

## Magazine Publishers of America

### Management Overview

### Recycled Content and Virgin Fiber: Environmental, Economic and Technical Considerations for Magazine Publishers

## Introduction

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Most businesses today have a vested interest in minimizing their environmental impact, whether to lower operating costs, improve brand reputation or out of a sense of corporate social responsibility. In magazine publishing, “going green” often focuses on building an effective environmental strategy around forest-based resources such as paper. A key consideration in developing and implementing this strategy is the paper decision, and often the decision is framed as a choice between paper with recycled content or paper made with virgin fiber.

Many environmental, economic, and technical issues are relevant to determining the best use of recovered and virgin fiber for magazine paper. Choosing one fiber type over the other based on a single attribute (i.e. a pre-determined percentage of recycled content) can be misleading and have unintended negative environmental consequences. To make an informed and strategic decision it is necessary to examine the life cycle of a paper product—including fiber type—and evaluate the environmental and economic trade-offs that occur in every paper purchasing decision. This means a complete evaluation starting at the fiber source through the manufacturing process, to product use, recovery and disposal.

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of the best use of recovered and virgin fiber for magazine grade paper and answer the following questions:

### Key Questions

1. What are the most relevant issues to determine the best use of recovered and virgin fiber for magazine paper?
2. What should magazine publishers consider in order to establish an optimal percentage of recycled content?
3. What issues are associated with the papermaking process—including global climate change—between recycled content and virgin fiber paper?
4. How do supply and demand dynamics of the recovered paper market determine best use?
5. Does recycled paper save trees?

## Summary

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### Best Use of Recovered and Virgin Fiber

Maximizing the use of recovered fiber—versus virgin fiber—in appropriate paper grades and under appropriate circumstances can be economically beneficial and significantly reduce environmental impacts. Maximizing recycled content for its own sake without regard to the product type, mill performance or mill location, however, may produce much more serious—if unintended—negative environmental impacts and no economic rationale

Determining the best use of recovered and virgin fiber for any paper type—including magazine grades—requires a life cycle perspective with an evaluation of the environmental, economic and technical considerations along the entire supply chain. This includes understanding where fiber is coming from (source), how the paper is made (manufacturing), and how effectively fiber can be utilized depending on the paper type (use).

### Operating Principles

Papermaking, like most manufacturing processes, involves a complex supply chain. Evaluations based on a single environmental performance criterion have limited utility and may be counter-productive. However, there are fundamental principles that any buyer concerned with making environmentally-informed purchasing decisions can adopt.

1. Use a **life cycle perspective**. Require that your purchasing people understand and measure the environmental impact of the paper they specify and purchase throughout the life cycle of the product.
2. Actively **engage with your paper supply chain** to set goals and benchmarks that have the power to move the marketplace toward improved environmental performance without sacrificing product performance.
3. **Use science as the foundation** of environmental decision-making. If you are not setting goals and measuring progress with data, you risk making unsupportable claims.
4. **Support paper recovery** to reduce waste and, ultimately, improve the economic incentives for using recovered fiber.
5. When virgin fiber is necessary, **select fiber from sustainably managed forests**.