



Green Marketing 101: A Step-by-Step Guide

Introduction

Due to increased demand from businesses and consumers alike, everyone, it seems, is talking about going “green.” UPS, for example, placed the largest single commercial order ever for alternative-fuel vehicles in May 2008, while some environmentally-concerned pest control companies now offer non-toxic pest management alternatives.

However, while going “green” sounds great, it’s not always easy to figure out which environmentally responsible choices to make. It’s been years, for example, since consumers first began to grapple with the paper versus plastic dilemma at the supermarket checkout, yet confusion still reigns about this most basic of decisions. Recycle the bags? Use your own canvas bags? Ask for paper?

The more educated we become about the array of choices available to us, the more confusing those choices seem – especially when it comes to business and marketing.

Just think about the decisions to produce a mailer: Recycled paper versus certified paper? Soy-based inks versus traditional inks? Window-free envelopes versus varnish-free self-mailers? Which of these well-intentioned choices will have a truly positive effect on the environment, and which are simply gestures that make us feel good but have little or no impact?





Going “Green” with Your Marketing Projects

Ferrante & Associates, Inc., a Boston-based multi-channel provider of design, print, web, mail and fulfillment solutions, has developed this guide to help you make smart environmental choices when it comes to your marketing projects.

We’ll help you sort through all your options as you specify paper and inks for your next job and will provide the most efficient methods for printing, designing your mailing, creating a mailing list, and more. And, we’ll help you determine what these choices will mean for your bottom line – and how they can help you grow your business and connect with your customers.

The good news is that the marketing profession and the industries associated with it have become more and more proactive and systematic about making green marketing a reality. Recent efforts to develop certifications and verifications for green products used in the production of marketing materials has taken much of the guesswork out of making environmentally-friendly choices and gives us a way to let our customers know about our commitment to the environment.

And, according to the Direct Marketing Association (DMA), which recently came out with a set of 15 benchmarks of environmental progress, the benefits of going green range from reduced pollution and a cleaner environment to potentially lower costs, improved customer relations, and opportunities to enhance your brand. Going green also sets a positive example for employees, provides a cleaner and healthier work environment, and can have a positive effect on employee morale.

The recommendations that follow have been put together to help you take the first steps towards making your marketing projects more environmentally-friendly. You don’t need to follow all these suggestions at once. Taking just a few small steps can have a huge environmental impact.

Step One:

Consider the Entire Campaign

Your efforts to go green with your next marketing campaign will be most effective if you plan ahead. Just as you think about your target audience and campaign objectives, you'll want to think about your goals in going green. What do you want to accomplish, and which aspects of your campaign should you focus on to achieve your goals? If you're planning a big direct mail project, for example, each phase of the project, from de-duping the mail list to choosing the right paper, can and does impact the environment.

And, you'll also want to consider your budget. Yes, going green does drive up costs and a 100% "green" campaign can cost considerably more than a campaign that includes a few green components.





Step Two:

Choose the Right Papers

TAPPI, an international technical association for the paper industry, reports that on an annual basis, Americans use more than 90 million short tons of paper and paperboard, for an average of 700 pounds of paper products per person each year. This has sweeping implications for the environment, from the number of trees that are harvested to produce paper, to the quantities of chemicals that are used in the paper-making process.

Fortunately, the paper industry has undertaken a number of initiatives to help reduce the environmental impact of its activities. According to the American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA), AF&PA members have reduced their environmental footprint in the following ways:

- Reduced emissions by 16% between 2000 and 2004, and committed to reducing emissions by an additional 12% by 2012.
- Recovered 53.4% or 53.5 million tons of paper from landfills.
- Agreed to operate under third party / certified sustainable guidelines from the following organizations and/or initiatives: American Tree Farm, Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).
- Increased reliance on recovered paper – approximately 80% of mills do so and approximately one-third rely on recovered paper exclusively.
- Phased out the use of elemental chlorine to bleach pulp.

Thanks to sustainable forestry practices, more land is actually devoted to forest in America today than in 1900.

