

# Mail: renewable, sustainable and responsible

A white paper by the ADMA Mail Marketing Council  
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## Introduction

Mail is a powerful medium for communicating with customers and prospects. But it has a poor environmental reputation. This white paper demonstrates how the direct mail industry has substantially evolved to reinvent itself in response to increased environmental concerns, and how these changes should be communicated to the direct marketing industry and your customers.

For too long, mail has been the environmental 'weakling' of the direct marketing family. There is no doubt that up until the 80's, it was not a 'green' industry. But huge leaps forward in paper manufacturing, inks, and transportation have changed the impact of mail and made it a much more environmentally friendly channel.

The perception of mail as an environmentally irresponsible 'old school' channel still remains long after the industry has substantially changed reinvented itself. Yet paper is the only communications tool made from a renewable resource and is one of the few sustainable advertising mediums, and its environmental credentials should be made clear.

## About the Author



**James Copley** has over 8 years marketing and finance experience in Australia and the United Kingdom, three of which were at an award winning agency in Sydney and another three years in telecommunications.

James has developed and managed numerous successful marketing communication campaigns both DM and Online for a diverse range of clients including charities, FMCG clients and financial institutions. He is a member of the Executive Committee of ADMA's Mail Marketing Council and assisted in co-writing the Council's Best Practice Guidelines for Mail Marketing in 2010.

## Acknowledgements

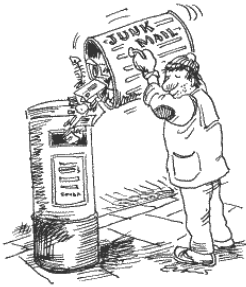
This paper has been created as part of the ADMA Mail Marketing Councils remit to promote best practice in the industry.

We offer our sincere thanks to James Copley for authoring this paper and also to the members of the Mail Marketing Council who reviewed and critiqued this paper and contributed their research. Special thanks also go to Alpine Offset Printing, Australia Post and Greenpeace

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## Mail Marketing – Current options



It seems like a no-brainer: mail *must* be more environmentally damaging than clean electronic channels, right? Think again...

Part of the problem is that mail is immediately

identifiable as 'wasteful' in a way that electronic channels are not. An article in *Direct Magazine* stated, "General marketing material, and direct mail in particular, forms a comparatively low percentage of total household waste. Yet how often have you pulled misdirected or irrelevant circulars from your overflowing mail box and muttered something pithy about dying rainforests?"<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps because computers are considered essentials, they are not perceived as wasteful. But you need to be clear-eyed about this medium: unless your computer is powered by renewable energy, it consumes fossil fuel based electricity whenever it is on, and especially when transferring files via networks. The e-medium is not entirely a green one, computers become obsolete after a couple of years and can be difficult to recycle. Compare this to printed material, which, once delivered, remains useable with no further energy required. And when printed matter has passed its expiry date, it is often recyclable.

The direct marketing industry itself is not immune from the perception that mail is bad for the environment. 83% of English media buyers 'strongly disagreed' or 'disagreed' with the statement that "paper is more environmentally friendly than digital communications"<sup>2</sup> when surveyed in 2008.

Many direct marketers feed the myth that paper equals environmental damage. This is the reason for this white paper.

This white paper is not to argue which communications channel is the more environmentally friendly, but rather to demonstrate that Mail Marketing has evolved over the last couple of decades from one that is embracing new environmentally friendly technologies, processes and raw materials on a continual basis.

Within the paper, we will look at these developments and how they can be implemented into our current day processes.

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<sup>1</sup> Joanne Douglas. "When green is all there is to be," *Direct Magazine*, pages 14-15, May-June, 2010.

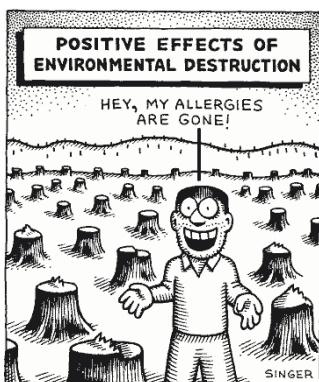
<sup>2</sup> "Two Sides" launch presentation from the National Association of Paper Merchants (UK) Suppliers' Forum 7 October 2008.

## The environmental evolution of the paper and printing industries

***“There aren’t many industries that can aspire to becoming genuinely sustainable. The pulp and paper industry, however, is one of them. It is inherently sustainable.”***

Jonathan Porritt, chairman of the UK Sustainability Development Commission, 2000-09.

