

WHAT CLIMATE CHANGE MEANS

Mailers must realise that a carbon emissions reduction strategy is necessary now. A wait-and-see approach is not enough as later may be too late

The concentration of greenhouse gases in the earth's atmosphere is steadily increasing to a level that scientists agree will have serious consequences for the planet. In response leaders are preparing to deliver a new global climate agreement by December based on the convening of world diplomats at the United National Climate change Convention in Copenhagen this year. In the USA the strengthened Democratic Congress has also promised action.

A new regulatory environment and tighter scrutiny on carbon emissions are inciting change in the marketplace – and the mailing industry is no exception. Informed leaders agree that the mailing industry, like all industries, will soon be asked to assess and reduce carbon emissions. Although there is no comprehensive, publicly available tool to analyse the total environmental footprint of the US mailing system today, several ongoing initiatives have attempted to quantify areas within the mail process that emit high concentrations of greenhouse gases.

For example, in a recent Pitney Bowes study, 'The Environmental Impact of Mail: A Baseline,' all available data sources were examined to determine a range of carbon emissions generated by traditional mail processes. The conclusions of this research were validated by an outside expert who specialises in life-cycle analyses and they now form the baseline of carbon footprint data for a carbon calculator solution.

Through a systematic approach, the carbon calculator analyses 18 components within the mailing process to gauge environmental impact. The calculator and process takes a holistic approach to measuring a mailer's carbon footprint and includes analysis of the amount and types of materials used, efficiency of equipment and the types of transportation and distances driven. By analysing this information using the carbon calculator, mailers can find new



Robbertz: "Later may be too late"

opportunities to consolidate mailpieces, run more efficient operations and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Industry associations are also providing environmental tools to help spread greater awareness of the breadth and complexity of environmental issues facing direct marketers and mailers. In the USA the Direct Marketing Association (DMA) offers a variety of environmental assessment tools to help mailers adopt environmentally conscious print-to-mail operations, including the Green 15 environmental performance scorecard.

The DMA's scorecard asks members to establish internal and measurable benchmarks to improve environmental performance in five key areas. These

comprise: list hygiene and data management; design; paper procurement and use; printing and packaging; and recycling and pollution reduction. The DMA then provides tips and strategies to help mailers achieve a reduced environmental impact.

For example in the hygiene and data management area the DMA offers ways to target mailpieces better, validate delivery points, and practice list and address hygiene to meet US Postal Service standards. By practising some of these techniques, direct marketers help reduce the amount of undeliverable-as-addressed mail and duplicate mail, which conserves natural resources while making mail operations more efficient. Strategies and tips listed in the other four areas provide similar solutions to help reduce the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by mailers.

As the carbon calculator solution and DMA's Green 15 scorecard exemplify, regulatory changes and 'green' growth trends are already driving change throughout the mailing industry. Pitney Bowes' vice president of environmental health and safety, Paul Robbertz, comments: "Continuous collaboration among industry associations, individual companies and government on environmental issues and challenges unique to the mailing industry promises to provide the necessary solutions to ensure its sustainability. Mailers adopting a wait-and-see approach must realise that a carbon emissions reduction strategy is necessary now. Later may be too late."

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Pitney Bowes
Tel: +1 203 351 6974
Email: carol.wallace@pb.com
Web: www.pb.com

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Please contact us:

Tel: +31 (0)597 593131

Email: info@hoza.com

Website: www.hoza.com

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