What you can do: Get to know about paper stock you use for your marketing projects and ask what the paper mills are doing to help the environment.

Recycled paper: Understanding your options

Paper recycling has reached record levels, according to the AF&PA. In 2007, 56% of the paper consumed in the U.S. was recovered for recycling. Paper recycling not only saves trees, it saves fuel and water, reduces pollution, and cuts down on waste being dumped in landfills or incinerated.

But not all recycled paper is created equal, and the presence of the ubiquitous recycling symbol is no guarantee that you are making the best choice from an environmental standpoint.

Recycled paper may incorporate three types of recycled material:

- Mill broke is composed of trimmings and scrap from the paper production process – it never leaves the mill and is recycled internally.
- Pre-consumer waste is material that was discarded before it reached the consumer – for example, paper that has been trimmed during the printing process. Even before recycling became fashionable, paper mills incorporated mill broke and post-consumer waste into their paper production in order to save money.
- Post-consumer waste is material such as old newspapers, phone books, and paperboard that has been used by consumers and recycled.

Recycled paper made from post-consumer waste is preferable to paper made from pre-consumer waste because it uses material that might otherwise end up in a landfill or an incinerator. The Environmental Defense Fund recommends purchasing products made with as much post-consumer waste as possible. If you must select paper made with virgin fibers, be sure to choose paper made from wood that has been harvested in a sustainable way (see below).

Available in a beautiful array of textures and colors, recycled paper can be produced with the same brightness and smoothness of non-recycled paper. It performs as well as virgin paper in printing presses as well as in copiers and office printers.

You'll find recycled paper in a range of grades, including acid free paper for projects where longevity is a concern. And, prices of many types of recycled paper, notably text and cover stock and some coated papers, have become competitive with non-recycled paper.

Although recycled copier and offset paper still cost somewhat more, the price difference is rapidly narrowing.

What you can do: Use recycled paper with as much post-consumer recycled content as possible to help reduce pollution, save trees, and reduce the burden on landfills and incinerators.

What about Certified Paper?

While the increased popularity and availability of recycled paper is very encouraging, recycling is only one way that the environmental impact of paper production can be reduced. Logging can pollute water and destroy habitats, displacing not only animals but indigenous people who live and work in the forests.

Several organizations now offer certification that qualifying paper has been made in an environmentally-responsible manner. These certifications help consumers identify paper that has been produced with minimal environmental and social impact.

One of these programs has been established by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), an association of loggers, foresters, environmentalists, and sociologists dedicated to promoting sustainable forestry practices.



Paper certified by the FSC complies with a set of strict environmental and social standards. Fiber from FSC-certified forests is tracked all the way to the consumer through the chain of custody certification system, including forests, pulp providers, mills, paper merchants, and printers. When you specify FSC-certified paper for a project, you can be assured that you are using paper that has been produced with a minimum of social and environmental impact.

Certification and oversight programs are also run by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), the Rainforest Alliance, and other programs.

One caveat: The fact that the paper you've specified bears the FSC certification logo does not guarantee that the printer is certified. Printers must go through a rigorous process to obtain certification. And, even a certified company cannot simply stick a certification logo on its product and say it's certified. They must submit paperwork to the certifying body that shows the entire chain of custody for the paper, from the forest to the printer. In return, they'll receive a chain of custody certification guaranteeing that the product is certified.

What you can do: Purchase paper certified by the FSC or another reputable organization and encourage your paper merchant to purchase materials from recognized forest certification programs. Ask to see the chain-of-custody certification to be sure the products you use are truly certified. Finally, make sure that your printer is certified as well.

What is paper bleaching?

Paper manufacturers often use chlorine or chlorine derivatives to make their paper white. The practice is harmful to the environment, and in fact, has been identified as one of the worst sources of water pollution.

