeking to get the most out of your wide format printer, media matters – more than you might expect. The days when white coated paper was your one and only choice are ancient history, given the hundreds of printable substrates now available. Too frequently media remains the last factor considered when printing a project on a wide-format machine. Yet, for best results, other than the choice of equipment, media should be a primary consideration.

Whether you have a monochrome CAD printer or a state-of-the-art color inkjet machine, you can choose from an extensive variety of media options for color and black-and-white applications running the gamut from client presentations to maps to signage. Selecting the right media may help you better achieve your goals, such as attracting new clients, streamlining construction workflow or selling more products at point of purchase.

To maximize your large format printer investment, you need to understand your media options and how to match them wisely with your applications. By guiding you in asking the right questions and heightening your awareness of available options, this whitepaper helps you select the media that best meets your needs for each specific project.



- **Retail.** Retailers use wide format printers to quickly create and update eye-catching signage, particularly point-of-purchase (POP) signage.
- **Schools/Universities.** Educational institutions frequently print posters, banners, signage and student projects.

## 2. WHAT GOAL DO YOU WANT THE OUTPUT TO HELP YOU ACHIEVE?

In today's highly competitive marketplace, your printed output provides a powerful opportunity to differentiate your business. The first step involves identifying your goal, then evaluating the potential impact of media in helping you achieve it. For example:

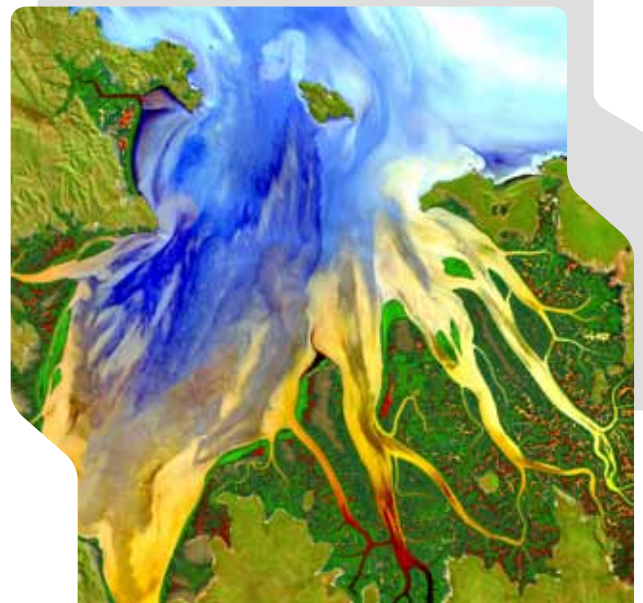
- If you're seeking to close a deal with a new client, you want to ensure your presentation makes a memorable impression and reflects your firm's commitment to quality.
- If your goal is to increase sales of a particular product or service, you want to create attractive, attention-grabbing signage, particularly at point of purchase. In addition, the ability to tailor messages to your target audience as well as update or change it frequently plays a key role.
- If you want to reduce errors and streamline workflow for contractors and subcontractors in the field, you need to produce easy-to-read, durable documents.
- If your aim is to increase awareness for a school project, you may want to create multiple eye-catching signs and banners in multiple sizes for a range of environments.

## KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN SELECTING MEDIA

### 1. WHAT IS THE APPLICATION?

Wide format printers bring value to several different markets or applications that seek cost-effective speed, versatility and quality output for large-scale projects. In turn, each of these markets takes advantage of the printers for a broad range of applications.

- **Architecture/engineering/construction.** Wide format printers are ideal for construction documents such as CAD drawings and MEP sets, for architectural renderings and for client presentation materials.
- **GIS.** Complex, highly detailed map applications are critical for a range of industries, such as land surveying, public utility management, urban planning and emergency management.



### 3. WHERE WILL THE OUTPUT BE USED?

The intended use of the output clearly affects the media choice. Certain media alternatives are most appropriate for indoor use compared to outdoor use, where water resistant materials play a more prominent role. Output that will be mounted and placed on an easel requires different media than signs that will be hung on the wall, with or without adhesives. It is also important to determine if using green or sustainable products is a factor. And last but not least, media choices are influenced by whether the printed output is designed for temporary, one-time use or needs to be durable enough for longer-term or multiple use.

### 4. WHAT IS YOUR BUDGET?

No business or organization can afford to ignore the cost of media. But many of the new and emerging media choices are far less expensive than you might expect, so it is important to compare options carefully.

