



The Inside Scoop

BY MARDEEN GORDON



Graphics Greener on the Inside

Manufacturers continue to improve sustainability of substrates



Mardeen Gordon has been making signs since 1983 and in 2001 started her own company, California Sign Group, offering consultation, design and permit preparation services to businesses and other sign makers in the Monterey Bay area. Contact her at 831-336-8497 or CaSignGroup@comcast.net with questions or requests for consultation.

THE HEALTH OF OUR PLANET is on everybody's minds these days, and sign makers are no exception. Many of us would like to trade toxic, polluting, chemical-laden materials for organic, biodegradable ones, and more clients are requesting eco-friendly products. But the material manufacturers have not yet invented the perfect substrate that is both green and durable enough for permanent exterior use.

Fortunately, there is one segment of the sign business that is not so driven by the need for longevity and UV resistance, and great advancements have been made in providing substrates made from recycled materials with low-impact processes that are biodegradable or recyclable at the end of their lifespan. There is no need to lower your expectations for image quality or finish, either, because in most cases, the presentation is almost indistinguishable from their more toxic cousins.

RECYCLED/BIODEGRADABLE MATERIALS

www.auroratextile.com/products.htm	Weaves of Green recycled, printable, canvas-like material.
www.ultraflexx.com/ultragreen.htm	Biodegradable PVC banner material
www.dickson-coatings.com/EverGreen-Fabrics	PVC-free biodegradable banner material
www.neschenbrands.com	Biodegradable cotton banner material
www.dazian.com	Search for eco-celtic cloth for recycled fabric material
www.xanita.com	Smooth-faced, corrugated-core recycled paper board
http://solutions.3m.com	Search for "controltac polyolefin" and click on the Graphic Solutions eNewsletter link.

NON-TRADITIONAL SIGN MATERIALS

www.smithandfong.com	Bamboo plywood
www.icestone.biz	Recycled glass and concrete countertop material
www.yolocolorhouse.com	Low-VOC, water-based paints
www.3-form.com	Clear and colored resin sheet embedded with natural materials
www.alkem.com	Recycled, aluminum-flake countertop material

Many of the manufacturers of the materials you are familiar with have been making great efforts to improve sustainable production practices and reduce their carbon footprint at the factory level, and some have developed new product lines that are promoted on their Web sites as "green" alternatives.

One company in particular that has gone above and beyond to research and

promote green products and practices in their digital-printing business is XL Prints in Santa Clara, Calif. I have been ordering from them for years, and have been pleased to read their newsletters and to see their eco-friendly materials featured prominently on their Web site, encouraging customers to check them out and give them a try.

They offer graphics printed on recycled and biodegradable banner materials—both vinyl and cotton; recyclable, PVC-free bio-board, corrugated fiber board made from recycled kraft paper; and non-PVC and low solvent Scotchcal IJ35E-20R printable adhesive backed flexible plastic film from 3M.

Other manufacturers and distributors offer Fome-Cor, Gatorfoam, Dibond, Alupalite, Celtec, Komatex, Aluma Corr

WEB SITES PROMOTING "GREEN" ALTERNATIVES

www.alcancompositesusa.com	Search for "green" to find press releases
www.piedmontplastics.com	Under Quick Links, click on GreenCore Rigid Substrate
www.laminatorsinc.com	Under Quick Links, click on "Green Information"
www.nevamar.com	Click on the green bar that reads "Panolam's Commitment to the Environment"
www.xlprints.com/products.lasso	Click on the box labeled "XL Green"

and Sintra produced with recycled content and waste reduction practices, and you will find even more if you take the time to search and support the effort to go green in the sign industry. PlyVeneer's BioBoard is made of 63 percent post-consumer waste and is 100 percent recyclable.

Some of these products even have potential for short-term exterior uses, and the technology will only continue to improve.

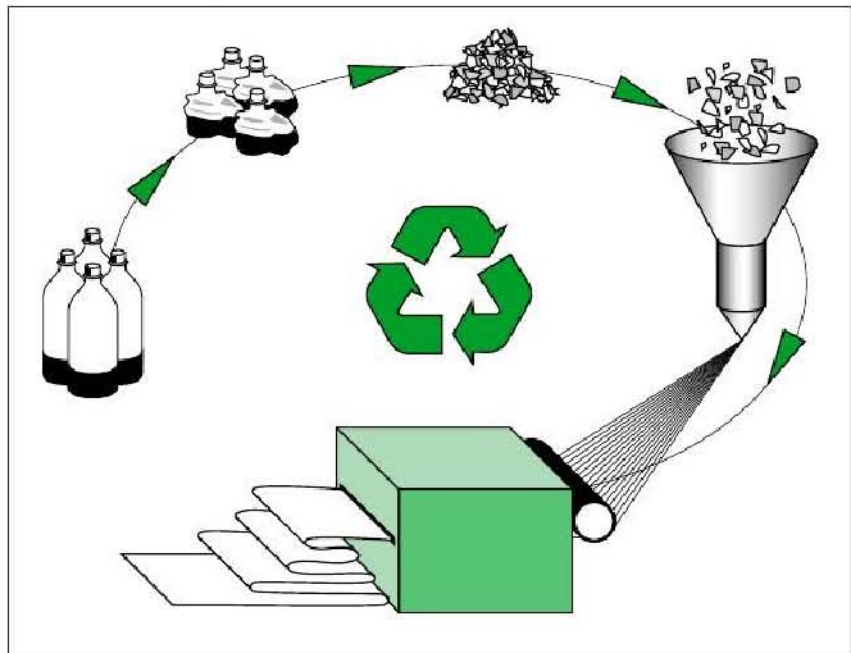
If you are adventurous enough to reach outside of the traditional sign-material suppliers and try using some of the green construction materials that are out there, a whole new palette of textures will become available. Many of these are not recommended for exterior applications but might be just the ticket for a unique and creative interior sign program.

As sign manufacturers, we and our clients are the end-users of these products, and we can continue sustainable practice by educating our customers about the disposal and recycling of their graphics, encouraging them to reduce waste by using sizes that utilize material sheets efficiently, and even returning printed boards to be re-used on the reverse side or re-covered with printed graphics.

The more we seek out and promote the use of environmentally friendly sign products, the greater the demand will grow, and the market will respond with more choice and competitive prices. We can help make our world greener from the inside out. **SDG**



When longevity is not an issue, much more environmentally friendly substrates can be used. Many of the manufacturers of the materials you are familiar with have been making great efforts to improve sustainable production practices and reduce their carbon footprint at the factory level, and some have developed new product lines to specifically be more environmentally friendly without diminishing image quality.



Bio-Celtic is an environmentally friendly white Celtic fabric, made from 65% Recycled Polyester/35% virgin Polyester. Same construction, fire rated properties and washability as our standard Celtic products. Each yard of Bio-Celtic Cloth conserves approximately 44,000 BTUs of energy, equivalent to .36 gallons of gasoline. Recycled polyester is made from post industrial waste and post consumer plastic bottles. Due to the nature of the raw materials used, Bio-Celtic will cast in shade to the off-white, a more natural look than the stark white of virgin polyester.