Fortunately, there is an alternative – papers produced without the use of chlorine. As with so many other environmental choices, there is much confusion surrounding different bleaching terminology. Treecycle Recycled Paper provides the following definitions:

- **Totally chlorine free (TCF)** - No chlorine or chlorine derivatives used to make the paper, which means the paper must come from virgin (new) fiber.
- **Elementally chlorine free (ECF)** - No chlorine gas, but other chemicals containing chlorine are used for bleaching. ECF paper is often misrepresented as TCF.
- **Process chlorine free (PCF)** - Recycled paper processed back into paper using no chlorine or chlorine derivatives. This paper is not re-bleached, or it has been bleached using an oxygen-based process. Secondarily chlorine free (SCF) is the same as PCF.

What you can do: If you're using recycled paper, ask for PCF-recycled paper. If you must use virgin paper, specify TCF paper.





Step Three:

Choose Environmentally-Friendly Printing Processes

The printing industry, like the paper industry, has overhauled its practices in an effort to “go green,” from switching to environmentally-friendly inks to changing the chemicals they chosen to clean and maintain the presses. But printers vary widely in their compliance with environmentally-friendly practices, so when you choose a printer, be sure to ask about the company’s practices.

Petroleum-based inks, the conventional choice of printers, contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs) that emit toxic gases as they dry. VOCs are hazardous to humans and can cause a range of health problems, from eye irritation to damage to the central nervous system. They also contribute to air pollution.

Environmentally-conscious printers have switched to vegetable-based inks, with little or no mineral oil content. Often these inks are soy-based. Soybeans require little energy to grow or harvest, and generally need little irrigation. And, soybean plants help to remove greenhouse gases from the environment.

The use of non-toxic inks is not only beneficial before and during the printing process – paper printed with soy ink is easier to recycle, too. According to the National Soy Ink Information Center, “soy ink is removed more effectively from newsprint than petroleum ink during de-inking, resulting in less paper fiber damage and a brighter paper.”

And, there’s even more good news about vegetable-based inks – they offer better quality and are richer and brighter than their petroleum-based predecessors, according to the National Soy Ink Information Center.

Soy inks are less likely to rub off, which is especially important for newspaper readers. Plus, soy inks are laser proof, so when exposed to the heat of a laser printer or photocopier, the ink is less likely to be transferred to machine parts instead of the paper. Finally, soy ink is stable, so the press operator will make fewer adjustments during a run and reject fewer copies due to inferior quality.

In addition to using FSC-certified and recycled paper, and printing with vegetable-based inks, an environmentally-conscious printer will also:

- Reduce the amount of paper needed by printing efficiently
- Recycle all waste paper
- Use vegetable oil-based, water soluble washes for cleaning presses
- Recycle solvents used in the printing process, as well as liquid wastes, such as oil
- Recycle other materials used in the industry, for example wood pallets
- Use up-to-date, computer-to-plate printing technology, to eliminate the use of certain chemicals, such as fixer, and use energy-saving presses
- Avoid or minimize print overruns, waste allowances, and in-process waste

What you can do: Ask your printer what steps he or she has taken to help protect the environment.

Step Four:

Choosing Environmentally-Friendly Mailing and Fulfillment

Design a “Green” marketing piece

The Charlottesville, Virginia-based company MBDC (McDonough Braungart Design Chemistry) has introduced a new production paradigm called cradle-to-cradle® design. Shifting away from the cradle-to-grave paradigm introduced with the industrial revolution, MBDC has established criteria for products which enable the ongoing circulation of materials in closed loops, maintaining the greatest material value without damaging ecosystems.

What does this mean for your next marketing project? Cradle-to-cradle® certified packaging is not only made from recycled materials – it’s easily recyclable after use. This means switching to windowless envelopes (the plastic window material impedes recycling), using vegetable-based inks, and choosing uncoated paper, which is easier to recycle.

But cradle-to-cradle® certification goes far beyond recycling. It begins in the design stage of your project, taking into account the environmental impact of the manufacturing process of the materials you’re using, and the efficiency with which the product can be shipped.

