

· GOVERNMENT · PROCUREMENT

GREEN PRINTING

Making Sustainable Printing Decisions

By Tonya Jackson

Saving money or saving the environment. In paper-process intensive government organizations, these are seemingly conflicting goals. The vast amount of data transmitted and the printing, faxing, and copying as a result can impact the environment through energy consumption and paper waste. Fortunately, there are ways for government organizations to minimize their impact on the environment by implementing an effective document management solution from an environmentally conscious solutions vendor.

Select the Right Company

Choose a company that has made a commitment to be proactive when it comes to health, safety, and environmental responsibility. Companies with this commitment typically have their management systems audited by a third party and are recognized as being in conformance with two widely known standards—ISO 14001, covering environmental management, and OHSAS 18001, covering health and safety management. Conformance with these standards demonstrates a company's commitment to continual improvement in two very important areas.

Choose a company that participates in voluntary environmental programs sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Participation in voluntary programs demonstrates a company's commitment to go beyond compliance when it comes to the environment. Two examples of voluntary programs are WasteWise, focused on waste minimization and reduction, and Plug-In To eCycling. Plug-In To eCycling facilitates partnerships with communities, electronics manufacturers and retailers to promote shared responsibility for safe electronics recycling and establishes pilot projects to test innovative approaches to safe electronics recycling.

Choose a company that meets the requirements of the European Union's Restriction of Hazardous Substances

(RoHS) Directive on a global basis. By meeting the requirement globally, companies demonstrate their commitment to removing hazardous substances from their product line, regardless of where the products are sold.

Select the Right Product

Choose document management products that meet certain environmental product design guidelines. One widely recognized designation in the U.S. that has also earned recognition in countries around the globe is the ENERGY STAR certification. ENERGY STAR is a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) designed to help save money and protect the environment through energy-efficient products and practices. Printers that have earned the ENERGY STAR seal have cut their electricity use by over 60 percent.

Choose RoHS-compliant products, which means they are made without specific hazardous substances intentionally added. These restricted substances include lead, mercury, hexavalent chromium, cadmium, polybrominated biphenyls (PBB's, flame retardant) and polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE's, flame retardant).

An additional consideration in thinking green includes choosing products that have thoughtful packaging designs, such as those that minimize the size and amount of packaging materials needed to protect the product and also use materials that have recycled content and are recyclable. Also, find out if the company provides a program for recycling used printer cartridges and end-of-life printers.

Implement an Effective Document Management Program

After identifying the right company with the right product, consider how an organization uses printers to identify additional cost savings. Printers with a duplex feature reduce the amount of paper consumed by printing on both sides of the sheet. A multifunction product

(MFP), one that scans, faxes, copies, and prints, reduces space requirements as well as maintenance and energy costs. Using an MFP enables the option of scanning documents to an electronic file and distributing them via e-mail rather than printing hard copies and mailing. Using a distribute and print process can save time, increase productivity and reduce paper and supplies usage—and save money. There is one additional feature to look for to avoid waste from printing mistakes if printing multiple copies. With the “proof then print” feature, when a user sends a multiple copy print job to the printer, only one copy will print for proofing purposes. If the proof is acceptable, the user can continue the job from the printer without returning to their workstation, thus saving time and avoiding multiple wasted copies.

Identifying the right printing solution will reduce the impact an organization has on the environment and save time and money. Procurement professionals can make a

difference by choosing a company that operates with the environment in mind, by using printing solutions that consume less energy, paper and supplies, and by recycling hardware, paper and supplies at their end of life. □



About the Author

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