



## TIPS & IDEAS from TENSION

# Greening your Mail

**More consumers and businesses serving consumers are looking to reduce their environmental impact. Businesses also want to improve and promote their public image as stewards of the environment. For your own mailing operation or mailing business, here is a suggested course of action to green your mail.**

- Create an environmental policy statement, establish goals, and develop initiatives. This will involve reviewing all your business practices from an eco-impact standpoint. It is important to communicate your plan and initiatives with suppliers and customers, both internal and external.
- Evaluate your operations for waste reduction and recycling. Are you efficient in your use of materials? Are you maximizing your recycling efforts? Assigning an individual or developing a committee to look at each of your material usage and production processes will enable you to discover opportunities for improvement.
- Look at your paper procurement. Increase your use of papers that are certified for environmentally sound forestry practices. Your paper and converted paper suppliers should be certified by such organizations as the Forest Stewardship Council™ (FSC) and/or the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI). Look for opportunities to use paper with pre and post-consumer recycled content. Also, consider using lower basis weights of paper where appropriate.
- Look at the other materials you use. Take into account your printing processes, the inks, adhesives, films, and packaging materials. Again, find ways to cut waste and maximize recycling opportunities. Reduce the sizes of packages to fit the contents and get extra mileage out of cartons by reusing and recycling where applicable. Talk to your envelope supplier about window film options to suit your production mailstream.
- Evaluate your mail design and mail production. Reduce waste allowances and process waste where possible. Most importantly, reduce the incident of returned mail. Stringent list hygiene will save postage and handling and will help the USPS reduce the percentage of mail volume that's undeliverable.
- Consider alternative mailing products. Two-way envelopes eliminate the need to enclose a separate reply envelope in billing and marketing mail. Consider options such as those developed by ecoEnvelopes, the EcoFirst 360, and the classic Send-'n-Return. Each style accomplishes the goal of source paper reduction while virtually assuring that the returned envelope will be recycled by the mailing business or organization.
- Manage the energy use of your business. Consider both the internal impact of your energy consumption and the "carbon footprint" of your suppliers and customers. Efficiency in your mailing operation, well-designed mailing products, and well-planned fulfillment and delivery can create cost benefits while improving your total eco-impact.
- Communicate the successes of your programs. An internal information flow will help to sustain and improve your efforts going forward. Letting mail recipients know about your product choices through printed certification "bugs" and statements like "Recycle this Envelope" will create a positive impression about your business and/or mailer clients. Make sure you take a look at all the PR options in your external green statements, such as "Wind Power Energy Credits" and low-VOC printing ink notations.

**For more ideas and suggestions, see the DMA's  
"Setting Your Green 15 Goals."**