

How to Go Green *with* Print Design

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During Planning & Concepting:

Consider converting the printed piece to an electronic publication.

Plan ahead and allow sufficient time for all projects. Saves on rush charges, oversights and mistakes, and stress.

Consider whether or not the printed piece will be a wise return on investment.

Ensure there is an effective distribution plan in place for your printed piece.

Consider having your print piece serve two purposes; for example, a brochure on one side, poster on the other.

Save the envelope and plan on making your printed piece a self-mailer.

During Design:

Work with your printer early on to determine the size of your piece. Maximize print sheet use, minimize waste.

Consider a design without bleed; bleeds impact the waste stream.

Save resources and energy by using fewer ink colors, perhaps 2 instead of 4.

Avoid metallic and fluorescent inks; you can't recycle them and many contain toxic compounds and carcinogens.

Consider design with fewer or no full page ink floods. All that ink has to be removed during recycling.

Proof on screen as much as possible. Think before you ink! Send pdf proofs via e-mail to clients for review.

Tout your green efforts on your printed pieces. Everyone, including your donors, will be impressed.

During Printing and Producing:

Choose local vendors and printers. Stimulate your local economy, and save on gas and shipping costs.

Choose FSC certified printers, and printers who use vegetable-based inks versus petroleum-based inks.

Use uncoated paper versus coated paper. Coated paper has a clay coating that has to be removed during recycling, therefore 40% less fiber is extracted from coated paper than uncoated paper during the recycling process.

Consider paper with recycled content. 100% post consumer waste (PCW) paper is considered "greenest".

Research any finishes you are interested in using on your printed piece; some are harmful to the environment and very difficult to recycle.

Avoid foil stamping, UV varnishes, thermography, and lamination.

Go greener with an aqueous varnish, embossing, engraving or a die cut.

If not using recycled paper, consider one which is FSC certified.

Consider Elemental Chlorine Free or Totally Chlorine Free paper.

Consider paper from a source using sustainable energy in production.

Some paper companies making beautiful, environmentally-friendly papers are Monadnock, Neenah, Mohawk, Sappi.

Consider toner-based digital printing. It is least environmentally invasive. Perfect for jobs with smaller quantities.

Consider asking for pdf proofs from vendors versus hard-copy proofs. Saves gas and shipping, saves time, saves paper.

Miscellaneous:

Keep learning, researching and asking questions.

Think before you ink! Limit desktop printing and photo copying. Print double-sided.

Look for ways to save resources, time and energy, and ways to reduce waste in your company or institution.

Form a "green team" at your company or institution.

11 questions to ask before you design, specify or buy anything:

1. Do we need it? Can we live without it?
2. Is the project designed to minimize waste?
3. Can it be smaller, lighter or made from fewer materials?
4. Is it designed to be durable or multi-functional?
5. Does it use renewable resources?
6. Is reuse practical and encouraged?
7. Are the product and packaging refillable, recyclable or repairable?
8. Is it made with post-consumer recycled or reclaimed materials and how much?
9. Are the materials available in a less toxic form? Can it be made with less toxic materials?
10. Is it available from a socially and environmentally responsible company?
11. Is it made locally?