

## How Responsible Sourcing Will Impact Printers in 2011

By [Vic Barkin](#) on January 21st, 2011

If you were in the storefront printing industry in the early-to-mid Eighties, the sign “We Accept Disks” means something to you. It was the beginning of the digital and “desktop” printing revolution. “We Accept Disks”. It meant you had a PC and/or maybe a MAC, and would accept customer floppys in order to print out copies to paste up and shoot to a neg or output an analog poly plate, or maybe run copies (not files) on your copier. But it didn’t mean there was any compatibility with what your clients were bringing in. All you knew was that you had to do it because everybody else was.

Let’s get one thing out of the way right now. This is not going to be a crystal ball article. The rhetoric surrounding “green”, “sustainability” and “corporate social responsibility” has cooled a bit. This means we are now in the normalization phase. Between 2005 and 2008, literally everything gained a greenish tinge. It’s the same with every standard business practice bubble. First there were the early adopters, and then market acceptance comes along. This is typically followed by market saturation, and finally normalization. Many shops claimed to be a “Green Printer”. Maybe you got FSC certified, increased your recycling efforts, switched to low VOC chemistry or replaced or upgraded offset equipment, or implemented higher efficiency digital.

2009 capped the trend by becoming the year of the “green printing trade show”. Again, everything had a greenish tinge to it. It didn’t matter what the product or service was. It was either “green” or “sustainable”. Then the inevitable happened. The Six (or Seven) Sins of Greenwashing hit the print industry airwaves and uncertainty about the message and its credibility crept in. Trade shows in 2010 had a diminished green presence. Not that it completely disappeared; Green now has earned a secured place in Print’s message. Now the FTC is releasing new green claim guidelines.

So here we are in 2011. Responsible sourcing/procurement is fast becoming the driving realization that encompasses everything green and sustainable. [Business Green offers 11](#) (as in 2011) things to look for in the next 12 months. Number 7 is “Ethical consumer spending will keep rising”. To quote a portion of the Business Green statement: “Every indication suggests this market will grow substantially this year even as other areas of the economy falter. It is time to stop treating green industries as a niche and appreciate them for the robust and fast-growing success stories they are”.

### **Let’s take a closer look at what this means to the printing industry.**

Paper is most likely to be thought of first. Chain of Custody certification, whether it’s FSC, SFI or PEFC puts third-part verification of at the very least legal and ethical sourcing. The credibility of the certifying bodies, who themselves are validated by independent accreditation organizations provides transparency as well as credibility. Supplies, whether for offset, digital, or for infrastructure (janitorial, facilities) also have their certification and third-party certifying body counterparts.

Green computing is going to have a large presence this year as the IT industry takes sustainable computing mainstream. The Climate Savers Computing Initiative is a nonprofit group of consumers, businesses and conservation organizations dedicated to promoting smart technologies that can improve the power efficiency and reduce the energy consumption of computers.

Formalized waste-stream reduction strategies have become profit centers for many organizations. Harmon Recycling, a division of Georgia Pacific is one of many organizations offering full-service programs to both manufacturing and office environments. Everything that can be recycled should, including strapping, containers of all types and other shipping material. In short, a zero manufacturing and office waste program is more of a reality now than ever as the reclamation industry matures.

A life cycle assessment (LCA, also known as life cycle analysis, ecobalance, and cradle-to-grave analysis) is a technique used by organizations to assess each and every impact associated with all the stages of a particular process from raw material sourcing through materials processing, manufacture, distribution, use, repair and maintenance, and disposal or recycling). LCA's can help avoid a narrow outlook on environmental, social and economic concerns which can validate both responsible sourcing and responsible disposal methodology.

Then there are all the other infrastructure improvements that also have their ethical, responsible and or sustainable components. This includes everything from buildings, HVAC, lighting, logistics and production equipment, to transportation and facilities management operations.

The end-game is that professional purchasers are embracing responsible sourcing. Organizations like The National Association of State Procurement Officials, the Responsible Purchasing Network, and The International Society of Sustainability Professionals are serious about responsible sourcing and many options are considered in choosing suppliers, based at least in part on their ethical sourcing policies. Don't be caught out in the cold because you cannot quantify and provide objective evidence pertaining to where your raw materials, products and services came from, and where your waste and by-products are going.

### Responsible sourcing is the new green.



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