

Sustainability Reaches the Print Community

Consumers are driving corporations toward sustainable behavior, asking for a report card on corporate actions and requiring authenticity in green claims.

BY TRISH WALES

The practice of sustainability is maturing. No longer is a recycled paper certification enough to satisfy the demands of today's sophisticated consumer. Consumers are driving companies to have an articulated sustainability strategy.

Green behavior has gone main stream and even reached the world of soap operas. *Time* Magazine colored its cover border green in an issue devoted to sustainability. This was only the third time in its history that the familiar red frame changed. Green is exploding.

The communications workflow is falling in line and adopting the mantra of sustainability.

The Pira-Intertech Sustainability in Printing Conference brought a diverse group of experts together to share their expertise and reflect on sustainability in business as well as on the planet. This topic is on the radar screen and businesses are scrambling to be green. The path is not obvious.

Various points of view were presented, questioned and debated during the conference. This was not a conference for idle assertions. Data and research challenged some commonly held beliefs as new information emerged about recycling papers, consumer behavior and entrepreneurial efforts to make, market and sell eco friendly products.

Consumers are driving corporations toward sustainable behavior, asking for a report card on corporate actions and requiring authenticity in green claims. Print may not have been at the top of the list of many corporations to examine but print is get-

ting more and more attention as clients want to know the practices of all the companies with whom they are doing business.

Sustainability Can Be Profitable

Keynote speaker Don Carli, an industry leader as well as a thoughtful expert from the Institute for Sustainable Communications, provided insight on the path to sustainability. "Sustainability is an aspiration, a journey, not a goal." It often boils down to optimizing energy use, to reducing waste, to being more productive and consequently more profitable.

"Digital media does not grow on trees," he continued. Digital data centers are mostly powered by coal fired plants. The need to maintain expanding digital assets has resulted in a doubling of their energy consumption since 2006. Consuming one ton of coal generates two tons of carbon dioxide along with toxic wastes. The time has come to document energy usage along with material usage and begin the conservation journey. Life cycle analysis, metadata for products, peer reviewed sustainability claims, and cessation of artificial labeling are a few concrete recommendations from Dr. Carli. He also warned of a carbon tax within three years.

Is A Green Marketing Strategy Viable?

Surveys show that individuals want green choices. They say they want to behave in an environmentally responsible way and will pay more for environmentally friendly alternatives. The truth is that consumers demand a green choice at existing price



levels. Scott Case from Terra Choice provided insight into adopting a green marketing strategy sooner rather than later. He interpreted the tipping point as the point beyond which money cannot be made on promoting sustainability. After the tipping point is reached, businesses will have to be green and being green will become a cost of doing business, a defense measure, the ante to be in the game; instead of a marketing strategy to gain new business.

We have not reached the tipping point yet but we

are nearing the peak. Green marketing can increase your business provided it is genuine. There is no room for false claims or posturing. Sustainability practices must be transparent, observable to buyers, authenticated. Getting caught green washing is worse than not having an eco friendly position.

What About Certifications?

Conference Sponsor Domtar, an early adopter of sustainable practices in the paper segment, offers a

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SUSTAINABILITY

line of certified Earth Choice papers. Although important, Domtar's Lewis Fix reminded the attendees that paper companies have a larger role to play in sustainability than just providing certified papers. The manufacture of the paper must be done in a sustainable way.

Most mills have ISO 14001 certification, an environmental management system that indicates a level of sustainability. There is still more to consider. The paper industry is the fourth largest industrial consumer of power, much of it generated from the byproducts of harvesting trees. Responsible use of that power as well as operating mills within federal and state guidelines for air, water and solid waste are minimum requirements. Making paper requires significant quantities of water. Sustainability requires it be returned to its source as clean as when it was pumped out. Mills are also point sources for greenhouse gas emissions. The EPA monitors and audits papermakers so their performance is a matter of public record.

Paper companies have public sustainability positions explained on their web sites and additionally publish reports on their achievements. Purchasers are urged to get to know their paper suppliers' practices.

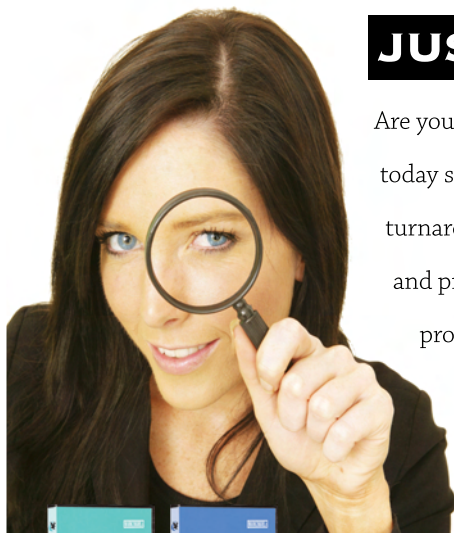
If you are a paper purchaser, guidelines exist to help with sustainable procurement of paper based products. A publication from the World Resources Institute details a 10-step method including a list of 22 resources. Paper is a global commodity and knowing its roots is critical to judging its environmental impact.

The popular FSC (Forest Stewardship Council), SFI (Sustainable Forestry Initiative) and PEFC (Programme for Endorsement of Forest Certification) certifications are earned by the owners of the forests while the associated Chain of Custody, a paperwork trail following the certified trees, is awarded to those in the supply chain. These third-party verified certifications help identify responsible forestry practices in purchased paper. Representatives of SFI and FSC explained their certifications and Keri Davis from the

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Rainforest Alliance provided a comparison of key attributes. A new certification for printers—SGP (Sustainable Green Printing)—is emerging, sponsored by PIA/GATE. This comprehensive environmental certification program is under development. Its scope will include product design aspects as well as input materials, process employed and the envelope surrounding the process which encompasses all manufacturing support activities.

