

By PHIL RIEBEL

There are many guidelines available to help a company ensure its processes, from procurement to production, are sustainable

TEN WAYS TO “GREEN” YOUR PAPER

Every year, more organizations are evaluating the environmental performance and social responsibility of their paper suppliers. The use of policies or guidelines for sustainable paper procurement has become more common for large paper buyers, for instance, Time Inc, JC Penney, Unilever and McGraw-Hill.

A systematic approach to sustainable paper procurement can help paper buyers minimize risks such as buying paper with fiber from illegal logging activities and impacts on forest biodiversity. Sustainable procurement can also create business opportunities for paper producers who have made efforts to lower the environmental footprint of their products.

Remind people of the sustainability features of paper:

The World Wildlife Fund states: “WWF believes that paper is a valuable product that has been an integral part of our cultural development. Paper is made from mostly renewable resources and is an essential part of modern life, helping to increase levels of literacy and democracy worldwide.”

Also:

- The main raw material for papermaking, wood fiber, comes from a renewable and natural resource - trees (the product of sunlight, soil, nutrients and water)
- Paper is recyclable and over 40% of paper fiber used in the world today comes from recovered paper
- The pulp and paper industry globally only contributes 1% of greenhouse gases and paper is often manufactured using a high percentage of renewable energy such as biomass
- Sustainably managed forests have numerous social and environmental benefits, including mitigating climate change by taking up carbon.

Few products that surround us today have these unique features. Many are more dependent on non-renewable resources and have lower recycling rates.

Reduce impacts over the life cycle of your products:

As all products, paper has environmental impacts at all stages of its life cycle: raw material procurement including forest management, manufacturing of pulp and paper, paper distribution, transportation, recovery and disposal. The goal of sustainable production should be to lower the environmental impact, or the overall environmental footprint, of paper products over their life cycle. Paper buyers are gradually becoming more systematic at integrating this life cycle environmental performance into purchasing decisions by using product scorecards or environmental product declarations such as these:

- Environmental Paper Assessment Tool (EPAT)
- Paper Profile
- Proctor & Gamble, Environmental Sustainability Scorecard
- WWF Paper Scorecard
- Walmart Supplier Sustainability Scorecard.

These reporting tools assess product performance across a wide range of indicators such as percentage of certified fiber from sustainable managed forests, recycled fiber use, water and energy use, emissions to air and water, solid waste to landfill, greenhouse gas emissions, social responsibility, certifications and reporting.

Show regulatory compliance:

Most customers expect full compliance with environmental regulations. It is best to be open and clear about any regulatory problems as soon as possible rather than your customers hearing it via a news

release or a competitor. When problems happen, show how you reacted and how you will prevent re-occurrence. Openness and transparency maintains good business relationships.

If performance is good and there is a wide gap between your emission levels and the regulatory requirements, then that is key message to send to customers.



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Promote sustainable fiber use and biodiversity:

Sustainably managed forest and recovered paper are expected to continue being the main sources of raw material for an increasing global need in paper products. Alternative fibers (non-wood based) made up only 4% of the global fiber supply in 2008, and this is forecasted to decrease to 2.8% by 2025, although volumes used will increase. As a result, non-wood fibers are not readily available for most papermaking. At a global scale, the use of more recovered paper will not result in a decrease in forest management. In fact, the opposite is true due to the forecasted growth in paper consumption. Hence, more paper recovery is needed in many regions of the globe, as well as more sustainable forest management.

Clean production will help your score:

Paper scorecards typically include the following environmental indicators that relate to the performance of pulp and paper mill sites:

- Air emissions (e.g., SO₂, NO_x, TRS)
- Energy use
- Wastewater emissions (e.g., COD, BOD₅, TSS, nitrogen, phosphorus)
- Solid waste to landfill
- Greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., CO₂ from use of fossil fuels, methane emissions from landfills).

Depending on how these indicators are weighted within a scorecard, they can significantly influence the final score. Therefore, good performance of pulp and paper mill facilities can help obtain more business if other product features are also competitive.

