



## Marketer's Primer Series: Greening Print Marketing

### INTRODUCTION

*I have been watching the growth and development of “green” print marketing for more than a decade. Initially, it was all about recycled paper and environmental certifications, but over time, the concept of true lifecycle analysis and sustainability (defined as a three-pronged approach covering environmental, societal, and economic concerns) have become part of marketers’ decisionmaking processes. While such detailed analyses are great for the environment, they can create confusion and frustration. This report is designed to cut through the clutter and look at some of the most practical, immediately implementable issues. Green print marketing will continue to evolve, so this report should be seen as a snapshot of a marketplace undergoing rapid change. While these observations are not intended to be an exhaustive look at all of the issues related to greening print marketing, they are intended to provide a broad compendium of the areas of most importance and immediate relevance to the average marketer. — Heidi Tolliver-Nigro*

One reason many businesses hesitate to “go green” is because environmental responsibility seems too time-consuming and overwhelming. It’s not that marketers don’t care. It’s that, with all of their other responsibilities, it seems like too much.

Just the thought of measuring the environmental footprint of your business—from measuring the carbon output of every office copier to the impact of the transportation methods of employees—is enough to send the poor manager tasked with the job into apoplexy.

But while going green may seem overwhelming, in reality, you don’t have to convert to wind power, add solar panels, and purchase carpet made of hemp fiber to make a difference. It can be as simple as being a little bit smarter and less wasteful in your next direct mail campaign. This might include the use of...

- better materials sourcing policies;
- focusing on greener print production and more environmentally conscious print suppliers;
- use of personalization and targeting to reduce the volume and wastefulness;
- smart use of databases to reduce waste and increase the effectiveness of marketing projects; and
- ordering via print-on-demand and just-in-time Web-to-print (or Web commerce) workflows to reduce print volumes, among others.

Going green doesn’t have to be overwhelming. The answer is for individuals and businesses to make conscious decisions to start taking even small steps, one at a time. It doesn’t have to hurt.



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### SECTION 1: WHAT "GREEN" REALLY MEANS

These days, it's all about going green. For some people, it's a personal and philosophical commitment. For others, it's an important brand image. Whatever your reason for greening, the question is the best way to go about it. This report will look at some of the key issues as they relate to print marketing.

There are many components to greening. For printers and marketers, it means looking beyond recycled paper and environmental certifications and considering a wide variety of factors along the entire product lifecycle.

Among them:

- **Design** (reducing weight and bulk of print jobs, optimizing product dimensions to maximize use of the sheet)
- **Materials sourcing** (choices in paper, ink, coatings)
- **Prepress** (eliminating film and other consumables)
- **Print process** (offset, toner-based digital, inkjet)
- **Process controls** (press chemistry, wastewater, emissions reduction)
- **Energy use** (volume, as well as use of alternative sources)
- **Print volumes** (reductions using targeting and personalization)
- Impact on the **solid waste stream** and contribution to landfill waste
- Vendor **environmental certifications**

But greening isn't restricted to the production process. There are softer issues, such as chain of custody (CoC), including the legal sourcing of materials and the impact on indigenous peoples (a big issue in many forestry certifications). There is also supplier commitment to broader sustainable initiatives. For example, for marketers, do your printers use sustainable practices in other areas of their businesses (use of solar power, internal recycling, or energy reduction programs)?

This is why there is no official standard for "green" printing or marketing (although there have been attempts at creating one, such as those set by the Sustainable Green Print Partnership). There are many factors that come into play. It's impossible to accommodate them all, so you need to focus on the factors you *can* control and the net benefits of various options within your project goals and budget.



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### SECTION 2: HOW GREEN IS PRINT?

Is printing green? Although printing has long been seen as a polluting industry that clogs up the solid waste stream, this is really an outdated notion. There are a number of reasons print is green.

#### Why print is green(er)

First, with the development of new technologies, print looks a lot different than it used to. Even traditional offset is a lot cleaner, more efficient, and focused on cradle-to-grave lifecycle than even a decade ago.

For example . . .

- Presses produce far less start-up waste.
- The equipment and production processes are more efficient, thereby reducing energy use.
- Consumables have become less toxic, produce less VOC emissions, and are more recyclable.
- Digital prepress and proofing processes reduce the use of consumables and carbon footprint from fuel, packaging, and postage.
- Quality controls help operators catch errors more quickly and reduce remakes.
- Lower makeready allows marketers to lower production runs, reducing or eliminating unnecessary production volumes and saving environmental resources.

Second, the printing industry has long had a focus on environmental regulation and compliance that has created a foundation for an even deeper environmental commitment. Printers are strong implementers of environmental certifications and renewable energy sources like wind, solar, and biogas.

Third, the maturation of low-waste, low-environmental-impact digital technologies has changed the equation yet again, both in terms of how these presses produce print and the applications they drive.

Fourth, the way print marketing is being managed is far greener than it used to be. Database-driven printing has reduced print volumes through targeting and personalization and multi-channel marketing is matching the delivery medium to customer preference (email, print, social media, broadcast), reducing unnecessary print volumes. What makes these campaigns particularly exciting is that they are being driven, not by environmental considerations, but by their effectiveness and profitability. Greenness is actually a byproduct.

