

"IT IS WRONG TO TRY AND GAIN ENVIRONMENTAL CREDIBILITY THROUGH MISLEADING 'GREEN' MARKETING"

the greenwash war

Two Sides' effectiveness in combating misleading consumer information – and other updates from the initiative

Two Sides is the initiative to promote the responsible production and use of print and paper and encourage its use as an attractive, practical and sustainable communications medium. The campaign has enjoyed a number of accomplishments already in 2011, including measurable success from its national campaign to educate major UK corporate companies such as banks, building societies, utilities and telecoms companies about using misleading or factually incorrect environmental claims in their marketing message to promote lower cost electronic billing and services.

New members have also joined the ranks, while the first winner of the Two Sides competition learned about sustainability in papermaking practices and enjoyed true German hospitality courtesy of prize providers and leading European fine paper makers, Sappi.

Fighting Greenwash

Towards the end of 2010, Two Sides launched a campaign to target companies claiming – without verifiable supporting evidence – that switching to online communication was better for the environment. Two Sides had become increasingly concerned that this was giving misleading information to consumers and encouraging them not to use paper when it is in fact one of the most sustainable ways to communicate.

These messages, often referred to as "Greenwash", were creating a false impression about the sustainability of print and paper and having a detrimental effect on these industries. Research revealed that 43% of the major banks, 70% of telecom companies and 30% of utilities were at risk of utilising Greenwash – thereby conflicting with the advertising regulations by their marketing messages carrying misleading or factually incorrect environmental claims to promote electronic billing and services.

Engaging misinformation

During the campaign, Two Sides contacted 33 major companies, including EON Energy, Barclaycard and Vodafone. So far, Two Sides has had a positive dialogue with 27 CEOs and staff from legal departments of targeted companies. As a result those companies have changed their online environmental claims or are engaging with Two Sides to use different wording that does not include possibly misleading or factually incorrect environmental claims in online marketing information.

Only six companies have not replied to any correspondence so far. Two Sides plans to actively challenge them; and if the concerns are not addressed, complaints will be lodged with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

Commenting on the success of the campaign, Two Sides Director Martyn Eustace said, "While Two Sides welcomes an

increased awareness of corporate responsibility and sustainability it is wrong to try and gain environmental credibility through misleading "green" marketing to encourage customers to receive their bills or communications online. However, we have been extremely pleased with the positive feedback and successful outcome from many of the companies contacted.

"Two Sides sees this as a vital step towards correct messaging about paper and helping the environment. Although we have still some way to go, the success of our national campaign proves that it is possible to achieve results for the future good of the paper and print industries. If a company wants to encourage customers to switch to e-billing because it is more efficient and offers lower cost for the sender,



Paper manufacturing is far greener than some people paint it

we have no quarrel with that. But we will continue the fight to stop corporates making a link between reducing the use of paper and helping the environment unless they have proof that this is so."

Competition winner

The end of 2010 also saw the first Two Sides competition winner, Tina Salvage from HSBC Bank, visit Sappi's Stockstadt mill in Germany to experience sustainability and papermaking. This was combined with fine wine and food in typical German surroundings. Thanks once again to Sappi for hosting and serving up a fantastic prize-winning trip for Tina and her client Mark Lewis of Mastercolour plc.

New members

Membership of Two Sides has now grown to over 350 companies, with printer membership soon to reach 100. Although encouraging, this still leaves a large number of printers outside the initiative; the forthcoming launch of the Print Power campaign is expected to produce greater interest from the sector.

Well known names such as Royal Mail, TNT, Kodak, Pitney Bowes, The Newspaper Publishers Association, KBA and Heritage Envelopes are recent additions to the membership which now covers the whole print media spectrum.

→ For more information or to join Two Sides, please visit www.twosides.info or email enquiries@twosides.info