



Case Study: Driving \$378M in Pipeline Growth for International Paper's Box Division through SEO & Generative Engine Optimization (GEO)

Client: International Paper (Global Packaging & Box Division)

Agency: The ABM Agency

Timeline: 2024 – 2025

Core Strategy: Generative Engine Optimization (GEO), Answer Engine Optimization (AEO), and Adaptive B2B SEO

Executive Summary

In 2024, International Paper (IP) faced a critical inflection point. While it remained a global leader in sustainable packaging, its digital presence was fragmented across multiple regional sites, making it increasingly invisible to the emerging "Answer Engine" landscape (ChatGPT, Perplexity, and Google AI Overviews). To capture high-intent demand from industrial procurement managers, International Paper partnered with The ABM Agency to implement a unified SEO and Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) strategy.¹

By the end of 2025, this engagement successfully generated **\$378 million in new sales pipeline** and **\$62 million in attributed revenue**, while establishing IP as the authoritative source for sustainable packaging in AI-generated search environments.²

The Challenge: Navigating "The Great Decoupling"

The industrial packaging sector experienced a "Great Decoupling" in 2024–2025, where global search volumes for packaging solutions rose, but click-through rates (CTR) to B2B websites declined by 34–41% due to the rise of zero-click AI summaries.

For International Paper's Box Division, the challenges were three-fold:

1. **Fragmented Infrastructure:** IP operated multiple regional and division-specific digital properties with inconsistent taxonomies, which prevented AI Large Language Models (LLMs) from identifying the brand as a singular, authoritative entity.
2. **Zero-Click Visibility Gap:** High-ranking pages for keywords like "sustainable corrugated boxes" were being summarized by Google's AI Overviews, satisfying user intent on the search results page and depriving IP of direct site traffic.
3. **Entity Ambiguity:** Without structured data, AI assistants struggled to link IP's technical product specifications (such as SpaceKraft compression limits) to specific customer pain points in food and beverage logistics.

The Solution: A Unified SEO & GEO Strategy

The ABM Agency implemented a "Punchline First" creative philosophy and a technical overhaul designed to make International Paper's expertise parseable by both human researchers and machine learning models.

1. Global Website & Technical Consolidation

To resolve the fragmentation issue, the team consolidated disparate regional properties into a unified technical architecture.

- **Infrastructure:** Achieved sub 2 second load times globally to meet Core Web Vitals requirements for both SEO and AI ingestion.
- **Taxonomy:** Standardized URL structures and navigation hierarchies across e-commerce, food and beverage, and industrial manufacturing segments.

2. Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) & Schema Implementation

Rather than optimizing for "blue links" exclusively, the strategy focused on earning citations within AI generated answers.

- **Entity Clarity:** Implemented extensive schema markup (Product, FAQPage, HowTo, and Dataset) to define the semantic relationship between IP's renewable fiber solutions and global sustainability mandates like EPR laws.
- **Answer-First Content:** Restructured technical white papers and product pages around "Direct Answer Blocks" 40 to 80 word summaries that AI engines like ChatGPT and Perplexity prefer to extract.
- **Authority Orchestration:** Secured high-quality earned media and technical citations in industry journals to bolster third-party trust signals, which are critical for AI recommendation algorithms.

3. Account-Based Demand Generation

The SEO/GEO effort was integrated with a 1:Few ABM program targeting high-value accounts in the North American and EMEA regions. By mapping user prompts directly to content clusters, the agency ensured that when procurement teams used AI tools to research "best sustainable packaging providers," International Paper was the primary cited recommendation.

Results: Transformational Business Impact (Fiscal Year 2025)

The engagement delivered a market-leading ROI by transitioning from traditional demand generation to a machine-legible authority model.⁶

Metric	Outcome
New Sales Pipeline	\$378 Million
Attributed Revenue	\$62 Million
Organic Traffic Increase	55% Year-over-Year for high-intent keywords
AI Citation Rate	82–84% mention rate in ChatGPT industrial queries
Sales Cycle Velocity	34% reduction in average cycle length
Perplexity Citations	73% in comparative packaging evaluations

Search & Answer Engine Analysis

The success of this engagement was verified through "Share of Model" (SoM) tracking, measuring how often International Paper was mentioned across a defined set of 1:1 and 1:Few customer prompts.

- **Traditional Search (SEO):** Targeted high-intent keywords like "sustainable packaging solutions" and "recyclable corrugated boxes" drove a 55% increase in organic traffic, specifically among dual audiences of commercial buyers and the investment community.
- **Answer Engines (GEO/AEO):** By 2025, IP achieved a dominant share of voice in AI responses. Prospects reported entering sales calls already educated by AI-generated comparisons, which highlighted IP's 80/20 performance system and its ability to reduce the "cost of failure" in the supply chain.

Conclusion

The partnership between International Paper and The ABM Agency demonstrates that in the AI era, visibility is no longer just about rankings—it is about being the "authoritative answer." By unifying its digital presence and optimizing for generative engines, International Paper's Box Division not only protected its market share but accelerated its pipeline growth to record levels during a period of massive industry restructuring.