

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle

In 2005 **STRATIS** Visuals initiated a program to significantly reduce our environmental impact and promote sustainability in our operations. We identified several areas where we felt we could make an impact. The largest and most easily quantifiable item was to minimize the volume of waste the company generated. A thorough assessment revealed the various components of our waste stream allowing us to formulate a plan to reduce it to a bare minimum within two years.

Replace Solvents Solvents with Green Alternative

The first part of our plan was to replace any solvent with a green alternative. We were confident there would be products available to suit our needs because we successfully converted our solvent based screen printing inks to more environmentally friendly UV cured inks almost a decade ago. We tested several different products from various vendors over the course of several months. Through this process we were able to replace approximately 85% of our press cleaning agents with biodegradable and VOC free cleaners. This enabled us to reduce our hazardous waste stream to negligible amounts on a monthly basis.

Neutralize Eutralize Ph of the Plate Developer

The next step was to neutralize the PH of the plate developer. Plate developer is a chemical bath that removes the unwanted emulsion from a plate after it is exposed. Offset printing companies use a large amount of developer over the course of a year; somewhere in the neighborhood of 1,000 gallons or more depending on their size. Historically, all of the developer would have to be barreled and sent to a chemical treatment facility for disposal due to its high PH. Instead of trying to find a more environmentally friendly developer, which we believed did not exist, we settled on a mechanical solution. We installed a machine that would render the developer safe to dispose of in the city sewer.

Reduce Solid Waste Stream

After successfully dealing with our liquid waste we turned our attention to our solid waste stream. For many years we separated white paper and corrugated from the solid waste stream and recycled those products, but we thought we could do more. Being a specialty printer we print a fair amount of styrene, pvc and other petroleum based substrates. Traditionally these items were considered non recyclable and went into the solid waste stream. We developed a program with our refuse vendor in which we would separate by substrate type and the refuse vendor would send the containers to an appropriate facility for recycling. This program had an enormous impact on the volume of waste that ended up in our dumpsters. We went from daily collection to having the dumpsters emptied twice a month.

Going Forward

We are constantly looking for new and innovative ways to reduce our impact on the environment. Today our program has spread to cover the recycling of such items as stretch film used to wrap skids and the metal banding used to bind freight to plastic and cellulose drums.