Have a strategy to lower your carbon footprint:

The carbon footprint of paper can be defined as greenhouse gas emissions emitted to the atmosphere during the entire life cycle of paper production and distribution. The most common methods used for greenhouse gas inventories in the pulp and paper industry are those of the World Resources Institute, the British Standards Institute, and CEPI.

Based on results of recent carbon footprint and life-cycle assessment studies, it is clear that pulp and paper mill sites using a high percentage of renewable energy such as biomass and “green” electricity from the grid can significantly reduce the carbon footprint of their paper products, up to 80% in some cases. Reducing organic waste to landfill avoids methane production (a powerful greenhouse gas). Land filling paper products can contribute up to 15% or more of the carbon footprint over the life cycle of the final product.

Show social responsibility:

Social responsibility is also a key element of sustainability, and social indicators are included in some paper scorecards like the EPAT. Certain voluntary reporting initiatives like the Dow Jones Sustainability Index also rank companies based on their social, environmental and financial performance. A good standing on the DJSI can help companies demonstrate sustainability leadership. Certification to the SA8000 International standard for social accountability is another way to show good management of social issues. Given that health and safety issues are a top priority in the industry, many companies have certified their occupational health and safety management system under the OHSAS 18001 standard.

Promote certification and eco-labels:

The use of third-party verified certification systems and eco-labels is a sign of environmental commitment and performance. The most well know of these labels is the Mobius Loop indicating recycled fiber content or recyclability of products. Although there are many standards and labels in use globally, the most common ones are included below.

- Sustainable forest management based on standards from: Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) and its affiliate programs throughout the world (e.g. SFI in North America); Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)
- Chain-of-custody and use of eco-labels for fiber use (standards from same organizations as above)
- Environmental management system (ISO 14001 standard, Eco-management Audit Scheme or EMAS)
- Eco-labels for overall environmental performance (EU Eco-label, Ecologo - Canada, Green Seal - USA) Reporting standard (Global Reporting Initiative).

Be open and transparent in sustainability reporting:

Open and transparent environmental reporting is a sign of sustainability leadership. Annual environmental or sustainability reports are produced by many companies, either at the facility level, corporate level, or both. Guidelines of the GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) are often cited as a standard for sustainability and environmental reporting. Third party independent verification of reports can add credibility to reporting initiatives, as done under the EU Eco-management Scheme (EMAS) or GRI.

In addition to annual reports, sustainability information can also be reported on a voluntary basis to outside organizations (e.g. DJSI, Carbon Disclosure Project) that will rank companies based on their sustainability performance and/or reporting.

Provide top environmental service:

Providing expert environmental support to customers can add value to certain business relationships. Services offered can include: answering inquiries, training on key environmental topics, assistance in developing sustainable paper procurement policies, developing environmental partnership projects.

Finally, the suggestions presented in this article will only generate marketplace benefits with effective

environmental marketing and a visible presence. Ensuring that your employees are knowledgeable and environmentally aware is a great way to demonstrate sustainability of your company and products.

A full version of *Ten Ways to “Green” your paper* including links to all references can be found in RISI’s White Paper Library

More information can also be found by visiting the following links:

- World Business Council for Sustainable Development and World Resources Institute. 2009. Sustainable Procurement of Wood and Paper-based Products: Guide and Resource kit, Version 1.1. <http://www.wri.org/publication/sustainable-procurement-wood-and-paper-based-products>
- Forest Products Association of Canada, Pricewaterhouse Coopers. 2008. A buyer’s guide to sustainable forest products, 2008. http://www.fpac.ca/publications/FPAC_BuyerGuide-Eng08.pdf
- The DMA Green 15 Toolkit. <http://www.the-dma.org/Green15Toolkit/>
- European Commission Green Public Procurement (GPP) Training Toolkit - Module 3: Purchasing Recommendations. Copying and Graphic Paper: Background Product report. 2008. http://ec.europa.eu/environment/gpp/pdf/toolkit/paper_GPP_background_report.pdf **PPI**

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