

## Cutting printing costs, cutting carbon footprint

We are going through a global financial crisis which is unlike anything most of us have ever seen before. The pressure on every commercial enterprise is to control costs to remain competitive – even to remain in business.

One important difference between this and earlier recessions is that there are now other pressures as well as financial. In particular, companies are expected to be aware of the environmental impact of what they do, and take positive steps to reduce it.

This is not just a matter of being a good neighbour, increasingly it is becoming a central part of doing business. The prospect for legally enforced carbon quotas and trading schemes is near. Many companies, keen to establish their own green credentials, expect the highest environmental standards from their own suppliers, and being able to demonstrate best practices could mean the difference between winning and losing major contracts.

So if there was a single business change that could both save money and reduce your carbon footprint, it should surely be near the top of the agenda. There is such a topic and it can be found in an area of operations that rarely demands much management time: business printing.

The Centre for Economics and Business Research (cebr) has recently completed a major study into this subject, across 23 countries in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA). *Smarter print management – controlling costs and environmental impacts* reveals that the annual spend on business printing, excluding publishing companies for which print is a core activity, is almost \$260,000 million, equivalent to the GDP of Ireland.

Further, the study suggests that by taking a new approach, and in particular adopting the latest printer technology and print management systems, enterprises can bring much of the print that was traditionally outsourced back in-house, resulting in savings of as much as \$25,000 million.

*Open up your dreams*

But the study did not just identify cost savings. cebr estimates that, by saving waste and by printing at the point of need, 1.5 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions could be saved each year across EMEA, equivalent to taking 400,000 cars off the road or the emissions from 750,000 long-haul flights.

### **Smarter printing**

At first glance it may be hard to see how moving print from a specialist supplier to your own building can have such a dramatic impact both on costs and on carbon emissions. The explanation, though, is simple: if you print in-house then you print precisely what you want, when you want it and where you want it. You might call this smarter printing.

Every business requires stationery: letterheads, invoice blanks and so on.

Traditionally this stationery has been pre-printed in advance, and because of the economies of scale when using an external supplier, items are usually ordered in large quantities.

You pay for a large amount of paper, tying up cash. You spend energy moving it from the print shop to your premises and, if you have multiple locations, to probably pay again to move it from the headquarters to these other branches. You have to provide storage for it. And if any detail changes – a new address, membership of a new trade body, an update in the corporate identity, maybe the addition of your environmental certification details – then the paper is just scrap to be delivered (more carbon) to a recycling plant.

Today's printers are perfectly capable of printing a logo and layout, in high resolution within tight colour tolerances, at the same time as the letter text or the invoice details. Why use energy on two print processes when only one is needed? Why manage the stocks of multiple letterheads and forms when you only need to keep plain paper?

**Online information**

The last few years have seen a marked change in the way that brochures and data sheets are used. Gone now are the days when if someone was interested in a product they called the company who put a glossy brochure into an envelope and mailed it. Today the expectation is that all this information will be available on the web, and while brochures still exist they are formatted to be downloaded and printed out remotely.

So again there is no need to print large quantities of brochures in advance. If you need ten copies to display in a reception area, print out ten copies. If you need 100 copies for an exhibition then print out 100 copies. And if the exhibition is in Las Vegas or Sydney or Beijing then print them there, rather than shipping them around the world.

This is benefit on every level. It saves money and it reduces the carbon footprint, but it also means that you can make changes to the data sheet as they happen, and your supporting documentation is always precisely up to date. If you add an important new function or service, you do not need to scrap a single brochure.

**Managed printing**

These real savings are realised readily, by taking a managed approach to printing. Identify what your requirements are, and install the hardware you need to support it accurately. From progressive suppliers such as OKI Printing Solutions, printers are available to meet a range of specifications: colour or black and white; high and lower resolutions; high output, bulk copies or occasional use.

The network design will ensure that staff have access to the right printer at the right time. Black and white documents should always be printed on monochrome printers, freeing up the colour printer for colour printing. Multi-page documents should be routed to duplex devices for double-sided printing to halve the paper cost. High speed collating printers, used for large bid documents, for example, are likely to make more noise so can be located in a dedicated digital printing centre.

These are simple steps but, according to cebr, can deliver cost savings to a business of as much as 30%. By printing what you need when you need you eliminate waste, and by printing where you need the document you save the cost, and environmental impact, of shipping it.

While achieving best environmental practices can be challenging for a business, particularly in the current climate, there are areas where going green does not inevitably cost money. Taking a fresh look at printing can be good for your business and good for the environment.