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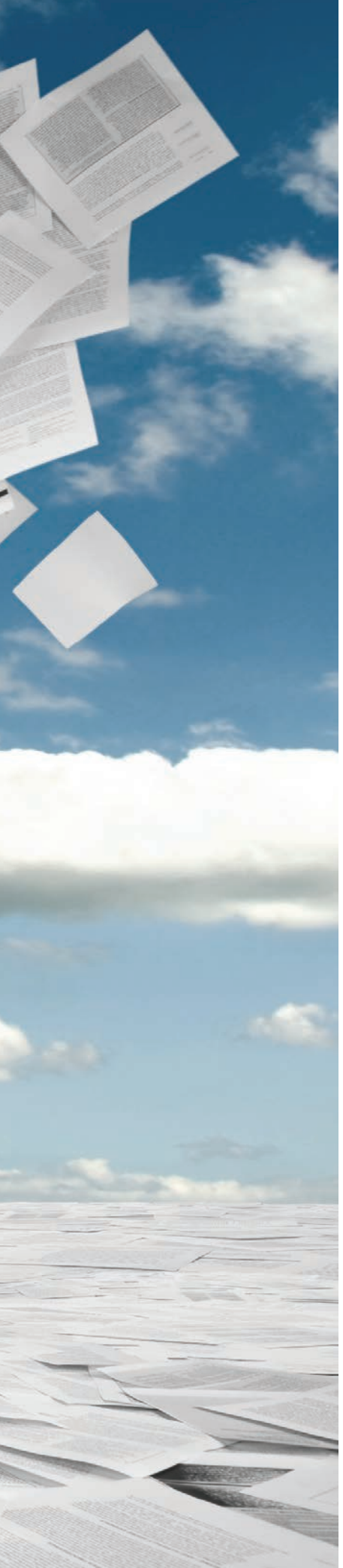


Going Paperless is Not 'Greener'

Two Sides encourages leading U.S. companies to follow best practices for marketing claims about print and paper.

BY KATHY ROWZIE

"Go paperless, save trees." "Think green, go paperless."

You can't open a printed utility bill, bank statement or phone bill these days without seeing messages suggesting that you'll help the environment by switching from paper to electronic communications, but where's the proof? That's the question Two Sides *(www.twosides.us)* will be asking senior management of leading U.S. companies as part of a new initiative to end the use of misleading environmental claims about print and paper. Two Sides will offer its expertise at no cost to help companies better understand the facts about print and paper sustainability.

"Our research shows that many companies are using unverifiable marketing claims about the environmental impacts of print and paper in their efforts to persuade consumers to switch to online billing and communications," said Two Sides President and COO Phil Riebel. "These claims don't meet best practice guidelines for environmental marketing and are potentially damaging to the paper, printing and mailing industries that provide millions of U.S. jobs. Two Sides and our 60 member companies are committed to sharing our collective expertise on the print and paper life cycle and its environmental impacts as we encourage corporate America to modify misleading print- and paper-related marketing messages," he said.

Sound science — or the lack thereof — provides the impetus for Two Sides' education effort. While many banks, utility companies and telecoms market electronic communications as green options — equating a switch from paper to electronic billing with a healthier planet — they offer little evidence for these marketing claims. "Some major U.S. companies have implemented credible sustainability initiatives that focus on true performance measurement and factual environmental claims" Riebel said. "However, in some cases, marketing seems to take the upper hand on science, and this could be considered greenwashing," he said.

The FTC Green Guides

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) publishes the *Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims (www.ftc.gov/bcp/grnrule/ guides980427.htm),* often referred to simply as the Green Guides, to help explain acceptable environmental marketing practices. The guides offer interpretations of laws administered by the FTC and provide a basis for voluntary compliance. In a nutshell, the Green Guides say that you should not make broad claims about the eco-friendliness of a product, package or service, and you must be able to back up any express or implied claim with "competent and reliable" evidence. Specifically, the FTC defines competent and reliable scientific evidence as "tests, analyses, research, studies or other evidence based on the expertise of professionals in the relevant area, conducted and evaluated in an objective manner by persons qualified to do so, using procedures generally accepted in the profession to yield accurate and reliable results."

A Message to Corporate America

To kick off its paperless claims initiative, Two Sides will contact companies to discuss their potentially misleading claims about the sustainability of print and paper communications and share best practices for environmental marketing.

"We clearly understand the need for companies to pursue the cost-saving and efficiency opportunities presented by electronic billing and other types of online customer communication, and Two Sides encourages waste reduction," Riebel said. "But it is important to recognize that the direct environmental impact of electronic technology and services is far from negligible. The trade-offs between print media and e-media depend on many factors related to their use and disposal. Marketing claims that suggest otherwise create misconceptions that are damaging to companies across the mail, print and paper supply chain, which make up 8.7 million U.S. jobs."