### Sustainable forestry



The bad old days of destroying old growth forest for pulp milling are nearly over. Rainforests are disappearing at an alarming rate, but the paper industry is not entirely to blame<sup>3</sup>.

Paper manufacturers are increasingly using purpose grown plantation timber as their source of raw material. The environmental benefit of such plantations is that they are a renewable resource of timber due to the way these plantations are managed. Another great advantage of these plantations is they are great at storing carbon.

### Carbon storage and offsetting



Sustainable timber forestry is becoming increasingly more greenhouse emissions neutral as the maintenance of harvesting of these plantations do not emit more carbon than it absorbs. It has been stated that industrial forestry globally absorbs 1 billion tonnes of

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<sup>3</sup> “95% of global land use change emissions are caused by deforestation in tropical developing countries due to land clearing for agriculture and human habitation needs.” Australasian Paper Industry Association, *Paper naturally sustainable*. [brochure], Melbourne, Australia

CO<sub>2</sub> annually<sup>4</sup>. This is a huge amount of CO<sub>2</sub> when you stop to think about it.

Let’s examine paper more closely. Paper consists of wood fibres and when examined at a molecular level they are chains of cellulose, (carbon, hydrogen and oxygen (C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>10</sub>O<sub>5</sub>)). As you see from the above molecular formulae, every chain consists of six carbon atoms (C<sub>6</sub>). Given the physical size of trees and the sheer amount of cellulose chains within its structure, it can be said that every piece of paper is a cache of carbon or what is referred as “carbon storage”.

Some paper manufacturers go one step further and carbon offset the electricity and emissions generated during the process of manufacturing, providing the industry with another level of environmental preservation. The process of carbon offsets as the names suggests offsets one activity that expels carbon into the atmosphere against a project that either captures or stops carbon being emitted; therefore both activities cancel each other out.

### Improved paper manufacture process

The process of paper manufacturing has evolved in the face of environmental consciousness (with reduced costs). The Australasian Paper Industry Association’s brochure, “Paper naturally sustainable” quantifies the following improvements (percentages expressed per tonne of paper produced):

- Energy consumption reduced by 21% and Green House Gas emissions reduced by 22% since 1990.
- 46% of energy sourced from bio-fuels.
- Water use reduced by 63% since 1990.

### Recycling

The paper and printing industry encourages recycling because recycled paper is often cheaper to produce than original fibre. But it must be highlighted that the process of recycling does use transportation, energy,

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<sup>4</sup> Australasian Paper Industry Association, *Paper naturally sustainable*. [brochure], Melbourne, Australia

water and chemicals. However, while recycled paper may not always be greener, it does mean less land is cleared for renewable plantations and more native forest.

Approximately 48.4% of the paper produced in Australia is made from recycled fibre and 52.9% of paper consumed in Australia is recycled<sup>5</sup>. In terms of recycled paper usage, direct mail within Australia stacks up well with 80% of home delivered catalogues being recycled<sup>6</sup>.

### Printing technology

In recent years, Australia's environmentally aware printers are gaining their certification at Sustainable Green Print (SGP), the industry-specific environmental management system for the printing industry. Through the SGP, the printer can identify, document and measure its environmental management impacts and objectives while ensuring alignment with many of the requirements of ISO14001.

As part of the SGP, we are seeing more printers are increasingly moving towards the use of vegetable based inks and dyes that can bio-degrade which also aids the paper recycling process. At the same time, many expensive and environmentally damaging chemicals have been removed from the paper and print industry while the remaining non-organic chemicals are being significantly reduced. These changes in the process allow the industry to reduce the environmental impact of paper and print to ensure that it remains an ecologically viable channel of communication.

Efficient Printing Technologies<sup>7</sup> - what has changed.

1990	2007
Graphic arts film	Silverless imaging
UV Plate exposure	CTP, chemistry free, very low H <sub>2</sub> O
Mineral oil based inks	Vegetable oil inks
1 hour make ready	15 minute make ready
Chlorine bleaching (dioxin)	TCF or ECF (no dioxin)
Hand washing	Press Auto wash systems
Petroleum based solvents	Water based 'solvent systems'
Chemical based proofing systems	Remote digital proofing
	High coating weight on paper

### Bleaching processes

Bleaching wood pulp is the chemical process to remove the natural colour of the wood, so that it becomes the clear white colour we all like to use. Conventional bleaching uses elemental chlorine-based chemicals, which release harmful compounds including chlorinated dioxins<sup>8</sup>, some of which are known to be carcinogenic as well as produce other negative health complications to both humans and animals.

