

DMA Advice for Protecting the Environment & Your Bottom Line

– Where Paper Comes From: Recycled Fiber Sources –

As demand for paper products remains high, and as the availability of recovered paper continues to vary, the need for responsible management of paper resources becomes increasingly important. This fact sheet discusses the role recycling and recycled materials play in the direct marketing process, and includes important definitions, resources and questions you should be asking yourself and your paper suppliers.

Responsible Resource Management

At the outset of the national focus on recycling of resources in America, a common misperception was that recycling paper would eliminate the need to harvest trees. This misperception provided a strong emotional incentive for Americans to begin recycling and to demand that more paper with recycled content be used.

However, most trees harvested for paper pulp are planted for that very purpose; they are crops, a renewable resource.

In addition, using recycled fiber cannot possibly eliminate the need to harvest trees for several key reasons: First, paper fiber can only be recycled so many times before it eventually wears out and some virgin fiber is necessary to replenish the fiber used for paper. Second, the consumption of paper continues to grow, outstripping the amount of available recycled fiber.

What are the challenges with using recycled material?

The requirements of catalogs and direct mail promotions are ever-evolving, as is the market for recycled paper. Factors such as market volatility, increasing exports and increasing demand may make it difficult for buyers to obtain affordable and predictable supplies of recycled paper.

Why recycle?

While recycling cannot eliminate tree harvesting, it can reduce it, which has important environmental benefits, such as preserving the full range of values that forest ecosystems provide including clean water, wildlife habitat and biodiversity.

Today's direct marketers are choosing to buy paper with recycled content for a variety of reasons, such as meeting the expectations of customers and stakeholders, branding or design purposes, or to help reduce and reuse resources.

Sample questions to ask yourself and your paper suppliers:

- What is the highest amount of recycled and post-consumer content available in a paper stock that is suited to this campaign?
- Can we adjust elements of this mailpiece/catalog (e.g., usability, inks) to utilize paper with a higher level of recycled content?

- What is the lightest-weight paper that will serve the purpose of this campaign? (The lighter the weight, the lower the amount of virgin and recovered fiber used.)
- Will we pay a premium for recycled paper?
- Which suppliers are offering the most competitive prices for recycled paper, and for which grades?
- How can we help improve our suppliers' manufacturing efficiency and profitability to offset any up-charge for recycled content?
- What other trade-offs can we negotiate to offset any higher cost for recycled content paper?
- How do you verify the percentage of recycled content in the paper you supply?
- Do you guarantee the quality of the recycled content paper you produce?
- Do you provide print samples to demonstrate print quality on recycled paper?
- What are your standards for the usability, strength and appearance of recycled content paper? Are they equal to that of your virgin paper?
- Will using recycled paper impact the production schedule?

Definitions

Recycling terminology has been the subject of extensive negotiations between industry, government and environmental groups. Some basic terms are:

- **Recovered paper** – Paper collected for the purpose of recycling.
- **Recovery rate** – The ratio of recyclable paper collected to the new domestic supply of all paper.
- **Pre-consumer material** – Material that has been discarded before reaching its intended end use (e.g., printers' waste, trimmings, and dry paper mill waste).
- **Post-consumer material** – Material that has served its intended end use and would otherwise end up in a landfill or incinerator (e.g., discarded paper from offices, homes, etc. According to the EPA, Undeliverable Standard Mail is also considered post-consumer).

For more information, please visit us at www.the-dma.org/environment for the complete *DMA Environmental Resource for Direct Marketers*.