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## Special Sustainability Report: Embrace Certification, Conservation

Nov 1, 2008

By Ed Farley

IN THIS new era of environmental responsibility, the message of "green" implies that a company uses state-of-the-art business practices and promotes good corporate citizenship. For a print provider, going green can transform an ordinary printed product into a powerful marketing tool, even as it serves customers as their most durable and trusted communication vehicle.

As more and more customers look for environmentally responsible vendors, the decision to turn printing operations green can positively impact a company's bottom line. The key for business owners in taking advantage of this new market opportunity is gaining certification for processes and facilities, from the materials used to the operations implemented. This assures customers of the integrity of your environmental initiatives.

Consider this: Consumers routinely pay more for a "certified" automobile because they know it has been thoroughly inspected and approved. Likewise, for print consumers, seeing evidence of "certified" product quality instills trust and confidence—oftentimes the tipping points in vendor selection—and opens the door for higher sales and profits in your company.

According to a Pitney Bowes online survey\* of 1,000 U.S. respondents on consumer attitudes toward the environment and the impact of direct mail, more than 87 percent stated that environmental conservation and preservation are important or somewhat important to them. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents said their opinion of advertising mail would be more positive if they knew there was a "green mail" label awarded by an independent third party, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). This survey indicates that print providers need to educate the public about their green initiatives and positive environmental impact.

It makes sense for the printing industry to offer consumers a green alternative. Our industry can synchronize its efforts of certifying the products and processes used by industry manufacturers, distributors and printers. This will create a powerful value proposition for providers that can increase sales, and for their customers who are concerned about product quality and integrity.

To join paper manufacturers and distributors in tapping this market, printers can go green by bringing their operations into compliance with all environmental regulations, and by adopting pollution prevention and resource conservation practices. As an example, consider these Green Printing Practices developed by printers and representatives of the Printing Industries of Northern California (PINC):

### An Early Adopter

Alonzo Printing was perhaps the first commercial printer in the United States to achieve "green" certification. President and Owner Jim Duffy has guided his 55-employee, \$9 million, Hayward, CA-based company in implementing sustainable practices since 1988, focusing on its mission to achieve a negative carbon footprint.

Alonzo received certification in 1997 from the Alameda County Green Business Program for its environmentally responsible practices and has since been recertified twice. According to Duffy, the company is "committed to giving preference to vendors and papers that streamline our production process and partner with us to meet our goals for sus-tainability."

For example, Alonzo Printing increased its percentage of post-consumer paper usage from 31.3 percent in 2005 to 42.4 percent in 2007. "We started printing on recycled papers with high post-consumer content that saved 25 million pounds in CO<sub>2</sub> gases from 2005 through 2007. For the past year and a half, we have had no chemistry in our papers.

"We educate our employees and customers on the benefits of sustainable print solutions," Duffy adds. "We work with our vendors and manufacturers to supply products and materials that are cost-effective and sustainable. We implement programs and systems that reduce waste, save time and energy, and increase productivity. The end result is a sustainable environment."

Alonzo has realized benefits from green printing such as: the non-existent use of alcohol, recycling as an integral function, improved handling of hazardous waste, automatic use of soybean/vegetable inks, as well as better acceptance of recycled papers (offering vastly improved quality, cost-effectiveness and greater availability).

The company started printing on recycled papers in 2000, began using process-free plates in 2006 and gained FSC certification in 2007. It has reduced waste 25 percent and is aiming for a 50 percent reduction in 2008.

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1) Computerize prepress operations (eliminates photochemicals and saves water and energy).

2) Establish a solvent recycling program (saves material and reduces air pollution).

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