

Environmental Focus

MFP manufacturers embrace green initiatives

by: Brent Hoskins, Office Technology Magazine

Do you remember the Keep America Beautiful public service announcement (PSA) on television in the 1970s featuring a Native American? We saw him row a canoe in polluted water, step onto a littered river bank and shed a tear when trash is thrown at his feet from a passing car on a crowded highway. If so, you may also remember the announcer's bold pronouncement: "People start pollution; people can stop it."

The images shown in the television PSA (you can find it on YouTube) provide a stark reminder of a time when many people were giving little to no thought about the environment. Pollution in the water, on land and in the air were all common sights. Phrases such as "environmentally friendly" and "carbon footprint" were not part of our lexicon at the time. Instead, the focus was on being reactive and reversing the pollution problem.

Fast forward 40 years. Today, societal pollution has been greatly reduced in America and the prevailing focus, now proactive, is on "going green" — that is, protecting the environment. Many corporations (and individuals, for that matter) have initiatives in place dedicated to sustaining the Earth's ecosystems. There is also a specific focus on reducing the release of various gaseous compounds (such as carbon dioxide) that absorb infrared radiation, trap heat in the atmosphere and contribute to the "greenhouse effect."

Within the office technology industry, protecting and sustaining the environment through an ever-widening collection of green initiatives is now commonplace among MFP manufacturers. It is clear that executives in these companies have adopted a new variation of the 1970s PSA: "People cause negative impacts on the environment; people can stop them."

Actually, while the focus on the environment has only been at the forefront of public dialog for the past decade or so, it is not a new area of sensitivity among the industry's manufacturers. Corporate philosophies and initiatives date back many years.

Kousuke Ito, director of environmental sustainability and



compliance at Ricoh Americas Corp., says "the journey" at Ricoh started in the 1970s "with pollution prevention," ultimately evolving from reactive to proactive and, today, to what he refers to as the "responsible stage." The focus on being responsible is reflected in what the company refers to as 3P Balance: people, planet and profit. "In order to be sustainable in the 'responsible stage,' you cannot just do this for five years and then do something else; you have to be continuously going for it," he says. "It starts with the people as-

pect. So, ease-of-use is considered. Of course, with a focus on the environment, it needs to be good for the planet, too. But to continue doing what we have been doing, our efforts need to have a financial viability. So, we have to generate a profit while we are doing this."

Ito notes that Ricoh has a goal to reduce its carbon footprint by the year 2050 to one-eighth of the company's carbon footprint in 2000. "The two tools we have to accomplish this goal are our technological innovation and people," he explains. "This includes Ricoh employees, the dealer community and end users. Because more than 75 percent of the environmental impact occurs when the machine is in use, through paper and electricity consumption, it must be a partnership."

As noted, Ricoh is not alone in its commitment to protecting the environment. Toshiba America Business Solutions Inc. (TABS), for example, first started publishing environmental reports in the mid-1990s. In 2000, the company initiated its Environmental Vision 2050, which, similar to Ricoh's goal, requires an increase in the degree of improvement in overall eco-efficiency by a factor of five by 2025 (as compared to 2000) and by a factor of 10 by 2050.

"We aim to become one of the world's foremost eco-companies through four strategies, by integrating business management with environmental management," says Tom Walter, chief green officer at TABS. "The four strategies to achieve this aim are: (1) a strategy to expand the number of environmentally conscious products (ECPs); (2) a high-efficiency

manufacturing strategy; (3) a compliance and management strategy; and (4) a communication strategy.”

Walter adds that TABS has two primary initiatives related to the four strategies. “The first is the ‘greening of products,’ by which we aim to achieve the highest level of environmental performance for all products we develop and reduce environmental impacts through product life cycles,” he explains. “The

second is the ‘greening of technology,’ by which we aim to provide a stable power supply and mitigate climate change on a global scale through low-carbon energy technologies.”

Similarly, another of the industry’s MFP manufacturers, Canon U.S.A. Inc., first adopted its “Kyosei” philosophy in 1985. As stated on Canon’s website, Kyosei, in part, guides the company’s “tradition of commitment to protect and preserve our most precious of resources — the world we share, the communities we serve and the lives we touch. We do this through environmental, conservation, recycling and sustainability initiatives.”

Although Canon’s commitment to the environment “was made a long time ago, in some ways, our sustainability efforts are a well-kept secret,” says Mario Rufino, manager of the company’s Product & Chemical Safety Division. “We have done many positive things to sustain the environment that people don’t know about. And, because Canon is a very large company, we don’t make these decisions on Friday and then implement them on Monday. It takes a lot of time and a lot of effort.”

One of Canon’s recent accomplishments, focused, in part, on protecting the environment, was the 2013 opening of its newly constructed, 700,000-square-foot U.S. headquarters in Melville, N.Y. Rufino notes that the building is LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) gold-level certified, meaning that the building meets standards for environmental responsibility and efficient use of resources, as set by the U.S. Green Building Council. “The driver was Kyosei,” Rufino says. “We could not, in good conscience, build a building without considering the environment.”

Paul Albano, senior manager of product marketing in the Solution Marketing Division of the Business Imaging Solutions Group at Canon, emphasizes one green initiative of the new headquarters that is likely of particular interest to dealers. “We instituted a print management program, consolidating the number of machines we have here in Melville,” he says, noting that the company’s carbon footprint

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Canon U.S.A. Inc.

related to its print volume has been significantly reduced. “At our previous building, we had 900 machines and 374 different models. Here we have deployed 75 devices and standardized on one model.”

