

# More than just “going green”

## The advantages of environmentally conscious marketing

From improving your company's image to complying with regulatory requirements to a genuine concern for the world's natural resources, there are plenty of reasons for companies to “go green.” Examining practices such as packaging, product promotion and online marketing can reveal a number of ways companies can improve their own business practices while positively impacting the environment.

### The e-commerce shift

Electronic marketing provides a substantial cost savings and the ability to update marketing campaigns on the fly. Companies are always looking for new, dynamic ways to increase their brand recognition, and e-commerce fills that niche. The fact that it's green is icing on the cake. Making marketing campaigns more personal helps to create customer loyalty. It also eliminates the need for natural resources and the cost associated with running huge print campaigns that run the risk of obsolescence and creating material waste. Electronic marketing allows for a level of flexibility and relevance that has, until very recently, been unattainable for many companies. Another benefit of e-commerce is that it has leveled the playing field for small to midsize companies that didn't have the financial wherewithal to compete in a marketplace dominated by big corporations with sizable marketing budgets.

Electronic bill presentment is another example of the trend toward paperless communication. The option of receiving bills online benefits the environment while adding efficiency and convenience to companies and consumers.

The trend toward electronic marketing — personalized URLs, e-mail blasts, e-campaigns, etc. — is driven in part by the green movement. Utilizing the popularity of social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter is an environmentally conscious way of marketing your company and brand. The costs and resources necessary are minimal relative to the impact these sites can have on your business. It's a win-win situation. Companies are able to extend their reach globally without depleting resources and negatively impacting the environment. E-commerce has created a truly global marketplace where innovation does not come with an environmental price tag.

### Smarter packaging

Moving to sustainable packaging is an initiative that has to come from the top-down and requires companies to take a look at new options and rethink old ideas and processes. While moving away from using plastics can save costs when petroleum prices are up, there is usually an investment involved in changing fulfillment and packing practices and re-aligning manufacturing equipment needed to pro-

duce environmentally friendly new materials.

Cartons and other forms of packages made from paperboard or corrugated material are naturally a better choice when designing to meet higher recyclable and biodegradable standards. Part of the equation involves simply using less: a cell phone without a clamshell cover or a computer made with reclaimed parts is a common-sense way to package things smarter and with an eye toward conserving materials and energy.

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In some cases, plastics are a better option, when made with durability in mind. For example, polypropylene plastic pallets are reusable and easily recyclable. As paper products become the favored means of packaging, the plastic industry is evolving through technology to drive better ways to meet the demands of a green-seeking population.

### Promoting change

Companies have choices when it comes to environmentally friendly promotional products. For instance, the reusable bags with store logos that shoppers carry in place of one-time-use plastic bags may not be made of recycled or even biodegradable material, but they're “green” nonetheless, because they're used again and again. While some manufacturing processes for green goods are significantly more expensive, a product as simple as a pen made from corn is going to have a comparable cost to one manufactured in a traditional way.

While rolling out a complete line of sustainable promotional products may not be economically viable for most companies right now, there are some green initiatives that align well with promoting a company's name. Using coffee mugs instead of styrofoam cups, BPA-free water bottles instead of plastic cups, or Post-it notes made from recycled paper are small steps toward putting products in place throughout an organization — and clients' organizations — that communicate a progressive, environmentally conscious corporate mindset.

Companies with a real dedication to environmentally conscious initiatives can start small and think big, implementing real change into their organizations that are more than just “going green.”



*With more than 25 years of experience, The Shamrock Companies specializes in building brands with integrated marketing solutions.*

### Case study:

The Shamrock Companies has been serving the patient communication needs of a world-renowned multifacility health care provider for 14 years. The client came to Shamrock to develop an electronic bill presentment and payment (EBPP) solution that would allow patients to receive and pay bills online for any of the health system's locations. Shamrock went to work to create a customer-focused initiative to improve efficiency and convenience with environmentally friendly benefits.

Shamrock already provided highly customized statement processing, imaging and mailing services for the health system network and possessed an understanding of the client's bill collections process and its brand. The next step was to integrate an EBPP solution that would complement the client's already significant online presence while providing patients with a secure, easy-to-use e-bill service.

The team at Shamrock seamlessly integrated the new technology into the client's existing Web site, making the EBPP solution a natural extension of the health care provider's customer-centric services.

This technology implementation resulted in a host of benefits to the client, including a dramatic A/R cycle improvement, significant cost, time and postage savings, and the environmentally friendly benefit of a reduction in paper usage.



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