

THE MEAN GREEN PRINTING MACHINE

THEO PETTARAS of Digitalpress explains why green printing with digital is a no-brainer.

FIRST, LET'S GET SOMETHING STRAIGHT

– print is not a dirty word. No longer can the print and paper industries be made the scapegoats for deforestation, water wastage, chemical pollution and other non-sustainable practices. Why? Because the print and paper industries are two industries that have come on in leaps and bounds, changing our methods and attitudes to become truly green industries.

Jonathon Porritt, one time chairman of the UK Sustainable Development Commission put it best, when he stated: "There aren't many industries around that can aspire to becoming genuinely sustainable. The pulp and paper industry, however, is one of them. At its best, this industry is inherently sustainable."

How so? I hear you ask. From paper mill through designer, print manufacturer, fulfilment and recycling, the printed medium is one of the only communication mediums that can claim environmental friendliness through its entire life-cycle. Choosing to print on 100 percent post-consumer waste (PCW), processed chlorine free (PCF), uncoated, Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper, working with a printer who uses waterless inks, or choosing to go up the digital print path to reduce wastage and increase response rates through more targeted campaigns are all examples of print's green initiatives. Digital Printing is Green Printing.

The printing industry as a whole has done a magnificent job in putting in place a number of initiatives that educate and inform the print consumer of all the environmental developments and initiatives that have been taking place.

Environmental concerns are an increasingly important part of printing today, when people are questioning whether certain projects should even be printed. We printers embrace the need for sustainable practices and have a lot of good things going for us.

It is important to understand the fundamental differences with regards to the environmental impact between offset and digital printers. The benefits of digital printing start with making it practical and affordable

to order only as many products as you know you'll need, so there's no waste when obsolete printed materials are discarded. Digital printing requires virtually no make-ready paper, and digital printing presses such as the Kodak NexPress are certified by INGEDE (the International Association of the De-inking Industry) because it is easily de-inked in the paper recycling process.

Here are a few more reasons why digital printing is environmentally friendly:

- No VOC-emitting fountain solution chemicals
- No petroleum-based inks
- No press-cleaning chemicals
- No film/platemaking chemicals
- No metal plates, and
- No synthetic proofing materials.

Consider also that once you've printed, and have your design, document or marketing message in the final user's hands, you've used all the energy and resources needed to go into producing that particular message and it can be reused time and time again at no extra cost to the environment. However, each and every single time an email is opened, a PDF brochure is looked at, a TVC is seen or radio ad is heard, more energy in the form of electricity is being sapped up, and more damage done to the environment. After all, one of our main sources of electricity still comes from burning fossil fuels, like coal.

Print is clearly a green medium and an obvious choice for anyone trying to send an effective and green message – but what about digital print specifically? Are digital printers any greener than conventional printers? The long and short of it is, yes. With their short run capability, digital printers are not nearly as hungry as traditional offset printers.



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Gone are the days when companies had to approximate how much they needed to fill the long run capability of offset presses, produce warehouse overruns and, ultimately, pulp outdated and unused collateral. Companies can now limit their print runs to exactly the number of pieces they need, with comparable print quality to its offset counterpart. This printing method even has advantages over offset printers using soy inks. While soy comprises 86 percent oil – which isn't biodegradable – digital printing uses 100 percent non-toxic toner. Toner-based inks also produce less chemical waste.

The customised personalisation abilities of digital print allow for more targeted and sophisticated messages, yielding higher response rates and, ultimately, higher returns with fewer printed pieces. The high value, short run material produced by digital printers means that digital print has a much smaller environmental footprint to offset printers who are limited to long run pieces with little to no customisation.

So, what about the other environmental aspects of digital printing? In general digital printing is environmentally friendly, as previously mentioned, through the ability of "just in time" printing for items like books rather than warehousing of books printed in large print runs. Such books are frequently unsold and may well be pulped. Digital printing generally has very little in the way of paper wastage. Also most equipment suppliers have good procedures for recovery and recycling of used consumables.

The print industry itself has in place a number of initiatives to encourage printers to become more environmentally friendly, and assist media buyers in recognising and locating green print service providers. The Graphic Arts Services Association of Australia (GASAA) has a flagship environmental management course called "Truly Green", which trains providers to implement cost- and waste-effective environmental management systems that are compliant with international standards (ISO14001), and its recently launched 'Carbon Footprint Scheme' rates a providers' environmental footprint, similar to the white goods energy rating scheme. Log on to www.gasaa.asn.au to find a Truly Green Printer or learn more about the programs.

With the current green pressures to conform to strict environmental practices I believe that digital printing is doing an excellent job, and I also see a major commitment from all suppliers to the environment. **DT**

Theo Pettaras is a self-confessed design junkie and veteran in the printing industry. He was one of the first commercial printers to become an exclusive digital print producer, commencing his Sydney company, Digitalpress, in 2005. He is also obsessed with Helvetica.

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www.digitalpress.com.au