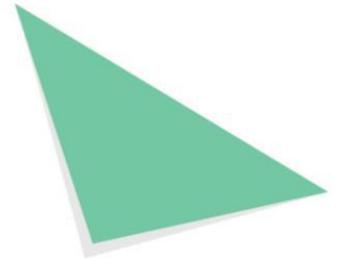


Two Sides Facts



**THE MYTH
ENCOURAGING PEOPLE
TO “GO GREEN – GO
PAPERLESS” IS A SOUND
ENVIRONMENTAL
PRACTICE.**

**THE FACT
“GO GREEN – GO
PAPERLESS” AND “SAVE A
TREE” MESSAGES ARE
MISLEADING AND MAY
NOT MEET BEST PRACTICES
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL
MARKETING.**

Many leading U.S. companies, including banks, utility companies and telecommunications providers, are urging their customers to go paperless with claims that paperless bills, statements and other electronic communications save trees, are “greener” or otherwise protect the environment. While these well-known, reputable companies take great care to be sure their claims used to market other products and services are verifiable and meet both government requirements and accepted industry standards for truth in advertising, they disregard best practices when it comes to making environmental claims about the use of paper.

Beyond the fact that “go paperless” marketing messages ignore the highly sustainable nature of print on paper – it comes from a renewable resource, is recyclable and recycled more than any other commodity in the U.S. and has great carbon characteristics – these claims fail to meet the most basic tests for acceptable environmental marketing as outlined by the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and others. They are not specific, they are usually not backed by competent and reliable scientific evidence and are misleading because they imply that electronic communication always has less effect on the environment than printed materials.

The truth is that both electronic and paper communications have environmental consequences and we should continue to look for ways to reduce the footprint of both rather than using unsubstantiated environmental marketing claims to promote one over the other.

- “Marketers must ensure that all reasonable interpretations of their claims are truthful, not misleading, and supported by a reasonable basis before they make the claims.” See FTC Policy Statement Regarding Advertising Substantiation, 104 FTC 839 (1984). In the context of environmental marketing claims, a reasonable basis requires competent and reliable scientific evidence. Such evidence consists of tests, analyses, research, or studies that have been conducted and evaluated in an objective manner by qualified persons and are generally accepted in the profession to yield accurate and reliable results. Such evidence should be sufficient in quality and quantity based on standards generally accepted in the relevant scientific fields, when considered in light of the entire body of relevant and reliable scientific evidence, to substantiate that each of the marketing claims is true.”¹
- “A self-declared environmental claim shall be: accurate and not misleading; substantiated and verified; relevant to that particular product, and used only in an appropriate context or setting; presented in a manner that clearly indicates whether the claim applies to the complete product, or only to a component part or packaging, or to an element of a service.”²
- “It is deceptive to misrepresent, directly or by implication, that a product, package, or service offers a general environmental benefit. Unqualified general environmental benefit claims are difficult to interpret and likely convey a wide range of meanings. In many cases, such claims likely convey that the product, package, or service has specific and far-reaching environmental benefits and may convey that the item or service has no negative environmental impact. Because it is highly unlikely that marketers can substantiate all reasonable interpretations of these claims, marketers should not make unqualified general environmental benefit claims.”³
- “A self-declared environmental claim shall be specific as to the environmental aspect or environmental improvement which is claimed. An environmental claim that is vague or non-specific or which broadly implies that a product is environmentally





beneficial or environmentally benign shall not be used. It is therefore not possible to use terms like environmentally safe, environmentally friendly, non-polluting, green, nature friendly or ozone friendly.”⁴

- “The pulp and paper industry has for long been under attack from different environmental groups, sometimes being projected as a clear-cutting, polluting sector using large amounts of energy, water and other resources. The option of using information and communication technology (ICT) instead of paper – reducing the consumption and thereby reducing the environmental implications of pulp and paper production – therefore attracts interest among the fast growing group of environmentally aware citizens. However, the direct impact of ICT products and services replacing paper is far from negligible, and the trade-off between the two “technologies” depends on conditions such as use frequency, source of energy, end-of-life management of the products, etc.”⁵
- “Papermaking creates the need for a dependable supply of responsibly grown wood fiber. The reliable income landowners receive for trees grown on their land encourages them to maintain, renew and manage this valuable resource sustainably. This is an especially important consideration in places facing economic pressures to convert forestland to non-forest uses.”⁶
- “In 2012, 65.1% of all paper produced in the United States was recovered for recycling.”⁷ “In the United States, paper is recycled more than any other commodity in the municipal solid waste stream, including plastics, glass and metals. The benefits of paper recycling include: extending the supply of wood fiber; reducing greenhouse gas emissions that can contribute to climate change by avoiding methane emissions (which are released when paper decomposes in landfills or is incinerated); contributing to carbon sequestration ; reducing the amount of energy needed to produce some paper products; and savings considerable landfill space.”⁸
- In the United States in 2009 [*the most recent data available*], 47.4 million computers were ready for end-of-life management. Some 29.4 million were disposed of and 18 million (38%) were collected for recycling.⁹
- “On average, about two-thirds of the energy used for production by the U.S. pulp and paper industry comes from using carbon-neutral biomass onsite, including spent pulping liquors, bark, wood, wood scraps, wood by-products, and process residuals. An additional small, but significant, amount of energy is produced by other renewable sources such as hydropower.”¹⁰
- The pulp, paper and print industry accounts for only 1% of global carbon dioxide emissions.¹¹ It is estimated that the production and running of the information and communications technology (ICT) sector equates to 2% of global GHG emissions, similar to the airline industry, and this is expected to double by 2020.¹²



¹ U.S. Federal Trade Commission, 2012

² International Organization for Standardization (ISO), 1999

³ Ibid U.S. Federal Trade Commission, 2012,

⁴ Ibid International Organization for Standardization (ISO)

⁵ Arnfalk, P., 2010

⁶ World Business Council for Sustainable Development and NCASI, 2007

⁷ American Forest & Paper Association

⁸ U.S. Environmental Protections Agency (EPA)

⁹ U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

¹⁰ American Forest & Paper Association

¹¹ World Resources Institute (WRI), 2005

¹² Gartner, 2007