

Print is Back: Understanding the Role of Paper in Business Today

Kevin Deveau | Ariva | Dartmouth Branch Manager

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In April 2011, Canadian Business ran an article suggesting that paper is "rapidly fading from our lives." While it may have looked that way then, it's certainly not the case now. Take a walk through any office and you'll see printers spitting out sheet after sheet, and recycling bins overflowing. Shred-it trucks are also a common sight on city streets.

The truth is paper is alive and well. What's more, so is Canadian forest management. A global trailblazer, Canada is home to more than 160 million hectares of certified forests, representing 43% of the globe's total. Certification reflects abidance with progressive social and environmental practices (more on that later). Also noteworthy is the fact that Canada recycles almost 70% of its paper and cardboard, making it one of the top paper recycling countries in the world.

Separating facts from myths

Do your homework and you'll discover that many of the facts you've come to understand about paper are, in fact, myths. For example, paper manufacturing doesn't always destroy forests. Rather, certified paper production supports sustainable forest management. Also, electronic communication isn't necessarily more environmentally friendly than print and paper. Consider the power it takes to run and cool the millions of computers we use to receive these communications, many of which are spam.

Dispelling paper myths is a worthwhile endeavour, one that gives businesses like yours an opportunity to increase return on investment - not by abandoning digital tools, but by creating a balanced mix that leverages multiple communication channels, especially print.

Why print is preferred

Not only is print tried and tested. It's trusted. Research conducted in 2015 indicates that 56% of those surveyed consider print marketing to be the most trustworthy, and 69% wouldn't choose to conduct business with a company that doesn't offer a printed bill option.

Canada Post agrees, citing in a July 2015 report that "direct mail is far more persuasive than digital media: it has a 20% higher motivation response;" and "direct mail requires 21% less cognitive effort to process and elicits a much higher brand recall than digital media."

How paper can define a brand

Speaking of brand recall, haptics - the science of touch - explores how paper quality influences communications and actually empowers brands to position themselves as leaders.

A 2015 study found that when people viewed a company on high-quality coated paper they were more likely to have a positive first impression than when they viewed it on low-quality paper or on a website, and they were more likely to recommend that company to a friend or colleague. Based on this, it's reasonable to conclude that haptics has the power to increase your ROI, and isn't ROI the reason you're in business?

What to do

So you care about building your brand and your profits, but you strive to be socially responsible. How can you optimize print and paper in good conscience? Look for certified paper manufactured by companies with a solid track record in environmental and social policy. Certification supports sustainable Canadian forest management by helping to ensure that progressive social and environmental practices are in effect from the sourcing of all materials through to manufacturing and delivery of the finished product.

Here's the bottom line: Print works and it continues to be a highly effective marketing strategy, so embrace its power. It's here to stay.

Kevin has been in the paper industry for over twenty-five years and is currently the Dartmouth Branch Manager for Ariva. Responsible for sales and distribution in the Atlantic Provinces, Kevin has been a lifelong Halifax resident.