

How to buy greener print

Most people are aware of the controversy that surrounds the global environmental impact of the print industry. On average, our society consumes 11 tonnes of raw material to make 1 tonne of finished product, but the good news is that it doesn't have to be all doom and gloom. Latest advances in environmentally friendly products and a good working relationship with your printer, mean we can make a difference

Print remains an essential marketing and communication tool and these days it should be a priority for every printer to help educate and dispel certain myths about environmentally friendly print. It's easy to achieve, it doesn't need to be inferior in quality and often, it's not more costly. What should be clearly understood is the power and the responsibility that buyers have as consumers. When a company decides to buy a particular product, they're essentially also making an environmental decision, the impact can be far-reaching. The buyer really does effect market changes and both printers and paper suppliers will change their supplies to meet demand.

The common misconception that

recycling paper uses up more energy than using virgin stock still exists even though analyses of paper recycling throughout its "life-cycle" have proved that recycling really does save energy. The choice of recycled papers available now has grown dramatically and it's now possible to produce fantastic high quality results on recycled stocks and the market is increasing its supply to meet buyers demand. But as paper can only be recycled a number of times, we need to introduce an amount of virgin paper into the cycle, and this is where "sustainable forestry" comes in. It's a term many still don't understand fully. It means replacing felled trees yes, but also guaranteeing the complete traceability of each tree. The only

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trusted organisation endorsed by Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace is the Forestry Stewardship Council, or FSC. Whilst FSC stocks are growing they are still limited, but as more users demand to see certification, they will increase. It's about creating the demand in the marketplace.

If you intend to recycle your product, traditional laminates, UV varnishes, metallic and fluorescent inks and some adhesives all make de-inking difficult. At Beacon we only

'recycling really does save energy'

use vegetable-based inks and can now supply new generation laminates which are bio-degradable and can be recycled. Consider also, how much waste might be created by the shape of your item, and the number of proofs needed, electronic proofing is often sufficient.

When considering your "decision making power" as a print buyer, you can effect great change by choosing to work only with print businesses who effectively prove their commitment to environmentally friendly

and sustainable print. If we are to continue to be able to print without significant damage to our environment, both consumer and suppliers must work together. Print has the potential to be a genuinely sustainable industry, but the path must be walked as a team.

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- Do use recycled paper
- Choose FSC stock through an FSC registered supplier
- 'Recycle' symbol on your product
- Choose new bio-degradable recyclable laminates
- Try to reduce the processes printed items have to go through
- Try altering your design to avoid waste
- Tree planting schemes, take your printer up on their promise!