Recycled Papers Not Always Eco Optimized

Landfills contain 40 percent paper and recycling is a way to reduce this number. However, there are complications. A surprising report from PIRA's Jack Miller revealed that recycled paper is not always the optimum enviro choice. From a large publisher:

We focus on carbon footprint. In a meeting with one supplier (mill) in Maine, we decided on three things to reduce carbon footprint:

►First, no recycled pulp because the deinked mill was 800 miles away;

►Second, no FSC because lots of small, local landowners have been in business for generations, obviously sustainable, and local;

►Third, all rail car loads because rail cars use energy more efficiently than trucks.

Making the best decision for the environment is not always a simple choice.

Significant quantities of paper have been removed from our landfills in the last ten years, a stated and desirable goal of the papermaking community. In fact, waste paper is our single largest export, primarily headed to China where it is used as a fiber source for packaging and fine papers, and often sold back to this country.

Consumer Behavior Spills Into Business Buying Patterns

Miller reported that green consumers are younger, wealthier and located in the Northeast, Northwest, Minnesota and the mountains. Consumers typically engage in easy environmentally friendly behaviors

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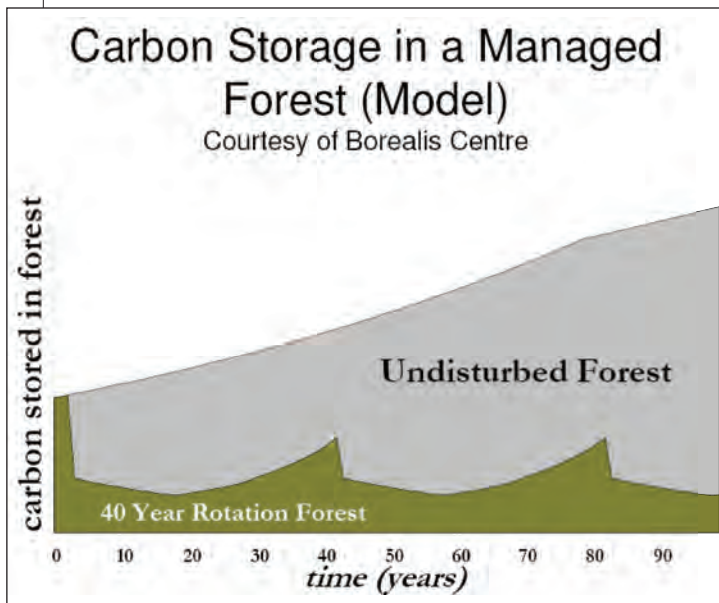


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such as recycling cans and newspapers but often fail to adopt more difficult practices like carpooling or using public transportation. Their voice is heard, however, when they ask for environmentally friendly practices from the companies that provide them goods and services.

In response, corporations are adopting a triple bottom line posture with public positions on their profitability, social structure and environmental policies. Such reporting started with the largest publicly held companies and is expanding to include both large and small businesses. Several experts reinforced the belief that consumers do drive this corporate behavior with their demands. Green is the new black as the expression goes.

Consumers carry their beliefs to their jobs and want their marketing materials and print to reflect sustainability. Print buyers now demand certifications and carbon neutrality even though they are not willing to pay extra for them. RFQs have an environmental component, carefully considered after the right price is established.

Environmentalists to the Rescue?

Environmentalists do not have all the answers. These scientists are not the extremist tree huggers of the past. Sustainable answers are complicated, and understanding environmental impact has many facets. Our understanding of the value of the forests is increasing. Biodiversity that comes from a forest ecosystem may be critical to our longevity and we

are losing forests at an alarming rate. Frank Locantore from Co-op America compared tree plantations to forests. Plantations require pesticides and fertilizers for growth, have 90 percent less biodiversity than forests and their long-term viability is questionable (see illustration to the left).

Even worse, decaying landfills (remember-40 percent paper) emit methane, a greenhouse gas with 23 times the heat trapping power of carbon dioxide. He urged reduction of paper waste; more post consumer content in recycled papers; use of recycled papers; and, at the top of the list, get started with responsible paper use and choice. Partner with your supply chain, create a road map, build a team, get help. Reduce, reuse, recycle is the message.

Corporate Road Map to Sustainability

Corporations have heard the call to arms. The largest are first on board and paving the way. Publicly traded companies include sustainability in their portfolios.

Rick Mazur from Kodak advises building a culture that looks at green, engaging all employees. Kodak has a Green Knights program to reward their employees and a downloadable kit for sustainability on their web site.

Early adopting and privately held Pictorial Offset began their sustainability journey a few years ago. Sales have doubled and new business has been secured by going green. Industry recognition and productivity increases are other business benefits. Pictorial's Gary Pawlaczyk advises that sustainability is a thought process. It is not just about certifications although their ISO 14001 environmental certification, first for a printer, helped move them along the sustainability path.

Sustainability Is Here to Stay

The Intertech Pira Sustainability Conference brought content and issues to light. The answers are not to be found in a textbook but the compelling message is clear. Sustainability is here to stay because we are waking up to the fragility of our life style. Individuals are consumers and they buy with their belief system in mind. They want green products and want the businesses they work with to be environmentally friendly. The buying public believes businesses have a responsibility not only for the quality of product and service they produce but for the cradle to grave impact of what they produce. It's smart business to be sustainable. And it can even be profitable. 