

Being Green Can Bring in More Green

Workshop Shows Printers How To Improve The Bottom Line Through Sustainability

By Mary Waters

Printers learned that going green can actually add to their bottom line at a day of workshops hosted by Printing Industries Alliance (PIA) Feb. 20 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Secaucus, N.J. The event, entitled "Sustainability: What Being GREEN Really Means" was moderated by PIA Vice President Vicki Keenan.

Gary Jones, director of environment, Health & Safety Affairs for Printing Industries of America/Graphic Arts Technical Foundation (PIA/GATF), noted that the idea of sustainability is not new, but in the past year, many more customers are demanding it. Jones and several other speakers attributed the recent interest in sustainability to several factors, including Al Gore's documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth," creating an increased awareness of global warming, and how everyone has an effect on the environment.

Environmental groups have also been stepping up pressure on companies that produce large quantities of printed material. A case in point is Limited Brands' Victoria's Secret, which had been mailing more than a million catalogs a day that contained little to no recycled content, and used paper logged from endangered forests. Environmental groups including ForestEthics conducted a public awareness campaign that included more than 750 protests and events aimed at drawing attention to Victoria's Secret's practices. The unrelenting pressure led to Victoria's Secret announcing a new forest protection policy in which the company pledged to increase the use of recycled paper in its catalogs. ForestEthics' latest target is Sears.

Another driver for sustainability has been Wal-Mart and its supplier "packaging scorecard" that was announced in late 2006. Through this initiative, the retailer plans to reduce packaging in its global supply chain by 5 percent by 2013.

Also on the horizon are "Do Not Mail" registry bills that are being considered by several state governments that would work in a similar fashion to the National Do Not Call Registry, and would prevent unwanted mailing of direct mail and catalogs.

To avoid receiving negative publicity from environmental groups, many corporations are establishing sustainability programs, and creating a new position—the corporate sustainability officer (CSO).

Jones said printers can respond to demands for environmental sustainability in three areas of their business: product issues, printing process issues, and what he termed "envelope" issues, which include buildings, grounds, and employees. Product issues include practices like using more recycled paper, and using inks and coatings that are low in volatile organic compounds (VOCs), vegetable-oil based, and heavy-metal free, as well as low-VOC cleaning solutions.

As far as printing process issues, Jones noted that filtration systems for fountain solutions are great for reducing pollutants, and although they are "a little pricey," they enable fountain solutions to be changed less often.

Envelope issues include reducing water and electricity use, and recycling waste materials. Suggestions in this area included the use of more fuel-efficient transportation and energy-efficient light bulbs.

Jones also discussed the Sustainable Green Printing Partnership (SGP), an organization founded by PIA/GATF, the Specialty Graphic Imaging Association (SGIA), and the Flexographic Technical Association (FTA). The stated mission of the group is to "reduce environmental impact and increase social responsibility of the print and graphic communications industry through sustainable green printing practices."

Jones commented that print buyers have been requesting lists of "green" printers, but such a list is not available yet because there is currently no criteria. He noted that the SGP plans to make an announcement on beta criteria next month at the National Health and Safety Conference, and then do testing and look for feedback from printers.

Mark Evers, business development manager for SGS Systems and Services Certification, Rutherford, N.J., described how his company conducts audits to enable printers to achieve

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Chain of Custody (CoC) certification from standards organizations such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), which offer certification programs for firms that practice responsible forest management. Certified companies can then label their products FSC or SFI-certified, assuring consumers that the products are made from material harvested from responsibly managed forests.

Richard Schielke, national business development manager for Mohawk Fine Papers, discussed "Sustainability From a Printing, Paper, and Design Perspective." Schielke noted that globally, the paper industry is the world's single largest industrial user of water, and the third largest industrial emitter of global warming pollution.

He suggested a list of questions a printer should ask before designing, specifying, or buying anything, including: Do we really need it? Can it be smaller or lighter? Is it durable or multifunctional? Does it use

renewable resources? Does it use less toxic material?

Suggestions he offered to reduce paper use included using digital printing, shorter runs, combining gang runs, and buying paper that fits the size of the job. He also suggested using paper with 100-percent post consumer waste (PCW) fiber, and uncoated rather than coated paper, which yields less recyclable fiber. He offered a checklist to minimize waste, which included: ordering just enough, making printed pieces smaller, avoiding complex folding and binding, and minimizing ink coverage.

Stefanie Gitter Feldman, director of sustainable business development projects for the Industrial Technical Assistance Corp., New York, discussed the benefits of "green" building, and noted that the demand for green buildings is rising as a way to reduce energy and operating costs. Feldman noted that there are various tax credits and incentives for companies that use green building methods, and that this type of building can actually improve employee productivity.

Michael Brice, national director, sales and marketing for National Energy Services Co. Inc., discussed how printers can reduce their energy use through lighting system upgrades, HVAC improvement, and wireless energy management. Brice noted that a lighting upgrade can provide the quickest return on investment, with the ability to reduce energy costs by 50 percent, by such methods as replacing incandescent lamps with compact fluorescent lamps, and replacing metal halide fixtures with T-5 fluorescent fixtures.

Brice noted that in addition to cost savings, companies can also promote themselves as being green. As an example, he mentioned that Sandy Alexander, a printer located in Clifton, N.J., obtains 100 percent of the power it uses from wind.

Representatives from Sandy Alexander who were in attendance noted that the company participates in a program run by the local power authority, which offers a choice of power produced by renewable sources. Although the company pays about 10 percent more for renewable power, the higher cost is offset by increased business from Fortune

500 companies looking to reduce their carbon footprint.

Lou Troiano, account manager, Reliable Paper Recycling/Reliable Wood Products, Jersey City, N.J., explained how his company can help printers reduce waste and save money by recycling. Reliable will collect not only paper, but broken and unbroken wooden pallets, as well as plastics and Styrofoam.

Troiano said that Reliable will come to a facility and identify what waste is recyclable, then manage it, collect it, and transport it out using one truck. "It's a win-win situation for the printer," he noted, who saves on waste removal costs, and even receives a rebate check for the recycled material. Troiano says that the company's goal is to help companies achieve a zero landfill initiative.

All in all, the workshop illustrated the advantages that going green can provide to printers' profitability by reducing costs and pollution, and attracting customers who are seeking to reduce their carbon footprint.

Mary Waters is a freelance writer.

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