With that said, Two Sides emphasizes that its efforts are not intended to bash electronic communications. "Electronic and print media will continue to be important in our daily lives, and we need to improve the environmental footprint of both," Riebel said. "Our campaign will focus on education using the latest sustainability information and scientific data. Given the proliferation of messaging encouraging us to 'go paperless' for environmental reasons, we believe it's vitally important that people know the facts when it comes to the sustainability of print and paper."

Encouraging Public Support

In addition to communicating with corporations directly, Two Sides will educate and engage consumers — especially those whose livelihoods depend on a profitable print, paper and mailing industry — in its efforts to correct potentially misleading environmental claims about print and paper.

"This is a bread-and-butter issue for millions of Americans who work in paper manufacturing, printing and mail production, distribution and handling jobs," Riebel said. "They know that 'paperless' marketing messages could ultimately threaten their job security, so they have a built-in incentive to join Two Sides in stopping them. It's a good bet that just about everyone in a paper-related job has a customer relationship with a bank, power company and telephone service provider, so communications channels already exist. And what's more effective in influencing corporate change than communication from customers who are asking for it?"

A Wealth of Resources

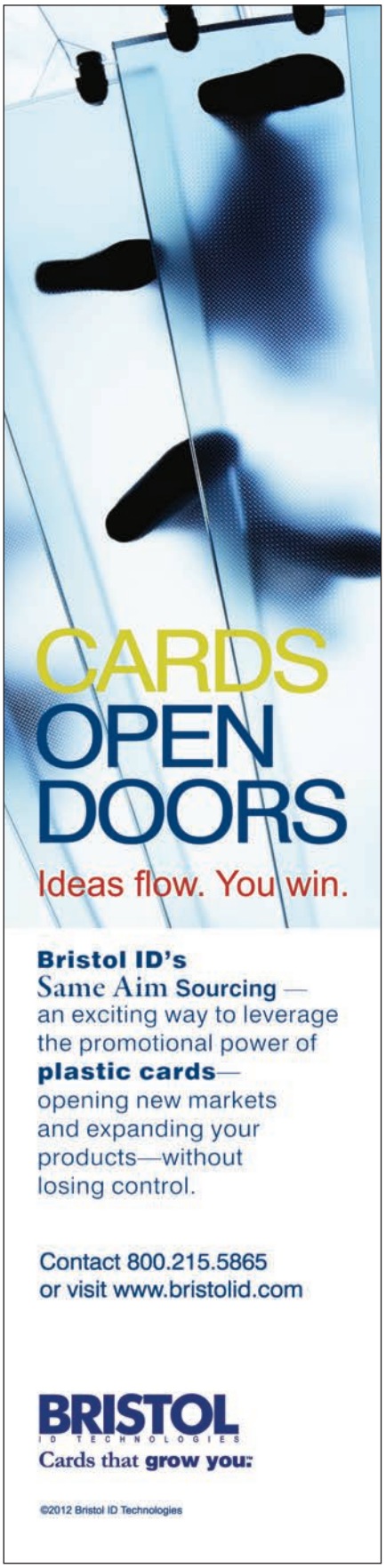
Much of the supporting information that will be used in Two Sides' paperless claims campaign is readily available on the organization's website. The site is loaded with resources, including the latest news, reports and studies on the sustainability of print and paper. "Whether you're a corporate decision maker or paper buyer, an environmentally conscious consumer or a journalist who needs to check facts for a news story, the Two Sides US website provides a wealth of information with citations and links to original sources that show why print on paper is a sustainable communications choice," Riebel said.

Especially useful is a Myths and Facts section (www.twosides.us/mythsandfacts) that cites facts from a wide variety of well-known, authoritative sources — organizations such as the World Resources Institute, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, the U.S. Forest Service and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. One fact sheet specifically addresses the myth that electronic communication is more environmentally friendly than print and paper.

"Most consumers who see messages urging them to 'go green' by eliminating paper in favor of electronic media may not know much about the true environmental footprint of either one," Riebel said. "Our myths and facts sheet includes a wide array of citations from credible sources to help people understand that paper sourced from responsibly managed forests is a highly sustainable communications medium. It's made with a renewable resource: wood fiber from trees. It's recycled more than any other material in the United States with a recovery rate of 66.8 percent in 2011. And it's manufactured using an average 65 percent renewable energy."