From the 1990's the use of elemental chlorine has been replaced with ECF (Elemental Chlorine Free) and TCF (Totally Chlorine Free) bleaching processes. In 2005, elemental chlorine was used in 19-20% of kraft pulp production globally, down from over 90% in 1990. 75% of kraft pulp used ECF, with the remaining 5-6% using TCF<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Page 5 F Ximenes, M Robinson, B Wright, *Forests, Wood and Australia's Carbon Balance*, The Forest and Wood Products Research and Development Corporation, October 2006

<sup>6</sup> Australasian Paper Industry Association, *Paper recycling... the facts*. [brochure], Melbourne, Australia

<sup>7</sup> Bernard P Cassell (Australasian Paper Industry Association), "Sustainability of paper and print," presented April 2010

<sup>8</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bleaching\\_of\\_wood\\_pulp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bleaching_of_wood_pulp) - cite\_note-can-23

<sup>9</sup> Ensis/CSIRO (Australia) joint research "Frequently Asked Questions on Kraft Pulp Mills" 4 March 2005

## Transportation

There are two elements to the environmental impact of transportation.

1. Moving the 'raw' paper products
2. The delivery of the completed mail piece.

There is no denying that shipping of materials for the paper industry consumes energy and produces emissions and as the use of paper increases, further damage is done to the environment. What is important to consider is the weight of this harm, against the harm caused by other channels. The other channels all require the transportation of raw material in the upkeep of infrastructure, such as coal for electricity for the Internet, TV, Radio and other electronic media channels.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to scientifically measure and compare energy use and waste in the paper/print industry as compared to other communications methods but it is worth mentioning and bringing it to your attention.

***“Last year, Australian businesses sent 4.2 billion paper items by post. Delivering this mail generates significant greenhouse emissions.”***

([www.paperlessalliance.com.au](http://www.paperlessalliance.com.au))

One area which is measurable is the delivery of mail pieces to consumers. The Paper Less Alliance quote above does not differentiate between direct mail and other business mail. This does lead to the major argument against the 'dirty' tag being applied to postal services. What fails to be acknowledged is that consumers receive post every day and the additional marketing material does not have a significant incremental impact on the overall emissions as it is usually included in the general post or delivered by paid third-party walkers.

It could be actually more efficient and less wasteful to piggyback on the existing postage delivery system rather than require

new infrastructure each time new technologies are developed.

In addition, mail deliverers are conscious of their environmental impact as well as their bottom line. Australia Post has demonstrated this, since 2005, they have reduced emissions by 2,488 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> through the use of new diesel class vehicles<sup>10</sup>.

We also need to keep in mind that the Australian population has increased and is now spread over more land, so this reduction in transportation costs is significant. Many other Australian delivery companies also participate in the Greenfleet initiative, which offsets the carbon emissions produced by their vehicles through the planting of trees to increase the amount of natural forests.

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<sup>10</sup> "Greenhouse gas emissions (tonnes) - by source" table, Australia Post website: <http://auspost.com.au/about-us/environmental-performance.html>

## From junk mail to valuable offer – changing your customers' perceptions



Consumers are the reason why businesses are paying more attention in reducing their environmental impacts. What the consumer wants, the

consumer shall receive. Right? Well, most of the time, as far as marketers can give!

### Current attitudes

Consumers want to reduce their environmental footprint, but still like to receive relevant offers. The reason paper and print continue to work is that material can be retained and referred to at a later time. Direct mail pieces represent something tangible, which appeals to consumer's sense of receiving something of value.

But as mentioned at the start of this paper, mail currently does not have a good environmental reputation with 62% of consumers rating email as better for the environment<sup>11</sup>. Mail marketers need to be sensitive to this perception and address it in credible terms.

If your organisation is using environmentally friendly print and paper technologies, be proud and tell your customers – not just on the envelope, but on the mail piece as well (no one keeps the envelope). Tell them why mail is your chosen channel and don't be shy about challenging the perception that it is not an 'environmentally sound' delivery method.

If you've used recycled and/or carbon offset paper and vegetable dyes, show the recipient the steps you took in providing an eco-friendly piece of work. Maybe integrate

some online activity and develop a landing page to show your customers. Tell your customers that your company is proud to be eco-friendly. Small things like this may just give you the edge over competitors who have not taken the trouble to explain their actions.

