

Carbon myth

Think you're being environmentally responsible reading a report on the net? Well think again.

The perception that electronic media leaves less of an environmental footprint than printed material is one of those myths that needs to be debunked once and for all. It's just not true!

Putting ink on paper is one of the most environmentally responsible ways you can get your message across. However, what is most concerning is that we see many organisations cringing at the thought of using paper as a communication medium.

Some organisations are starting to actively discourage the use of print on paper because apparently it is negatively impacting on the environment. Whether the concern is real or just cost cutting, it is being said often and people are starting to believe it.

So being able to provide a factual counter to these claims is critical. The example given overleaf, based on The Stern Review, is a case in point, although it applies to almost any publication, annual report or document that may be published and distributed in print, online or on CD.

For an industry that gets regularly slammed for its supposedly poor eco credentials, this is excellent news and we should be sharing it with all our customers.

Trees lock up carbon

A significant portion of the earth's carbon dioxide is in the atmosphere and organic matter such as trees and bushes. Carbon in the atmosphere traps sunlight and in doing so contributes to global warming. Paper production can have a valuable impact on reducing this influence.

A report by Jorge Sarmiento and Steven Wolfsy for the US Carbon and Climate Working Group highlights how the huge reforestation programs taking place in many parts of the world are helping to create a positive shift in the amount of carbon trapped within the environment, rather than the atmosphere.

The reason why this is beneficial is that a tree, which is almost entirely carbon with a small measure of water, grows for about 100 years. Its weight represents the amount of carbon taken out of the atmosphere, so after 100 years very little carbon is absorbed into the atmosphere.

We should be sharing this news with all our customers.

Fight global warming

The more paper we use from sustainable forests, the stronger the contribution towards the fight against global warming. More managed tree plantations equals more carbon locked up and the fibre can be recycled four or five times. Has anyone ever recycled their 1995 laptop into a brand new up-to-date laptop?

Carbon myth – print **versus** electronic

When making a comparison between reading the printed version of the Stern Review and viewing its content using electronic media, the environmental impacts are quite surprising.



Each copy of the
Stern Review
Printed

85 grams*
maximum



For every hour spent
reading the
Stern Review
on Computer

226 grams ** ^
each time



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* Because it is a finished printed book, that is the maximum CO₂ it will ever amount to and can be read as many times as you like over the next 100 years.

** This does not include the CO₂ footprint for the IT infrastructure to deliver the PDF via the Internet, nor does it include the footprint to print it out on an inkjet or laser printer. Of course, a typical reader will print out parts or all of the report. Why? Because we want to read it in hard copy and that's the majority's preference.

^ 2.13 GHz Intel Dual Core 1GB RAM, CRT Monitor (Panasonic PanaSync E701) and Wireless Router Modem (Belkin VoIP 802.11g) Computer energy costs sourced from Choice Australia, May 2008 and conversion coefficients used are sourced from the Australian Greenhouse office Factors and Methods Workbook December 2007.