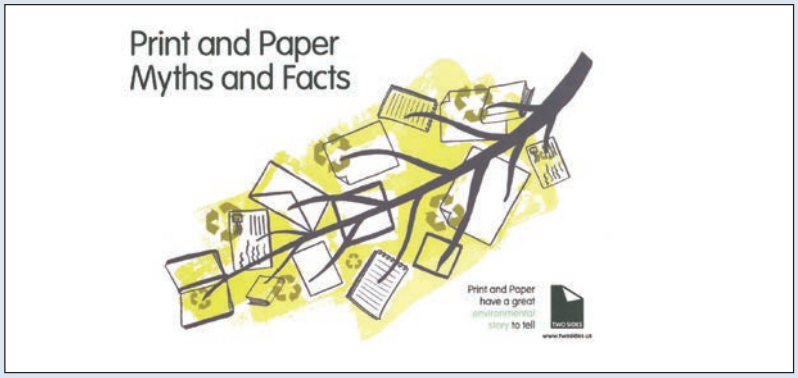
The Two Sides fact sheet also offers cited references that show that electronic media are not without environmental costs. For example:

- Data from Computer Aid International, the world's largest provider of professionally refurbished PCs to the not-for-profit sector in the developing world, reports that the manufacture of information and communication technology (ICT) is material- and energy-intensive. The production of each PC requires 22 kg of toxic chemicals, 240 kg of fossil fuels and 1,500 kg of water. Also, 80 percent of life cycle energy use is accounted for before we even switch a PC on for the first time.
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency data show that 47.4 million computers were ready for end-of-life management



A Sampling of Print and Paper Sustainability Facts

- Paper is made from renewable resources, and responsibly produced and used paper has many advantages over other, nonrenewable alternative materials.[1]
- Paper is recycled more than any other material in the United States.[2]
- Most of the energy used to produce U.S. pulp and paper — around 65 percent — comes from, renewable biofuels, and the paper industry generates more renewable energy than all other U.S. manufacturing industries combined.[3]
- The print and paper industry accounts for only 1.1 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions.[4]
- In the United States, we grow more trees than we harvest. The country continues to benefit from a large and diverse forest inventory distributed across about one-third of total land area. The amount of U.S. forestland has remained essentially the same for the last 100 years at about 750 million acres, even though the U.S. population tripled during the same period.[5]
- Because forests are a renewable resource, when managed in a sustainable manner, they can continue to provide services while simultaneously enabling landowners to meet their economic objectives. This, in turn, gives landowners an incentive to retain their forestland rather than sell it to developers for conversion to other uses.[6]



The "Print and Paper Myths and Facts" brochure from Two Sides lays out all you need to know about the sustainability of paper and print. The Two Sides website (www.twosides.us) also features a Myths and Facts section that cites facts from a wide variety of well-known, authoritative sources —– organizations such as the World Resources Institute, the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization, the U.S. Forest Service and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development. "Most consumers who see messages urging them to 'go green' by eliminating paper in favor of electronic media may not know much about the true environmental footprint of either one," said Phil Riebel, president and COO of Two Sides. "Our myths and facts sheet includes a wide array of citations from credible sources to help people understand that paper sourced from responsibly managed forests is a highly sustainable communications medium."

[1] World Wildlife Fund (WWF), 2010
[2] U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, 2010
[3] American Forest and Paper Association, 2010
[4] World Resources Institute,, 2005
[5] U.S. Forest Service, 2010
[6] Society of American Foresters, 2007

About Two Sides

Two Sides is an initiative by companies from the Graphic Communication Value Chain including forestry, pulp, paper, inks and chemicals, pre-press, press, finishing, publishing and printing. Membership spans Europe, the United States and Australia. Its common goal is to promote the responsible production and use of print and paper and dispel common environmental misconceptions by providing users with verifiable information on why print and paper is an attractive, practical and sustainable communications medium. For more information about Two Sides, contact Phil Riebel at 1.855.896.7433 or *pnr@twosides.info*, or visit the Two Sides U.S. website at *www.twosides.us*.

in 2009 (the most recent data available). Some 29.4 million were disposed of, and only 18 million or 38 percent were collected for recycling.

- The United Nations Environment Programme estimates that the production and running of the ICT sector equates to 2 percent of global GHG emissions, similar to the airline industry, and this is expected to double by 2020.

Building on Success

A similar campaign conducted by Two Sides in the United Kingdom last year yielded very positive results. At the outset of the campaign, 43 percent of the major U.K. banks, 70 percent of telecoms and 30 percent of utilities were using misleading environmental claims to support e-billing and statements. As a result of Two Sides' efforts, more than 80 percent of these companies have either eliminated the claims or now use wording that doesn't include misleading statements.

"Once presented with the facts, we believe the U.S. companies we engage will do the right thing, align their marketing messages with accepted best practices and stop presenting electronic communications as a greener alternative to print and paper," Riebel said. "If companies want to encourage the use of electronic bills and statements to reduce their costs or promote convenience, that's their choice," he said. "But using environmental marketing without sound scientific backup only serves to further erode confidence in all green marketing claims, including the ones that represent real environmental value." PS

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