

# Tips on Designing Green

by Lauren Smith

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With the world population growing at an alarming rate and our natural resources per capita shrinking every year, there is an ever increasing concern for conservation and sustainability. Industry has taken notice and many companies are shouldering the responsibility of finding ways to be less polluting and more diligent in their efforts to diminish their environmental footprint. For those of us in the graphic arts related industries the responsibility is particularly heavy. The printing industry is the world's third largest polluter\* right behind the auto industry and steel manufacturing. Designers and marketing professionals have the opportunity to play a key role in the move toward sustainability by finding creative ways to communicate using fewer natural resources, specifying more environmentally-friendly printing methods and choosing biodegradable or reusable materials. Here are a few guidelines to follow:

- Try to develop design solutions that have high visual impact but low environmental impact. Does the brochure need to be printed or would a PDF be as effective?
- Specify recycled paper with a high post consumer fiber content.
- Specify recycled paper that has not been de-inked. The de-inking process results in toxic waste.
- When possible specify unbleached paper stock. Bleaching results in toxins that are harmful to wildlife.
- Select uncoated paper stock.
- Consider using treeless paper. Papers are being developed today using bamboo, hemp and kenaf instead of wood.
- Use a printer that prints with renewable vegetable-based inks.
- Avoid the use of metals such as foil stamping and metallic inks.
- Avoid the use of synthetic adhesives. Some of these substances can take hundreds of years to break down.
- Use the smallest possible paper size for each project.
- Ask your printer what is the most efficient trim size for your job to avoid paper waste.
- Consider using digital printing that eliminates film and plates.
- Avoid overpackaging. Does that direct mail flyer need to be mailed in an envelope or can it be self-mailing?
- Substitute cellulose for plastic in windowed envelopes.
- Choose manufacturers that utilize renewable energy to power their plants.
- Stay abreast of technology. New techniques and practices are constantly being developed for green design.

\*Source: Imhoff, Daniel, "Paper or Plastic: Searching for Solutions to an Overpackaged World", Sierra Club Books

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