

In-plant Graphics

FSC Certification: 'A Good Investment'

In-plants that have earned chain-of-custody certification say it has brought many benefits and improved their image as a sustainable partner.

By Bob Neubauer

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For in-plants eager to show their commitment to their organizations' sustainability policies, earning chain-of-custody certification from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) has been worth its weight in gold. Sustainability has become a critical strategic initiative, particularly at universities, and becoming FSC certified has helped many in-plants show their support of this goal.

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"Our campus is very sustainably minded," notes Brian Wadell, director of Repro Graphics at the University of California-Davis, "and we thought, 'let's go ahead and do this so that we can be part of that effort.' "

"It helps us align ourselves with the vision of the university," agrees Jason England, project leader at Yale University Printing & Publishing Services, in New Haven, Conn.

"We wanted to do our part to be responsible stewards of the world's timber, but also participate in our [university's] sustainability program," explains Bill May, director of Printing Services at the University of Alabama, in Tuscaloosa.

Getting FSC certified became simpler a few years ago when Printers Green Resource LLC launched its InGreen group certification program for in-plants. So far 22 in-plants—including Yale, UC Davis and the University of Alabama—have taken advantage of the program, which allows U.S. in-plants with annual print sales of less than \$5 million to get FSC certified for a much lower rate.

"It costs us about half as much to have the certification with InGreen than it was costing us to do it on our own," affirms Waddell.

At the same time, InGreen handles many administrative and compliance requirements, such as documented procedures and training, simplifying the process for busy in-plants. It also provides marketing support.

"The InGreen folks, they've been great," lauds May. When the in-plant does an FSC job, it must send InGreen a PDF showing placement of the FSC logo. May says the group has been quick to approve the files, so production can proceed.

Customer Support

In-plants with FSC certification admit that not every customer is interested in having their pieces certified, but those that are, are often big customers. At UC Davis, the University Extension program—the in-plant's number one customer by volume—bought into FSC in a big way.

"As soon as they found out we had the certification, they said, 'we want all of our jobs to be certified,'" reveals Wadell.

Being FSC certified, he adds, has brought in business the in-plant wouldn't have been able to do otherwise.

"Some of the departments that put out print bids put the FSC requirement on there, so I know we wouldn't be able to bid on some of those jobs if we weren't certified," he says.

Being FSC certified can also help improve your parent organization's image. Wadell says it likely played a role in getting UC Davis named the number one "cool school" on *Sierra* magazine's 2012 ranking of America's greenest colleges.

The certification can bring about a similar image enhancement for paper itself, too often maligned as a "waste of trees."

"By using FSC paper products, paper is a sustainable entity versus a waste entity," remarks Yale's England.
"It's important for us to show people that we have these papers."

More than 30 percent of the in-plant's papers are FSC certified, England says. That number is even higher at UC Davis, where Wadell says, "all of our sheet paper is FSC paper." (Only those clients who pay to have their jobs FSC certified get the logo, he adds.)

The University of Alabama handles its FSC paper differently. Chiefly a large-volume offset operation, the in-plant orders the required amounts of FSC paper on a per-job basis.

"It helps us with our audit trail," explains May.

Though getting certified may not have led to booming business for these in-plants, all of them say it was well worth the expense.

"For us, it's been a good investment," affirms May.