

## Save trees - read magazines

By Stu Freeman, ProMag

Readers of Meeting Newz may notice that in the last couple of issues we have carried the FSC Mixed Sources logo on our contents page. This logo is proof that the magazine is printed on paper sourced from well managed forests and other controlled sources. To be able to use the logo, ProMag Publishing needed to send our contents page to the United States (via our printer) to ensure we qualified.

While the logo in itself is a nice thing to have on the magazine it does not actually signify a change in ProMag policy - this company has been using paper sourced from sustainable forestry for many years and has sought proof of that from our printer, Geon, on a number of occasions.

Indeed, the vast majority of magazine publishers use sustainable resources to print their products. This means we need forests - and forests need trees.

I often find that people are keen to blame paper for many of the world's ills but when they are actually asked why they feel that way they have no real answer except 'we want to save the trees / rainforests'. Most people know that paper decomposes quickly - especially when compared to metal discs and other computer componentry - and that it is easily recyclable. So the 'save a tree; argument is where their disdain seems to start and finish.

But when those same people are asked whether they think sustainable forestry is good for the environment compared to most other industrial land use (or residential for that matter) they say yes - after all this is an industry which depends on the constant replenishment of trees. And most people, when they spend five seconds thinking about it, would probably admit that they are well aware that Kauri trees from the Waitakeres or the rainforests of Sumatra are not getting smashed down to feed the bulk of the world's paper industries. New Zealanders see examples of sustainable forestry regularly - many have shares in the industry - so they know where pulp and paper comes from.

The Magazine Publishers Association (MPA) recently held a seminar on the impact of the paper and printing industry on the environment. Obviously the MPA has an interest in the message, and I am happy to declare it. But that doesn't make the argument less reasonable. During the seminar 'sustainable paper' was defined as paper 'produced using virgin wood fibre that is sourced from well managed, purpose grown tree crops. As a general rule, for every tree harvested, two or three are replanted in its place. To be sustainable, the number of trees harvested cannot exceed those being regrown.' People who say that by not using paper they are saving trees should be asked what they think the land that is currently used for sustainable forestry will be used for instead if there is no demand from the paper industry - housing, dairy farming, golf courses?

Of course, paper production is not only about source. But publishers are aware they need to take other factors into consideration - such as whether the paper mill has the relevant certification and manufactures its products under a recognised environmental standard. As mentioned, ProMag's printed products are produced by Geon in its shiny, new premises at Highbrook, Auckland. The premises were opened last year by Helen Clark when she was Prime Minister and a number of speakers, including the PM, alluded to the environmentally friendly nature of the site.

In her presentation to the MPA seminar, Lisa Hegh, of BJ Ball Group, maintained that compared with other materials, wood and paper based goods manufactured in a sustainable manner are a wise choice because:

- The industry is actually helping the planet. By using sustainable forest management practices, we are reducing the CO2 in the air and ensuring no more wood is harvested than regrown.
- The paper industry is one of the few industries able to say that production of primary raw material removes carbon dioxide from the air.
- Trees eat up carbon dioxide and turn it into oxygen, which means every tree planted helps to reduce greenhouse gases - and helps our planet breathe.
- Papers are easily recyclable, which extends their life cycle and avoids landfill.

Of course, I have presented just one side to this argument. I make no apologies for this after hearing various well meaning but misguided environment 'consultants' emphasise paper as an evil to be eliminated (like the airline industry, paper is an easy target). I am happy to publish responses from readers - either for or against this article - and I always believe debate is healthy. But hopefully, if nothing else, readers of this will at least think of both sides of the story before accepting the glib statement 'paperless good, paper bad' as indisputable fact.

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