

DELIVER

a magazine for marketers

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Story Summary: — Direct mail is a key part of the messaging strategy for many environmental advocacy groups.

How Do Environmentalists Do It?

Think you've got green issues? Imagine what it's like for activists

By **Linda Formichelli**

It's a genuine conundrum, which is actually Latin for "annoying problem involving paper that plagues environmentalists."

Environmental advocacy groups, in order to support their causes, need to attract donors and members, and to keep those supporters informed and happy. That means that the groups need to market. And that means using paper, ink, and energy (for printing and transportation), which typically requires cutting down trees, using petroleum-based products, and expending non-renewable resources.

Environmental advocacy groups use numerous techniques get their messages out while staying sensitive to the core concerns of their members and organizations. We spoke with three groups about how they keep their marketing green.

Clean Communities

In the late 1970s, Lois Gibbs discovered that her neighborhood in Love Canal, New York had been built on a toxic waste dump. She formed the Love Canal Homeowners Association, and, along with her community, fought to have the local, state, and federal governments take action. Eventually, 900 families were evacuated and the Love Canal cleanup started. In 1980, Gibbs

founded a group that is now called The Center for Health, Environment and Justice (CHEJ). CHEJ's mission is to make people aware of the serious public health effects of dangerous chemicals in communities.

While the group doesn't do massive mailings, CHEJ does rely on direct mail to reach its members and donors. CHEJ mails appeals to its donors twice a year, which adds up to 400 to 500 two-page mail pieces. The group also mails a series of up to three appeals to about 1,000 members annually, and a 12-page quarterly newsletter that goes to 800 members. Three hundred major donors – those who donate \$100 or more – receive an eight-page quarterly newsletter. That's a maximum of 55,000 sheets of paper per year, not including envelopes.

To minimize the size of its mailings, CHEJ prints all of its materials on both sides of the paper. The paper is chlorine-free, since bleaching paper produces the toxic chemical dioxin. For perhaps obvious reasons, CHEJ is keen on minimizing chemical pollution. "You can get it totally chlorine free, but they use virgin pulp because with recycled paper, there may have been chlorine in the paper originally," explains Maryll Kleibrink, CHEJ's director of development. "So we use processed chlorine free, mean-

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ing it's recycled and no chlorine was used in the recycling."

CHEJ also prints its mailings using soy-based ink, which minimizes air pollution from the printing process and is easier to remove during recycling than petroleum-based ink. While CHEJ doesn't have hard data on how much more they pay for TCF paper and soy ink than they would for conventional materials, "We do have a firm impression that we pay more to choose these environmentally-responsible options," says Kleibrink.

The group uses commercial printers that are not only environmentally friendly, but also union shops. "We choose union printers because it nurtures relationships with organized labor, and that and environmentalism go hand in hand," Kleibrink says. "All the justice movements go together."

CHEJ makes mailing more efficient by mailing only to those people who are interested and who are likely to support the organization. They update their list quarterly to eliminate bad addresses, they recently stopped mailing to people who have never donated to them, and they asked major donors to specify how often they would like to hear from CHEJ. Of the major donors, 10 percent have opted to hear from CHEJ only once a year.

In addition, another 10 percent of the donors receive the newsletter electronically, requiring no paper at all. Says Kleibrink, "Our members are very concerned about minimizing their impact on the environment. Offering them a way to do that by getting our newsletter online is a win-win proposi-

tion. They feel good about doing something positive, we save money, and the environment benefits too."

Nature Neutral

The Nature Conservancy is a conservation organization that works around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters. The group mails its award-winning magazine to more than one million members every quarter, as well as renewal notifications, newsletters, and solicitations such as appeals for donations.

In order to, well, conserve nature, The Nature Conservancy avoids using paper whenever it can. "That's where our Web initiative comes in," says senior media relations manager Bridget Lowell. "We're constantly offering donors the opportunity to opt-out of our mailings, as they are encouraged to support us online and get e-updates instead of mailed ones. The effort has been quite successful so far." Last fiscal year, 4.5 percent of TNC's membership revenue came through the web, but this fiscal year that number has jumped to 7.5 percent. In addition, this year 20 percent of TNC's members received e-communications, versus 10 percent last year.

When TNC does send mail, the process is thoughtful and selective. By using sophisticated modeling performed by its analytics team members, the group focuses on getting the right pieces of mail to the right people. For example, throughout the year TNC prepares ten different donation appeals. "For

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the January appeal, which focuses on what we did the previous year and the challenges ahead, we know the propensity of donors to give to this specific appeal based on their past behavior,” says Lowell. “This is a combination of different variables: did they give to this appeal before, how many gifts have they given already to the organization, what was the amount they gave before to this appeal or another, have they renewed their membership, are they interested in conservation in their state or any other location, and so on.”

The Nature Conservancy is also working to increase the percentage of recycled paper content in the paper used in mailings and to increase the use of Forest Stewardship Council certified products. FSC certification helps consumers recognize products that support the growth of responsible forest management; the FSC logo on products guarantees that the wood came from a certified well-managed forest. To become certified, a company must comply with ten principles and 57 criteria that address such matters as legal issues, indigenous rights, labor rights, and environmental impacts.

Renewable Resources

The Center for Resource Solutions (CRS) is a national non-profit working to build a renewable energy market by increasing demand and supply of renewable resources such as wind and solar power. The group creates energy strategies to protect both the environment and the consumer; it also has programs

in renewable energy policy and regulatory issues, such as their Green-e program, which certifies renewable power products sold by marketers, utilities, and energy-service providers in wholesale and retail markets.

Although their mailings are small – 10 to 15 mailings per year to recipients numbering in the hundreds – CRS is concerned with keeping their marketing eco-friendly. “All along we’ve used sustainable materials for our marketing, like paper with a high recycled content, and inks that are soy-based if we can,” says communications director Sarah Krasley. “It’s been important for us to reflect the sustainability we have in our mission.”

CRS walks the talk by helping its vendors become more eco-friendly as well. For example, CRS buys its paper from New Leaf Paper and Neenah Paper, which are committed to using recycled paper. “They wanted to take that commitment a step further by using renewable power, so we talked about the different options and how much they would need,” says Krasley. “We certified the renewable energy they use in their operations.”

New technology helps the group cut down on waste. E-mail marketing suits the many supporters who are interested in going as paperless as possible, and this year CRS created a CD version of its annual report and stopped offering paper copies. To cut down even further on materials in the mailing, the group looked for CD packaging that uses no glue. They discovered the Arigato Pak, a CD case created by Stumptown

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Printers in Portland, OR, that's made with recycled paper and that uses tabs and inserts instead of glue. "This is our first year of stepping away from the traditional book," says Krasley. "We got great feedback -- people thought it went with our mission to promote corporate responsibility in business." **D**

SIDEBAR: Lessons Learned

Take a cue from the environmental advocacy groups to make your marketing more eco-friendly:

- * Use recycled paper with as much post-consumer recycled content as possible.
- * Opt for soy-based ink instead of petroleum-based ink whenever practical
- * Reduce unwanted mail by having customers specify how often they'd like to hear from you.
- * Update your mailing lists often to eliminate bad addresses.
- * Choose vendors who use renewable energy, or urge your current vendors to do so.
- * Use chlorine-free paper.
- * Print marketing materials on both sides of the paper.
- * Offer customers the option of getting information online instead of in paper form.
- * Experiment with CDs, PDF files, and other formats that require less (or no) paper and packaging.