

# Sustainable Printing – Are we there yet?

Featured in Print 21

K. Holdorf July 2005

If given the vision of the future, what would a fully sustainable printing company look like? Are we on the right road and who are the leaders in this field? This report looks at one Californian, printing company, Anderson Lithographics (part of the Cenvéo Group) and their long term view of sustainable print.

## “Are we there yet?”

I remember as a child along with my 4 siblings my parents taking us on long drives in the old holden station wagon, with no particular place in mind to go. As inquisitive kids we'd always have to know “where” we were going. Mum would always give the same answer, “there and back again to see how far it is”.

I remember back, thinking, “where's *there*?” and inevitably one of us kids would pipe up “well, are we *there* yet?”

With the advancement of technology and sustainable development many are asking that same question and although some are making leaps and bounds in this area in short the answer is no.

Sustainability you could say is a little like going on a drive to “there” . No body actually knows where “there” is. One thing is for sure many printers are not going back and have realized how far they've come in sustainable practices. It's this philosophy that printing companies around the world are embarking on and reaping the benefits.

There are many key strategies that are being put into practice to achieve sustainable goals . These include the observation that design and end users processes are influencing the materials used and recoverability of end of use printed products. Also technology used in the printing process its self is becoming more sustainable. Energy is being minimised and met from renewable sources. Distribution and printing in the bulk printing process are being also optimised to minimise environmental and social impacts. Management of the whole print process is being scrutinized to eliminate wastage and unnecessary processes. Residual emissions, waste and effluent are also being reused to complete the life cycle process.

## Anderson Lithographics

Although many may feel these are long term visionary goals and are far from where we are today one company, Anderson Lithographics in Los Angeles, is setting a new benchmark. From fist appearances they look like any other printing company, with printing awards and accolades proudly displayed along with printed samples. It's not until you take a look at the awards you get a sense this is no ordinary print shop.

Frank Barnett, Director of Manufacturing Systems, Safety and Environmental Services, Facilities and Cogeneration Plant Operations explains “Sustainability is not something new for Anderson Lithograph, In 1995 we made an investment of \$9 million dollars in a natural gas fueled, combined cycle, Cogeneration facility that produces 5.7 megawatts of electrical power and 1,340 tons of chilled water production. As a part of constructing the cogen plant the printing facility was modified to capture nearly all volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions of both web and sheet fed presses.”

This qualified Anderson's facility for permanent total enclosure (PTE), as certified by the local Los Angeles County air quality regulatory body. This also meant that the temperature on the floor could be controlled for the comfort of all employees. A key aspect of their strategic business philosophy is their commitment to ecology and their obligation to their stakeholders, including the wider community. With this in mind Anderson Lithographics developed a comprehensive ISO 14001 based approach to the management of making the most out of everything that it takes, makes and wastes. More importantly when it ceases to become useful to them they find ways to make them useful elsewhere.

"We have an extensive recycling program here, but like the development of the cogen plant it took thinking outside the grid to come up with the initiatives" says Barnett.

An example of this is the fact they recycle on average 100tons of pre and post consumer paper waste each week, in which part of it goes to one of our recycling partners who then converts it to home insulation.

Barnett adds "Recycling of paper is a complex issue with a number of factors to be considered. Converting waste paper into end-products that are of a more durable nature, presents a far more environmentally advantageous solution. Other environmentally sound uses of recycled paper are paper board liner, packaging materials, and wood substitutes for building and furniture fabrication materials."

### **Customer involvement and beyond**

Barnett agrees that sustainable issues are increasing and that many customers are asking beyond the obvious of "do you use soy based inks and eco friendly paper". As a part of their environmental Management System, they have developed a reporting system that actually details the impact of printed materials they produce on the air.

"Many customers have already addressed their internal processes and direct supplier practices and are looking for new opportunities. "We have a paper purchasing policy which encompasses all the needs of our clients including FSC Chain of Custody" states Barnett.

It's this forward thinking and working with their customers that has attributed to their success. But when asked if they were indeed "there yet", the answer was no. Barnett agreed that companies within the fortune 500 themselves were at different stages of sustainability and that it was a slow process in educating and working with them. As for Anderson Lithographics, as part of their environmental commitment for continual improvement, they'll keep exploring their options and questioning the way they do things.