It may be appropriate to make the environment a feature in some offers. If you want to really emphasise the green credentials of your campaign, choose recycled stock, an accredited FSC stock or go one step further and use a seed-impregnated paper.



Don't forget, if mail can be recycled, identify it as recyclable so campaigns don't end up in the rubbish with the food scraps but in the recycle bin to be used again or even retrieved from the recycle bin (without food all over it) if the offer was too good not to take up!

### Greenwashing

Any business that wants to make claims about its environmental credentials has to ensure it provides factual information to businesses and consumers. This applies equally to paper and print companies and digital systems and computers. The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) have issued guidelines on Green Marketing. In part, they state:

*"Claims should consider the whole product life cycle – When making claims about a particular characteristic or part of a product, you should also consider the whole product life cycle. The manufacturing, recycling, destruction and disposal process should be taken into account before making any environmental claims regarding the relevant characteristic or part."*

Be wary of "Greenwashing" (the use of half-truths and spurious comparisons) when describing your environmental credentials.

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<sup>11</sup> Consumer Perspectives Report: Mail, email and online advertising [white paper], Research by Open Mind Research Group, commissioned by Open up to Mail

For more information on Greenwashing see the Resources section at the end of this paper.

In the report, "How Sinar Mas is Pulping the Planet", Greenpeace advise to be wary of "illegitimate certification" where products claim to be certified but actually don't adhere to the Programme of the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) scheme.

To bear the PEFC logo, a product must contain 70 per cent minimum of PEFC-certified virgin fibre and the remaining material in the product must come from "verified non-controversial sources" <sup>14</sup>

If you plan to use logo and certifications, ensure that they are genuine and from a recognised external auditor. Consider the international ISO 1400 family of standards or the Australian Federal Government's National Carbon Offset Standard (NCOS) certification (which replaced 'Greenhouse Friendly' on 1 July, 2010). Also, examine the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) that encourage consumers to look for their logo on paper products.



### Clean data equals green marketing

Consumers do not appreciate receiving irrelevant offers by any channel, and as a result untargeted postal material is often classed as 'junk mail'. The most effective way to gain mail cut-through is to be strict with your data cleanliness and ruthless with your targeting.

Data hygiene provides marketers with immediate opportunities for environmental improvement. In an article asking advice on improving the environmental impact of mail campaigns, 'three of the four experts cited, recommended attention to data as the most important step towards being green'<sup>15</sup>.

Minimising incorrectly targeted communications and collaterals reduce the use of energy and materials.

Marketers should consider the following:

- Providing consumers with choice about the types of communication they receive and the channels which they want to receive them through.
- Maintain an in-house suppression file and wash against the latest Do Not Mail Service (DNMS) as appropriate. Suppliers should also ensure non-ADMA clients are encouraged to use the DNMS for unsolicited campaigns.
- Ensuring data accuracy by removing duplicates, deceased persons and enhancing data so that details are standardised and correct.
- Using segmentation, modelling and personalisation techniques to better target consumers and messages.

## Recommendations to make your mail more environmentally friendly

When you order stock, take 2 minutes to ask your supplier where the paper came from, what the bleaching process was and whether the manufacturing has been carbon offset. There is very little cost difference for this type of stock and if demand increases, it will further encourage responsible forestry practices.

Inks may no longer contain heavy metals, but petroleum based inks release Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) into the atmosphere. Investigate vegetable based inks, particularly soybean based inks. You'll be surprised how good modern vegetable based inks are. Also consider the impact of ink on the recyclability of your piece. Metallic inks and laminate foils pose ongoing problems for deinking mills. Consider using poly laminates as alternatives.

Adhesives also cause recycling problems. Some adhesives cannot be easily removed in the recycling process and little specks called 'stickies' may stay in the paper pulp and gum up both paper machines and printing presses. Marketers should specify the use of recyclable or environmentally benign adhesives and should consider alternatives to labels.

Consider your addressing method: adhesives and clear windows can contaminate envelopes. To eliminate this problem, marketers should print addresses directly on the envelope or design the package so that the address shows through an open window. Don't spoil your eco-friendly efforts with an un-environmental envelope. Also, consider using those clever integrated envelope/mail pieces "self mailers".

Marketers using plastic wraps should encourage consumers to separate the plastics from paper components for recycling, use recyclable polymer envelopes, or investigate degradable wraps such as EPI.

When mailing product samples or promotional items, use recycled and recyclable plastics and papers.