In addition to considering the entire life cycle of your marketing piece, evaluate using downsized pieces. Would a smaller mailing be as effective as a larger one? Can any extras in the mailing be eliminated? Can you print on both sides of the paper?

What you can do: Find ways to trim the fat from your marketing project and make sure each component can be recycled easily after use.

Use a clean mailing list

Recent studies suggest that maintaining a clean mailing list can benefit your bottom line as well as the planet. The Aberdeen Group reports that 85% of companies who practice careful list management “experience year-over-year improvement in customer retention levels,” compared to only 5% of those who do not. And, the report continues, “best-in-class companies have achieved a 266 percent improvement in customer profitability compared to laggards.”

Bottom line: Use a clean mailing list. For starters, eliminate duplicate addresses, update changed addresses, correct zip codes, and identify undeliverable addresses. Maintain an in-house Do Not Market list. With every mailing, give recipients the option to receive only mailings of interest or to opt out of receiving your mailings so you’re not sending unwanted mail.

And, be sure your list is targeted. Know the demographics of the zip codes you’re mailing to and ensure that they’re appropriate for your product or service. For example, it doesn’t make sense for a roofing contractor to target a neighborhood that is predominantly made up of rental units!

What you can do: Take steps to ensure that your list is clean, if necessary, with the help of a company specializing in list management.

Alternatives to paper

More and more companies are using electronic marketing campaigns as an alternative to paper in an effort to go green. While some situations do call for a printed marketing piece, consider e-mail or an e-newsletter as an alternative whenever possible. Electronic communications have become increasingly popular, particularly for internal communications.





Step Five:

Call Ferrante & Associates for help with your Green Marketing projects

Ferrante & Associates offers a spectrum of multi-channel marketing solutions. Reliable finished products are based upon a single point-of-contact approach, integrated and developed to make your life easier. If you're facing a pile of time-sensitive projects – marketing promotions, trade shows or meetings, collateral materials to design and print, direct mail promotions to be produced or integrated data-driven programs utilizing web-to-print and online fulfillment solutions – Ferrante can help you.

In addition, we're committed to being on the forefront of "Green" marketing processes – to help our clients by identifying marketing choices that are both affordable and environmentally friendly and recommending solutions that lessen environmental damage and preserve the environment for future generations.

If you're looking for a company that is proactive, anticipates potential obstacles, and overcomes problems before they can affect your quality, schedule or bottom line, then call Ferrante & Associates!

For more information:

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Like many of our clients, you're probably swamped with work and find it hard to keep abreast of all the dizzying changes taking place within the marketing industry. Ferrante & Associates offers a free newsletter to help you keep up with marketing industry trends, from the latest in green marketing to vanity URLs and print on demand. You'll receive tips and strategies to make your marketing job a little easier – from printing and fulfillment to online and creative.

To sign up, visit:

<http://www.ferranteassoc.com/news/index.php>

Resources

Aberdeen Group
<http://www.aberdeen.com/summary/report/benchmark/4635-RA-green-marketing-waste.asp>

American Forest and Paper Association (AF&PA)
http://www.afandpa.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Environment_and_Recycling/Recycling/Recycling.htm

Direct Marketing Association (DMA) Environmental Resource Center
www.the-dma.org/environment/

Environmental Defense Fund
<http://www.edf.org/article.cfm?contentid=552>

Environmental Leader
<http://www.environmentalleader.com/2008/03/12/green-companies-use-list-hygiene-to-trim-waste>

Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
<http://www.fscus.org/paper/>

Go-Green.com
<http://www.go-green.com>

National Soy Ink Information Center
<http://www.soyink.com/>

Rainforest Alliance
<http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/forestry.cfm?id=certification>

Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)
<http://www.sfiprogram.org/aboutsfi.cfm>

TAPPI, an international technical association for the paper industry
http://www.tappi.org/paperu/all_about_paper/faq.htm

Treecycle Recycled Paper
<http://www.treecycle.com/recycling.html>

United States Postal Service
<http://www.usps.com/green/>