(For more, see section on how digital printing applications drive sustainability.)



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### SECTION 3: THE IMPACT OF PAPER

When you think printing, you think paper. Thus, the contribution of the paper to the lifecycle of the printed product is critical when it comes to thinking about greening your print marketing program.

Before looking at the paper itself, it's important to step back and look at the paper industry as a whole. Paper companies are increasingly using sustainable forestry practices and — did you know — they are among the greenest industries. Yes, the paper industry.

Did you know that, while less than 10% of U.S. power comes from renewable sources, when it comes to the manufacturing of paper, that figure is greater than 60%? In fact, on the EPA's list of the Top 20 list of green energy purchasers in the U.S. is a paper company — Mohawk Fine Papers.

In a recent publication, "Pixels or Paper?", International Paper wrote something many people may find surprising:

Our industry is one of the biggest users of renewable, low-carbon energy in the world. Sixty percent of the energy used to make paper in the U.S. comes from carbon-neutral renewable resources and is produced on site at mills. In addition, these facilities use combined heat and power (CHP) generation systems, which are 80-90% efficient. Fossil fuel use and purchased energy in this industry is steadily decreasing.

So not only is the paper itself increasingly green, with recycled content and less toxic chemicals used in processing, but the mills themselves are increasingly sustainable, as well.

#### Why paper certifications matter

One of the first, easiest steps to greening your paper choices is to look at the sourcing of paper. This means where the fiber comes from, how it is harvested, and how it is handled along the supply chain. This means looking at environmental certifications.

Why look at sourcing and not just recycled content? It would be easy to think that everyone is buying recycled these days, but this is not the case. The bulk of paper purchased today is still primarily if not exclusively virgin fiber. Plus, unless the paper is 100% postconsumer waste, it contains at least some percentage of virgin content. This means that consideration of forestry practices is critical when it comes to greening your print marketing.



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### SECTION 5: APPLICATIONS DRIVE SUSTAINABILITY

Did you know that by making some basic changes in your document management and print marketing, you can reduce your carbon footprint, use fewer trees, use less petroleum, and improve your bottom line at the same time? It starts, not with the paper or ink you spec, but with the fundamental way you manage your documents.

By utilizing today's digital production and Web-to-print (Web commerce) technologies, you can move to document management models that have a less negative impact on the environment. By printing shorter runs, you eliminate warehousing costs and the cost of outdated print, and on the environmental side, you avoid cutting down trees for no reason. Every time a book, a pamphlet, a flyer goes out of date and gets thrown in the trash before it's even read, you just the environment for nothing.

Although this report focuses largely on digital production, some of these benefits also can be claimed by offset, too.

#### Databases and the environment

What's the deal with databases? By making smarter use of your database—say, mailing only to the top 10% of your customer base—you reduce the amount of printed material you use. If you combine this with smart use of print personalization (reducing your print volumes by including only relevant material), you could earn even more revenues than on a larger static mailing.

Some great examples can be found in the companion reports on digital-printing-driven marketing models, including “Digital Printing: Transforming Business and Marketing Models”; “1:1 (Personalized) Printing: Boosting Profits Through Relevance”; and “Personalized URLs: Beyond the Hype.” Although these reports focus on the marketing benefits of these technologies, the green benefits can be seen by looking at them through a different lens.

Nearly every digital and 1:1 case study has some positive environmental impact, as well as a positive bottom line impact, because of the production process and the reduction in print volumes that attend it.

For example, the Baan Company, a provider of B2B commerce solutions, wanted to reduce costs from obsolete collateral, reduce inventory costs and complexity of management, and improve time to market for document changes and updates. Before implementing a digital, print-on-demand workflow, 60% of its brochures were thrown away. By switching to centralized, online on-demand



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### SECTION 6: TARGETING THE GREEN CONSUMER

As much as greening your print marketing is the right thing to do for the planet, let's face it. It's also good marketing. Consumers want to purchase products and purchase from companies they feel good about. Helping customers feel good about your environmental stewardship is just another way to feel good about you. It's why Johnson & Johnson talks about using wind power in its television advertisements and why SunChips promotes its "one-third compostable" packaging on its snack chip bags.

#### Current state of consumer attitudes



What is the current state of the general consumer on the issue of green products? Grail Research recently conducted a survey of 500 consumers on issues related to the purchase of green products. In its conclusion, it referred to green as mainstream and sticky, but not deep.

According to the study, "The Green Revolution" (September 2009),

- 84% of consumers say that either some or most of the products they purchase are green (mainstream)
- Only 1% say that they used to buy green products but no longer do (sticky)
- Only 8% of consumers make green the primary factor in their purchase decisions (not deep)

The number one reason people are deterred from buying green products? These products are perceived as being too expensive, with 69% of respondents giving this answer. Forty percent view green products as not offering enough variety and choice.

What is the difference between the moderately interested (light green consumers) and the very committed (dark green consumers)?