

# Mailers Work to 'Green' Their Marketing

By Ellen Keohane

With growing consumer concerns about the environment, direct mailers are encouraged to take steps to go green.

“In today’s world, [going green] is becoming a business imperative,” says Sam Pulcrano, the US Postal Service’s recently appointed corporate VP of sustainability. “It’s also, simply, the right thing to do.”

Pulcrano’s position, newly created, is responsible for coordinating the agency’s environmental and energy programs. Mailers and consumers are becoming more aware of the options they have and are choosing to do business with companies that operate in a more responsible, environmental manner, Pulcrano says.

Canada Post is also encouraging mailers to be more environmentally conscious. The agency recently launched a green marketing campaign, highlighting its eco-friendly products, services and practices.

“We’re committed to educating Canada’s marketing community on responsible usage of direct mail,” says Rosalie McGovern, GM, marketing and business development, DM, Canada Post Corporation.

Over the past year, a number of direct mail preference services have launched, including Catalog Choice, Green-Dimes, 41pounds, ProQuo, CatalogEnd and DMAChoice. And, some companies have taken steps on their own to address their customers’ growing concerns. At the National Postal Forum (NPF) in May, Christina Nicholson, the director of sustainable development for Williams-Sonoma, spoke about the brand’s decision to allow consumers to indicate their catalog mailing preferences on its corporate Web site.

Freddie Baird, executive of a direct mail, on-demand printing and e-marketing provider, says green mailing “has started to become top of mind” for customers making printing decisions. “If you’re in the direct marketing business and you don’t have a green initiative, you’re really going to be left behind,” Baird continues. Indeed, according to the Pitney Bowes Direct Mail Survey, consumers overwhelmingly said that a greener mail strategy would positively impact their decision to do business with a company.

At the same time, taking steps to make direct mail more environmentally friendly will not necessarily make it completely green, points out David Weigel, VP of marketing for Ecos Consulting, which helps its clients implement environmentally sustainable practices. The most environmentally sustainable direct mail is none at all, he says, though he acknowledges that’s just not an option for businesses that believe direct mail is the right direct marketing channel for them.

Further, many marketers say that using the mail can save a car journey, which can be more of a drain on the environment. USPS postmaster general John Potter said at the NPF that it was important to teach consumers the benefit of having something delivered rather than driving to and from the store.

If businesses are going to use direct mail, says Weigel, they should do it intelligently by making it as targeted as possible and by printing on recycled and Forest Stewardship Council-certified paper.

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