

Green Grøset Trykk

Protecting the environment has to be a top priority for all of us in the printing industry. This much we know, but taking steps to improve how we do business isn't that simple and is made harder by the ridiculous myth that going green is an expensive proposition. Fortunately a growing number of printing companies around the world are using their brains and have recognised that green habits are good for business as well as the planet. They are making real and tangible improvements to their profitability, as well as to their green credentials. Some of these companies have only come lately to the environmental cause, while others, such as Grøset Trykk in Norway, have been at it for many years.

Grøset Trykk employs 29 people and has a turnover Nkr45 million (about €5.25 million). In Norway, which has a population of 4.6 million, this is considered a medium sized offset printing company. Grøset Trykk has a couple of Heidelberg Speedmasters and images Agfa's

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chemistry-free plates with a Heidelberg platesetter. The company prints magazines, brochures and books, much like many other small printers. In fact in size, turnover, equipment and services, Grøset Trykk is pretty typical of most printing companies around the world.

The idea to go green came from the company's owner, Jan Erik Petterson, who had established a sales office in Sweden. Swedish print buyers were already demanding green certifications and Mr Petterson returned to Norway to become the first green Norwegian printer some 15 years ago. But it took a while for customers to catch on, and even now the company isn't under particular pressure from customers, although over the last two years print buyers and Norwegians in general have started to appreciate the need for green policies. "We have this environmental focus because we believe in it and there's

a good connection between environmental activities and clear economic benefits," says Grøset Trykk's CEO Karin Hokstad Widerøe.

Grøset Trykk has been committed to environmentally friendly working methods since before being green was trendy. The company has been certified for ISO 14001 since 1999 and recently became the first printing house in Norway to obtain dual certification for both the PEFC and FSC certification schemes. Grøset Trykk is now the only Norwegian printing company to offer



The print factory at Grøset Trykk, housed in a former barn.

customers the choice of either PEFC or FSC certified papers. This is an important step because chain of custody certification has taken off slowly in Norway. As with other Nordic countries, forests have long been treated as a renewable crop, a resource that has to be managed in order to sustain the trees and the ecosystem for which they are the foundation. From a Nordic perspective it's reasonable to question the need for certification of an activity that has long been standard practice.

That Grøset Trykk has bothered with certification sends a strong signal to its local market and beyond: certification provides an independent and formally recognised endorsement. Customers can have environmentally friendly print and are unconstrained in their choices of paper, since some paper suppliers have one and some the other. According to Widerøe: "It depends on their supply chain so we don't prefer one or the other, but customers have the choice". This gives customers confidence and a clear conscience. But perhaps the most important signal is the one going out to other markets, especially

in countries where forest management isn't part of the national DNA.

Widerøe continues: "We chose to get PEFC and FSC certified because it was a natural part of our overall business approach, where we focus a lot on environmental responsibility. We are more focused than many Norwegian commercial printers, particularly on the environment. Our environmental responsibility has at least two aspects. One is the shaping of the product because you must have enough knowledge to shape the



Karin Hokstad Widerøe, CEO of Grøset Trykk.

product in an environmentally friendly way and enough morals, so that if, for example, a client wanted a leaflet in a certain way we might explain that if he reduced it by one centimetre in one direction he could save. Secondly, when it comes to production, our responsibility is to do it in a way that considers the environment, as far as possible".

The customers for the most part are privately held companies, with whom Grøset Trykk works quite closely. "We do both design and printing. Within design we meet the needs of our customers. For printing we work by deciding what products they are good at, and then target at relevant customers. We have increased our production 18 percent this year".

Perhaps the most compelling reason for these green efforts is financial. The company's investment into green certificates has given it an income as well as reduced costs. In 2008 Grøset Trykk invested Nkr300,000 into its environmental work and added an astonishing Nkr1.2

The PEFC (Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification schemes) founded in 1999 promotes sustainably managed forests, through certification by third parties. It is a global non-governmental organisation that recognises national certification schemes so that buyers of wood and paper products are assured that their materials are sourced from managed and sustainable forests.

The FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) is also an international, non-governmental organisation. It was founded in 1993 to provide a reliable wood labelling scheme and promotes responsible management of the world's forests. It has national working groups in more than 50 countries and gets support through certification fees and other NGOs such as the World Wildlife Fund and Greenpeace. FSC certification confirms that a business's operations meet the FSC's specifications and that the paper's origins can be tracked to the point of production and that the raw materials involved are from managed forests that the FSC has also certified.

million to the bottom line. This fourfold return resulted from reduced costs and higher revenues, generating a solid increase in income. Widerøe says: "It's very good investment for us working with environmental practices ... the way we gain more money is far beyond the costs. We earn money from our rubbish: plastic, printing plates, paper and many more categories for recycling... it's only 1.7% of our rubbish that goes to landfill". This material is trace material that cannot be recycled because there are no channels for it such as rubber and the straps used on paper piles. In 2008 Grøset Trykk had an income of Nkr100,000 from rubbish.

These numbers are the result of continuous efforts to manage waste since 1998. This is when Grøset Trykk gained its first eco-label; now it has seven including the Nordic Swan for which it has been certified for over ten years. This Nordic ecolabel is designed for consumers, so that they can choose goods produced in a sustainable way. It's a voluntary system so companies follow an agreed set

of criteria such as paper, ink, production processes and so on.

Grøset Trykk also has a system in place to ensure total CO₂ neutrality through carbon offsetting. Widerøe explains: “We decided to go CO₂ free last year. It was a long debate within the company. When we found the UN Projects (an initiative to spread clean energy use) we decided to buy units. The project is a socially responsible project verified by Norske Veritas (providers of verification services) or equivalent companies, and the results of projects are real. Ours is in Rajasthan in India, where they burn waste to produce electricity and the waste from this is used as fertiliser. We feel certain that this is a good line.”

Routines of compliance with standards such as 14001, FSC or PEFC also impose a discipline on the company, and this too is good for profitability. Going for formal certification encourages a company to review its own position on the environment, and Widerøe is convinced of the internal values of certification: “The process makes us reflect on our own procedures and we learn something new about our work for each certificate we earn”, she says. “Also, the recognition of our efforts that the certificate provides tends to strengthen our teamwork spirit and instils pride in our work”.

The effort made by of companies like Grøset Trykk really can make a difference. It puts pressure on suppliers to follow green practices and in the case of Grøset Trykk, attracts customers from competitors. This in turn can encourage other companies to establish their own environmental policies. Given the steady rise of environmental awareness and its economic benefits, this ripple effect will spread further and further. It won't reach the world's hundreds of thousands of small to medium sized printers overnight, but the work of companies such as Grøset Trykk is more than just the beginning.

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