



WHETHER IT IS TURNING OFF THE LIGHTS FOR EARTH HOUR OR SORTING THE MILK CARTONS FROM THE COKE CANS, EVERYONE WANTS TO BE A GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZEN THESE DAYS. BUT ARE PRINTERS THE EXCEPTION TO THE RULE? MITCHELL JORDAN TAKES A LOOK AT THE INDUSTRY THROUGH GREEN EYES AND DISCOVERS THAT IT IS A TOPIC THAT FEW WISH TO TALK ABOUT, LET ALONE TAKE ON.

TURNING A BLIND EYE?

No one can ignore the threats of environmental danger surrounding us. Al Gore raised concerns by exposing a few inconvenient truths; politicians and rock stars alike are waving their placards. To cope, corporations and businesses need to put on a good front, and becoming eco-friendly seems to be the right way of surviving.

But finding printing companies that support the environment is harder than finding somewhere that sells free-range eggs or vegan produce. The list, once I found it, was limited and some companies I spoke to declined the chance to be interviewed, citing reasons like "We don't want to blow our own trumpet."

Finsbury Green Printing, however, is a company whose business is very much an open book that anybody is welcome to read. Originally called Finsbury Print, it began a number of initiatives back in the late '90s and became the first commercial printer in Australia to be awarded ISO2001:2000 Quality Management and ISO14001 Environment Management Systems certifications. In 2004, the company published its first environmental report and changed names to Finsbury Green Printing.

GOOD TO GO GREEN

Rodney Wade, environment and technical manager for the company says the change has led to only positive developments for the company.

"We remain the only printing company in Australia to publish an environmental report," he says. "We felt that it was really important to be a good example to our customers, suppliers and staff and so by publishing a fully audited environmental report we were able to genuinely and honestly expose what we were

doing to scrutiny."

Not that there has been any criticism, Wade says. Finsbury has continued to publish environmental reports each year and people have enjoyed reading them.

"There's been a very positive response from customers to all our initiatives," he says. As for adding that extra word, 'green' to its name, Wade denies that it was a risky decision.

"Some may have thought it was a risk, but any of these sorts of steps forward need genuine senior management support," he says. "Finsbury's owners, the Orel family, were extremely supportive of all of the initiatives and that has been one of the reasons for our success."

FOLLOW THE LEADER

Finsbury Green Print is keen to spread the word about its work and regularly conducts tours of its Adelaide plant for customers.

"From that point of view, we're an open book," Wade says, adding that, like anyone who decides to do something different, it is inevitable that others will want to follow. "I believe that we have shown leadership in the industry and clearly a lot of people are following our lead."

Wade also concedes that being eco-friendly is a part of larger macro developments that few in businesses can ignore.

"Small pockets of corporate Australia started driving environmental reform at least five years ago, but now the media is awash with stories about climate change and how businesses need to change. I guess there's a chain reaction going on here," he says. "Business, government and society in general are driving change, but in our industry there's still only a handful of genuinely 'green' printers and there is a bit of 'greenwash' going on, people saying that they're green but they're actually not."

Robert Fuller, general manager of *Printing Industries NSW*, believes that printers will eventually become more environmentally conscious, whether they like it or not.

"Not only are these changes to work practices being client-driven but the entire business community is responding

Right: "It's about being responsible for what you produce."—Brad Salsbury, Printpoint. Below: This building is green—the Finsbury Green Printing facility at Port Melbourne.



to demands from customers, Kyoto Principles, global training and good corporate citizenship," he says. "Just as OHS went through its transition phases to its rightful place in today's normal business practices, so too in years to come we will see environmental practices as being just a normal consideration in the business psyche."

SWIMMING IN IT

But surely Finsbury Green Printing are not the only eco-friendly printers out there? I talked to people like Kel Drewett, director of Fluid Technologies, who warned me of deceptive marketing ploys that run rife among the industry.

"It just goes on and on and people are sick of it," he says. "You hear about things like marketing an IPA replacement fountain solution mixed with IPA, or marketing an IPA fountain solution that requires additional additives to make it work. For us to have a full armoury of truly environmentally products that honestly work is appreciated."

Alarmed at what this could mean for the industry, I dived into the pool of 'greenwash', goggles and all, and resurfaced, eventually. Drying off, I found Printpoint, a company that is the biggest dedicated waterless printer in Australia as well as a user of soy-based, water-washable inks and with accreditations for Eco Biz. Printpoint is currently being certified for ISO 14001 and green procurement accreditation ISO 14024 and ISO 9000, and prides itself on having a full recycling program that has been running for nine years within its business.

Brad Salsbury, NSW general manager, says that Printpoint didn't just jump on the environmental bandwagon and that being a waterless printer was something that it has done right from day one.

"Printpoint Australia has had an environmental stand for the nine years it has been operating," he says. "This

**"The printing industry is a fairly dirty industry and printers should be held accountable for their waste and energy consumption"—
Brad Salsbury,
Printpoint.**

was seen as the best path to take to supply superior print quality to our clients without the environmental cost, and to contribute to the sustainability of our industry. It was difficult initially because the face value of print was purely based on price rather than the long-term effects of choosing those print houses not being responsible for their environmental impact."

Salsbury acknowledges a changing attitude amongst customers whose buying habits are now increasingly controlled by ethics. This has, he says, resulted in greater business for Printpoint.

"From a client's perspective, purchasing green wasn't high on the agenda, now I'd say that at least 30 percent of buyers are purchasing based on whether it's a green product, whether it's buying something from a supermarket or buying printing," he says.

Business isn't the only incentive for a printing company to be eco-friendly, according to Salsbury; it's something that should be done regardless.

"The printing industry is a fairly dirty industry and printers should be held accountable for their waste and energy consumption," he says.

COUNTING THE COST

When it comes to the cost of setting up a company that is eco-friendly, Wade and Salsbury both share similar outlooks.

"Green printing shouldn't cost anymore than regular printing because ultimately there are savings to be made by legitimately going green over time," Wade says. "However, many printing companies in Australia don't have the either financial resources, the will or the management support to embark on that journey, because it is a journey and there are obviously costs associated with the equipment, so it takes a fair bit of effort."

Salsbury says that: "The cost involved in the accreditations is really in line with the cost to the environment if a print house chooses to not meet the standards. It's about being responsible for what you produce."

One thing that both Finsbury Green Printing and Printpoint have noticed through making the switch is that others want to be part of their respective companies.

"We've seen the difference in our staff," says Salsbury. "They are proud of working for a company that is committed to sustainability. People have approached us and said they'd like to work for us and be a part of a business that is conscious of the footprint they leave."

Wade also says that once printers and the wider community began reading their environmental report, they received calls from people who were keen to join the company.

Wade's advice for any printer that is considering making the switch is to approach these changes firstly with the right attitude rather than doing it to make a buck and look good.

"We'd encourage people to look at it, but at the same time they have to be genuinely committed and that seems to be one of the biggest issues that confronts any company," he says. ●