Aside from any internal strides to protect the environment, manufacturers point to a number of product features that

dealers can promote to their customers. Today, for example, Energy Star compliance is a common attribute of MFPs. Energy Star is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) program established in 1992 that reduces a product’s carbon footprint through energy efficiency.

In recent years, manufacturers have also been promoting their participation in the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) program, launched in 2006 and managed by the non-profit Green Electronics Council. The program is described on the EPEAT website as a “comprehensive global environmental rating system that helps purchasers identify greener computers and other electronics.” Participating companies can achieve Bronze, Silver or Gold status for their products. Products must meet all required criteria to be registered at the Bronze level. They can then be registered as Silver or Gold based on the percentage of optional criteria they meet above the baseline.

Beyond Energy Star and EPEAT, there are, of course, various product capabilities that are dedicated to protecting the environment. Emphasizing the environmental impact of duplexing, for example, Ito notes that the manufacture of a single sheet of letter-sized paper consumes 17 watts of electricity. Consider, too, that MFP manufacturers have had toner cartridge return and recycling programs in place for years. In addition, changes in the MFP manufacturing process have been made. “We are now building products that are lighter in weight and smaller in size, but with the same or better capabilities,” says Brad Arrington, manager of product marketing in the Enterprise Solutions Division of the Business Imaging Solutions Group at Canon. “This results in less energy being consumed to transport products via ships, railways or trucks with a corresponding decrease in related CO emissions.”

Recently, TABS has taken its green initiatives to a whole new level. In 2013, the company introduced its e-STUDIO-306LP, featuring erasable toner, output in a distinctive blue, serving to notify users that the page is erasable. The

accompanying e-STUDIO-RD30 unit applies heat to remove the special toner. Walter notes that using the same sheet of paper up to five times minimizes paper usage, thus reducing carbon dioxide emissions at the paper manufacturing level. "Interest in the e-STUDIO306LP MFP has been very high," he says. "As of today, we have sold 69 units; we are currently working on a bid for 94 units for one of our major accounts."

While you may not be selling an erasable-toner MFP, there are many green attributes of the MFPs you do sell, given the commitment among manufacturers industry-wide to protect the environment. Are you promoting these attributes to your current and prospective customers? While he says there are a variety of reasons to do so, Rufino emphasizes one primary reason dealers should consider: "Understand that sustainability is a pass-through. That is, the manufacturer's smaller environmental footprint passes through to the dealer, to the dealer's customer and to that customer's customer."

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Toshiba America Business Solutions Inc.

Arrington adds to Rufino's point. "Dealers should ask their customers if they have environmental initiatives within their businesses," he says. "Once you understand and appreciate where the customer is on the spectrum of environmental responsibility, you can then engage with that customer to help fulfill their needs and support their sustainability efforts."

Walter advises dealers not to view today's focus on the environment as temporary. "Sustainability is not just a corporate buzzword; it is here to stay," he says, noting that it is an area that dealers can wisely use to advance their businesses. "Companies that can effectively use this concept to differentiate themselves will rise to the top of the industry." ■

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PrintReleaf Minimizing Impact of Paper Usage

Louisville, Colo.-based PrintReleaf (www.printreleaf.com) recently introduced a technology platform that enables cloud-based paper tracking and, ultimately, reforestation. The company's PrintReleaf Exchange (PRX) provides dealers, MFP/printer manufacturers and their customers a way to promote sustainable business practices and reduce the environmental impacts that can result from printing.



Jordan Darragh

"It is unreasonable to think we can completely eliminate the need for paper," says Jordan Darragh, PrintReleaf founder and CEO. "Rather, we are providing a solution that minimizes the negative impacts of paper usage."

How does it work? "PrintReleaf measures a customer's paper consumption and equates it to forest impact, measured in trees," Darragh explains, citing the accepted forestry industry standard of one average tree equating to 8,333 sheets of letter-sized paper. "Customers then 'releaf' — or replant — their consumption by planting new trees as part of a user experience inside their PrintReleaf portal to neutralize their environmental impact. In other words, we guarantee to reforest every sheet of paper that a PrintReleaf customer consumes."

Through online portals, customers are connected directly to reforestation projects, Darragh says. "After selecting where they want their paper 'releafed,' customers can use their portals to track the growth and survival of their trees over an approximate 10-year time frame for each tree," he says, noting that his company has

partnered with SGS International, a leading forestry auditor, to monitor and report on the trees that are planted. "Worldwide, about five billion acres have been deforested or degraded over the past century. That's about 100 billion trees. PrintReleaf provides an opportunity to help, with dealers, manufacturers and their customers participating in reforestation as partners in this process."

From a business perspective, Darragh says, the company charges a wholesale price per page to a dealership or manufacturer, which, in turn, marks it up and charges a retail price per page to customers, realizing an increased profit on every page tracked by PrintReleaf, he says. "We've done significant beta testing with end users and the feedback thus far has been very positive," he says, adding that in the testing phase, the company has averaged a retail price of \$0.0007 cents per page. Since the company's founding in 2011, PrintReleaf and its beta customers have reforested more than 3,000 trees.

Although PrintReleaf only released its PRX in early March, it is already making strides in broadening its reach. The company was recently named a LINK partner by PrintFleet, a provider of managed print software and solutions. LINK is PrintFleet's platform for system integration, enabling business process automation and seamless connections with supply chain partners. "Innovative partners like PrintFleet are helping us achieve our mission," Darragh says. "This is a tremendous opportunity to provide customers of PrintFleet's global network of dealers the chance to 'releaf' the paper they've consumed."

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