

Press Release

Consumers misled by online billing and statement services

14 July 2011, London, UK – Consumers are being duped into thinking they are being more environmentally friendly than they actually are by misleading or factually incorrect environmental online messages.

Graphics Industry organisation Two Sides has warned that online marketing messages to promote lower cost electronic billing and services do not paint a full picture of the life cycle situation of printing out documents at home. As a result it fears consumers could be misled in the future if corporations fail to heed recent changes made by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) relating to online claims.

So far a significant number of Banks & Building Societies, Utilities and Telecoms companies have amended their online sites after a recent Two Sides' national campaign targeted companies who were using misleading environmental statements to persuade consumers to switch to online communication. However, Two Sides warns that Greenwash could continue in other sectors of UK industry if CEOs fail to recognise the dangers of using factually incorrect messages.

Director of Two Sides Martyn Eustace says: "Big corporations use Greenwash to save themselves money at the expense of the consumer. Gaining environmental credibility by using misleading 'green' marketing information to encourage customers to receive their bills or communications is wrong and it is also unfair on consumers who often believe they are going down the route of being environmentally friendly when the true facts paint a very different picture."

He is calling for full transparency of life cycles for any environmental claims made as he believes consumers are not aware of hidden commercial agendas. Eustace adds: "If a company wants to encourage customers to switch to e-billing because it is more efficient and offers lower cost for the sender then we have no quarrel with that. However, we will continue to fight all way in the future to stop corporates from making a link between reducing the use of paper and helping the environment unless they have proof that this is so."

A total of 34 major corporate companies were contacted during the campaign, including well known names such as BT; HSBC; Barclays Bank and EON Energy. Two Sides had a positive dialogue with 28 CEOs and staff from their legal departments. As a result those companies have changed their online environmental claims or are engaging with Two Sides to use different wording that doesn't include possibly misleading or factually incorrect environmental claims in online marketing information. Regarding the three companies that have not replied to any correspondence so far, Two Sides will continue to actively challenge them and if concerns are not addressed complaints will be lodged with the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).

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Notes to editors

If you have any queries please contact Sally Cousins (01858 466329) or Vince Collins (07977 178772) at Collins Scott Marketing Ltd.

About Two Sides

Two Sides is an initiative by companies from the Graphic Communication Value Chain including forestry, pulp, paper, inks and chemicals, pre press, press, finishing, publishing and printing. Today there are nearly 300 members. Our common goal is to promote the responsible production and use of print and paper, and dispel common environmental misconceptions by providing users with verifiable information on why print and paper is an attractive, practical and sustainable communications medium. www.twosides.info

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