It also makes good business sense to take a big picture perspective. When calculating costs, factor in the time and cost savings resulting from in-house printing – not simply the price of the media. Also, think of the media as part of your total investment in a wide format printer. Keep in mind that using subpar media can undermine your efforts to optimize the performance of a premium color application.

### 5. HAVE YOU EXPLORED ALL THE AVAILABLE OPTIONS COMPATIBLE WITH YOUR PRINTER?

Even the most basic four-color CAD inkjet printers offer a broad range of printing capabilities that are often under-utilized, let alone the newest wide format models that incorporate a host of innovative technologies designed to increase flexibility, improve workflow and enhance quality.

Be sure to consult your printer specifications to fully understand the spectrum of materials your machine has the potential to handle. Focus on key attributes such as media thickness, which normally ranges from #20 to 7 mil or 13 oz. It is also valuable to work with a trusted vendor or media specialist, who can help you knowledgeably determine and evaluate your options.



### CHOOSE FROM A WIDE VARIETY OF MEDIA OPTIONS

The good news is that there are now hundreds of printable media options available – and more continue to be developed. The challenge becomes sorting through the options to find the ones that help you achieve the best results for your particular application. First and foremost, answering the five questions above can help you focus your search. In addition, manufacturer sample kits and cross reference guides can be valuable resources in making specific selections.

Media options most commonly suited to the needs of AEC companies, GIS firms, retailers and educational institutions include:

- **Presentation bond.** Economical media with a matte finish that delivers high print resolution and excellent color density, and resists curling. It is ideal for CAD drawings and maps, as well as creating high quality visual marketing and sales tools with clear, crisp colors.
- **Synthetic paper.** Environmentally friendly and recyclable, this UV-stable paper is resistant to tearing, water, chemicals and grease. As a result, it is an excellent choice for maps, construction documents and other outdoor use applications.
- **Gloss or satin photo paper.** These papers reflect more light than matte surfaces, providing outstanding color definition and vibrancy. They enable accurate, clear reproduction of digital images, a smart choice for POP signage as well as perfect for proofing applications.



## SAVVY MEDIA SELECTION DELIVERS TANGIBLE BENEFITS

Investing a little extra time and thought into choosing the most appropriate media for your project can yield substantial benefits. First of all, you can differentiate your organization, strengthening your competitive edge in today's challenging marketplace. When you leverage media to create more effective and impressive visual marketing tools, you raise the bar for customer expectations.

Second, AEC firms can increase the impact of client presentations to more effectively generate new business. After all, when you're asking prospects to commit to multi-million dollar projects, your presentation materials need to reflect an outstanding commitment to the highest quality.

Third, enhancing the capability to deliver high quality construction documents and maps may help reduce costly errors in the field and helps improve the ROI for construction projects by streamlining workflow.

Fourth, creating cost-effective, high-impact signage for retail environments helps attract customer attention and helps boost sales. Eye-catching signage also plays a vital role in building awareness of events, service opportunities and resources at schools and universities.

## EXPAND YOUR OPTIONS, ENHANCE YOUR COMPETITIVE EDGE

Whether you are an architecture/engineering/construction firm, GIS professional, retailer, school or university, the better you understand the media options for your wide format printer, the more effectively you can match them to your specific applications. And the more skillfully and knowledgeably you accomplish this, the more successfully you will leverage your investment to optimize performance – and gain a valuable edge in today's highly competitive marketplace.

- **Canvas.** This material is ideal for printing long-lasting images, and can be stretched, mounted, sewn or finished with grommets.
- **Vinyl.** An excellent option for event or retail signage, it hangs without creasing and is less susceptible to tearing and water than paper.
- **Tyvek.** Highly durable, with great opacity, mechanical tear strength and uniform color reproduction, Tyvek works extremely well for a variety of applications, from construction documents in the field to advertising banners.
- **Backlit film.** This media is often used to deliver eye-catching images in illuminated displays, either indoors or out.
- **Self-adhesive products.** There are numerous options within this category, ranging from repositionable media to low-tack for temporary use to permanent adhesives



CANON SOLUTIONS AMERICA

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**Large Format Solutions**

100 Park Boulevard  
Itasca, Illinois 60143-2676

1-800-714-4427 | 1-773-714-4076  
Fax 1-773-714-4056

**email: [info@csa.canon.com](mailto:info@csa.canon.com)**  
**[www.csa.canon.com](http://www.csa.canon.com)**