

COMMON SENSE FLEXO

Environmentally friendly flexography doesn't mean hugging a tree

By David J. Lanska, "The Anilox Guy"

In a busy print shop, environmental concerns are frequently put on the back burner. Rather than looking at quality, safety or environmental issues as extras, they should instead be part and parcel of the way managerial decisions are made. A focus on doing things the right way—rather than rushing and skipping steps—results in fewer defective products.

Pop Quiz: *If you are scrambling to find time to get the job on press as it is, when are you going to find time to rerun it? While you puzzle over that one, here is another: If you are struggling to pay the increasing prices for inks and substrates, how can you afford to throw them in the trash dumpster?*

Wouldn't you have more time to run your business if your printing process was more predictable and repeatable? Wouldn't your life be simpler if your press operators could set up each print station according to pre-established settings for a repeat print job and successfully color-match right out of the gates? Wouldn't life be sweet if you knew what ink density to expect from each of your anilox linecounts?

Environmentally friendly flexography doesn't mean hugging a tree. It means getting the best quality product through the press the first time with as little waste possible. It means taking steps to make the print process more predictable and repeatable. It means taking care of your equipment so it performs properly. It means taking a good hard look at what is going into the dumpster and asking if you couldn't find ways to reduce, reuse or recycle some or even most of that material.

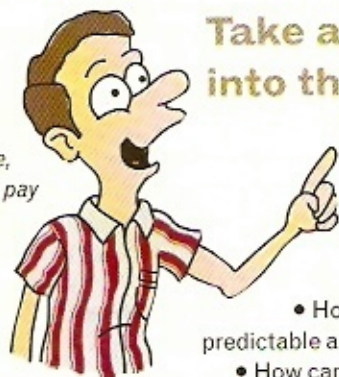
Generally speaking, the largest consumable costs for printers are ink and substrate materials. Increased demand, coupled with the scarcity of raw materials, are driving those consumable costs through the roof. What do you expect to happen to those costs in the future?

It seems strange to me that some printers will force price concessions on suppliers in order to

improve profitability but fail to consider their own utilization of those products. They fight over 5 percent but throw as much as 25 percent into the dumpster without even blinking. Perhaps, instead of asking outsiders for bigger discounts, they should first ask themselves the following questions:

- How can we be more efficient in our operation?

Take a good look at what's going into the dumpster. Find ways to reduce, reuse or recycle some or even most of that material.



- How can we make our equipment more predictable and repeatable?
- How can we ensure optimum performance from our equipment?
- Which variables determine our quality, and what can we do to control them?
- What components of our waste stream can be eliminated or recycled?

The process starts when you take a serious look at what goes into the trash bin [beyond trim and other production waste]. Is metal present—e.g. old anilox rolls, worn bearings, damaged gears, soda cans, and fried electrical equipment? Are there old pallets and leftover construction materials from an addition or remodeling? Is useable office furniture tossed when new desks are purchased? It is amazing how much material goes in the dumpster to fill up the landfill. It is a crying shame how much of that material could be recycled in one form or another, isn't it?

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