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*Watchdog Graphics
Production believes we can
have a powerful and very
real impact by working
together toward fully
sustainable and responsible
graphic communications.*

Our objectives:

- *Lifecycle*
 - *Design*
 - *Education*
-

Is it really easy being green?

From hybrid cars to biodegradable coffee cups, being “green” is everywhere. Sustainability and corporate social responsibility is now part of every business conversation. It’s touching every part of our daily lives and often creates confusion. Are we doing the right thing? Does it really make a difference to recycle one grocery bag? For every step we take, it seems ten more options open up. What direction should we go?

Nowhere is environmental impact more evident than in the communications industry, particularly print. Paper and printing represent 15 to 30 percent of every corporate dollar spent, with direct mail and events adding even more.¹ And despite predictions to the contrary, print continues as strong as ever. Print materials—and the financial, environmental and social consequences—appear everywhere from magazines, informational graphics, packaging, direct mail all the way to the office worker printing out digital communications such as PowerPoint handouts, e-mail and PDF documents.

Taking an analytical look at our environmental footprint means looking at the long-term as well as short-term advantages and disadvantages of alternative action. When faced with such complex issues, a common reaction can be either avoidance (“it’s too much trouble to figure all out”) or oversimplification (“This is on ‘recycled’ paper, that’s enough”). Watchdog Graphics Production believes we can have a powerful and very real impact by working together toward fully sustainable and responsible graphic communications.

Think beyond the ink

How a product is printed, distributed, used and recovered is as important as the raw materials of which it is made. Sustainability includes social and ecological factors as well as economic. Consider the entire production process, from concept and design to paper choices, printing methods, distribution, use and recovery of resources. Think beyond recycled paper and soy ink.

Lifecycle

Know how the triple bottom line (people-planet-profit) measures up for sustainable success in your next communication project. Think about “cradle-to-cradle”, that is, consider the impact of a given product throughout its lifespan. Become an undercover journalist. Answer: Who? What? Why? Where? How?

- **Who** is your audience? How will they be using the information you are presenting? Will the information be more useful in print or digital—or a combination of both?
- **What** are the impacts of doing this? What resources will it take? Consider total cost of media—direct and indirect—and both short- and long-term lifecycle cost. For example, trees are renewable resources—the primary environmental damage comes in the manufacturing of the paper.
- **Why** is this the best method of communication? Why will this method be most useful to your company and to your customers?
- **Where** are the deliverables created? Shipped? Where will the project end its lifecycle?

Sustainability calls for current economic needs to be met while maintaining the same quality of life for future generations.



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- **How** can your final piece best be recycled or reused? How will you help recover or recycle the product at the end of its life? Consider the different aspects of recycling: for example, using products that use less virgin material, the collection and processing of those recyclable materials. Many companies, such as HP and Apple have implemented take-back policies to help customers recycle their products.

Design

- From raw materials through product return and disposal, sustainability all starts with the design phase. From the beginning, design for reuse, remanufacture and recyclability—and share with your customers how they can be part of the lifecycle.
- Optimize process and consider production. Minimize paper usage through efficient design and simplify communication.
- Design your communications for durability. Think about how to be “evergreen” with content that will last past the first read. Your communications might be more effective with a combination of print and online media.
- When designing for online, keep in mind the sustainable implications of digital media: generation and consumption of electricity for servers and end-users, the printing out of color-intensive web pages, just for a few examples.

Education

- Show your street credibility. Be transparent about the sustainable decisions you have made. Use recycled logos and explain why you chose the materials used. Consider opening a dialogue on the environmental product data with your customers, offering blog space for comments on your corporate website for instance.
- Vendors, co-workers, customers, executives, stockholders: they are all part of the conversation. Communicate your concerns and involve them in your discussions. New ideas can come from any source and it keeps you in touch with your stakeholders.
- Back up the information with third-source certification for best sustainable practices, such as ISO standards (International Organization for Standardization), FSC certification (Forest Stewardship Council), Nordic Swan (the Nordic Ecolabel certification), and SmartWood paper (from Rainforest Alliance).

Real **green** makes real change

Sustainability calls for current economic needs to be met while preserving biodiversities and ecosystems to maintain the same quality of life for future generations. Stepping forward to uphold our shared responsibility for the environment and our community starts by working together. We can learn to make it easy being green by using and sharing our communication resources effectively.

Learn more at www.watchdoggraphics.com to find additional resources and information.