Digital printing should also be considered as it provides a customised short print-run, reducing inventory and waste. The use of Computer To Plate (CTP) printing also eliminates the need for film.

Ask your printer to use inks that have been manufactured to perform with the least amount of petroleum based solvents possible.

Finally, consider the option of printing your mail packs in the state where they're going to be delivered. With the advances in digital printing and many printers having facilities in each state, this is a way to save on transport emissions.

## Resources

**Australian Paper's Sustainable Paper Guide** provides information on paper choice and references the Australian Government's new National Carbon Offset Standard initiative (NCOS) which replaced the Greenhouse Friendly program on 1 July this year:  
<http://www.australianpaper.com.au/environment/request-sustainable-paper-guide.aspx>

ADMA is concerned about the sustainable management of natural resources and the need to reduce pollutants such as greenhouse gas emissions. **The Green Blueprint for the Australian Marketing Industry** is designed to formalise environmental efforts. Please note that this can only be accessed by ADMA members.  
<http://www.adma.com.au/data/portal/00000947/content/93981001215126827955.pdf>

**The Sins of Greenwashing** is a guide to help marketers win over consumers through genuine environmental marketing & communications.  
<http://sinsofgreenwashing.org/marketers-guide/>

**The Environmental Planning Tool & Policy Statement Generator** has been created by ADMA in conjunction with the US DMA Committee on Environment and Social Responsibility. It provides the opportunity to consider current practices and their environmental impacts and the internal policies of organisations and their goals for continual environmental improvement, in balance with financial performance. This tool also features a generator function that enables you to create and print an environmental policy for your organisation based on your current practices. Please note that this can only be accessed by ADMA members.  
<http://www.adma.com.au/envgen/>

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## About the Australian Direct Marketing Association

ADMA was formed in 1966 and is the peak industry body of the Australian direct marketing industry.

Our primary objective is to help companies achieve better marketing results through the enlightened use of direct marketing.

We achieve this through the three pillars of our activity; Advocacy, Knowledge and Community.

### Advocacy

During its 44 years of operation ADMA has been involved in the formulation of law relevant to the direct marketing industry.

Predominantly our focus has been the Privacy Act 1988, the Spam Act 2003 and the Do Not Call Register Act 2006.

### Knowledge

ADMA improves Australian marketer's knowledge by a number of different ways including education, councils and events.

ADMA runs a number of courses including the pre-eminent Certificate of Direct and Digital Marketing. A number of short courses are also offered.

ADMA Councils provide a meeting place for Australian marketers to develop discuss common problems and develop industry best practice. ADMA Councils run free events and issue white papers on leading areas of interest.

ADMA Events feature renowned international and national marketers.

### Community

ADMA has over 500 member organisations including major financial institutions, telecommunications companies, energy providers, travel service companies, major charities, statutory corporations, educational institutions and specialist suppliers of direct marketing services.

ADMA events and councils offer the perfect way for marketers to meet and network.

## About ADMA Councils

This paper is the work of the Mail Marketing Council.

ADMA has seven different councils including:

- a) Agency
- b) Analytics and Data
- c) Contact Centre
- d) Digital
- e) Mail Marketing
- f) Multi-Channel Acquisition
- g) Relationship Marketing / Customer Management

The Digital, Multi-Channel Acquisition and Relationship Marketing /Customer Management Councils are Super-Councils because each has broad cross over of multiple facets of marketing disciplines.

The objectives of the ADMA Councils are to:

- a) provide forums for sharing information on matters of specific common interest aimed at increasing the industry sector body of knowledge
- a) assist in the development of a unified approach on public policy and regulatory matters
- b) develop, where appropriate, industry best practice guidelines that set ADMA members apart from others in the industry
- c) add value to ADMA membership.

ADMA Councils allow marketers to network, discuss best practice and regulatory issues, discuss current challenges and make new contacts.

ADMA Councils are a free member benefit.

Joining an ADMA Council is easy and any employee of an ADMA Member can join by emailing [councils@adma.com.au](mailto:councils@adma.com.au) or calling 02 9277 5419.

## How to Become an ADMA Member

By becoming an ADMA member you join Australia's largest marketing industry association.

ADMA membership delivers Protection, Promotion and Education benefits to all employees in your company including:

- a) Access to free Regulatory guidance, updates and compliance webinars
- b) The ability to participate in member-only ADMA Councils
- c) 35% discount on ADMA events and education programs

Becoming an ADMA member is easy. ADMA Councils are a free member benefit. Simply complete the [online form](#) or call **02 9277 5400**.

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