

GEOFF NEAL LITHO

communicates the message

This Feltham printer is one of the first in the country to become carbon neutral and this combined with their other green accreditations enables them to offer the highest level of environmentally responsible print manufacture available.

CUSTOMERS OF FELTHAM printer Geoff Neal Litho are among the few that can have the statement 'printed by a carbon neutral printer' added to their finished literature. Geoff Neal Litho is among only a handful of printers that have achieved carbon neutral status. It is the cherry on top of a list of environmental achievements that include ISO 14001 ISO 9001 ISO12647-2 and FSC Chain of Custody status. The company's ethos is one of constant improvement, to minimise its environmental impact wherever possible. With two B1 sheetfed presses its impact is not great in the global scheme of things, but that's not important, they believe that the environment is everyone's responsibility. "The environmental issue has gained more prominence now and rightly so," says corporate strategy director Sam Neal. "We have all got to concern ourselves about the environment and global climate change even if there isn't one simple answer to the problem.

It includes buying green tariff elec-

tricity and installing a capacitor to make much better use of the electricity it buys. It has worked very hard to reduce waste sent to landfill and now recycles or reuses over 90% of what would once have been destined for landfill. The company is also an evangelist for the use of recycled papers wherever possible. And of course it is carbon neutral.

"A common misconception of being carbon neutral is that by paying to plant a few trees to absorb a notional amount of carbon dioxide is all that is involved. This is far from the truth, there is much more to it than that, including an agreement to an ongoing annual reduction of emissions," Sam Neal continues. The Carbon Neutral Company handled the assessment. The printer had to complete a thorough questionnaire designed to collect data on all energy use, including electricity where it gained a head start by its choice of buying from a renewable source, gas used in heating, and all fuel used not just in their vehicles but also subcontracted vehicles whether moving print during

production or in the final delivery; it also covered how energy is used through the company; what happens to waste and so on. "We had to prove that we were doing as much as we could to reduce our environmental impact before they would offset our unavoidable emissions through various approved worldwide projects," says Geoff Neal, managing director.

The result is that the company knows precisely what carbon emissions it is responsible for and how to offset that. Any customer looking for a carbon neutral job – there have been a few and the number of requests is increasing, says Sam Neal can be assured that the figures provided by the company are accurate.

The journey towards the environmental high ground began when one of the high street banks suggested that achieving ISO 14001 would in future be necessary to retain its business. Geoff Neal says he looked into it and the more he looked the more convinced he became that this was the path to follow. "We'd been running with vegetable oil inks for some time as



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these are better for a sheet that has to be laser-printed," he explains, "so expanding on that wasn't a huge step for us."

The rest of the work has followed, reducing waste and increasing reuse and recycling over the years until there is no need for a compactor in the yard to crush rubbish before being picked up for landfill simply because not enough material is thrown away to justify the compactor any longer.

"ISO 14001 is about looking at every process you do and increasing efficiency. There is a greater awareness across the staff of what they are doing and the impact of their actions on every print job," he continues.

"When we talk to people about all this they think that what we have done should make us an expensive printer. But that's not the case."

The company's staff have been involved from the outset with the responsibility for environment falling to Diane Bisson in addition to her health and safety remit. Meetings with managers and staff have spread the message and engaged everyone in dialogue. One result is that Geoff Neal has bought a wormery for his garden at home and keeps it topped up with waste food from the canteen.

"What we now have is a proper CSR policy," says Sam Neal. "We were always good at health and safety, now we are truly excellent. It's very much about the way that we treat people. It's the same thing with ISO 9001 – it's about allowing people to do a good job."

Part of the process is helping customers achieve a better environmental profile for their print work. Sam Neal is involved in spreading the word to customers, helping them select the most suitable paper for a job and changing from a virgin sheet to one with a large recycled element if not a fully recycled grade. "A large car manufacturer who is also one of our biggest clients has in the last month changed to using a recycled

stock," he says.

"Almost every print buyer or procurement manager is having pressure applied on him to find out more about green issues. It means that a company like us with in depth knowledge of this needs to be spoken to," Geoff Neal adds. "They are interested in what we have to say. We can offer a green print service and people are taking this seriously."

"The important thing is that it is not just sales patter. We all believe this sincerely and we are doing the research, reading the articles and material that is available to ever increase our knowledge. What we find is that when we make a first call to a new customer instead of being thrown out after five or ten minutes, we are there for up to an hour talking about these issues and beyond saying that we have six-colour presses, we don't talk about the equipment. It's about what is important to the buyer."

This stokes the interest in recycled papers where the company has accumulated a great deal of knowledge that can be shared with its customers. "There is no longer any great premium for recycled,"

Managing director Geoff Neal (left) and corporate strategy director Sam Neal say the company has not looked back



says Sam Neal, "nor any questions about the quality."

Industry trends are helping the company because a key strength is producing targeted direct mail pieces. As DM companies feel the pinch from moves to cut back on blanket mailings, the shorter, more targeted runs fall into the company's sweet spot, before any impact from using recycled grades is taken into account.

Last year the company installed an Australian-designed ClimaCool climate control system based on a heat exchanger unit to replace its energy hungry air conditioning. Now it is looking at further steps to cut back its impact. On the prepress side this will mean that the next plate setter will handle processless plates and that the next press will print without isopropyl alcohol, a major cause of harmful volatile organic compound releases. "It would be nice to be IPA-free," Sam Neal comments, "but that will take investment and that will be the next time we purchase a press."

Its next delivery vehicles will produce fewer emissions per mile and it is keen to look at plans Toyota have in taking its hybrid engine from its Prius car into a commercial vehicle. More importantly the company is using both ISO 12647-2 colour print standard and ISO 9001 to cut back on the number of waste-generating mistakes that can be made as a result of poor communication.

Communication is very much to the fore. The company has progressed thanks to communication with the likes of J&G Environmental on the best ways to recycle waste and consumable suppliers on cutting back on emissions. "We've found that as soon as you show serious interest, there are a lot of people willing to help: the BPIF, Envirowise, J&G, Stehlin Hostag and Heidelberg among them," says Geoff Neal. It works for customers too. The company is communicating the message that print can be cleaner and greener and it seems the customers are prepared to listen. ■