

Environmentally aware – Elanders Malmö, Sweden

The growing awareness of the need for action against unnecessary use of energy, chemicals and fuel, has spurred both vendors and individual printers within the graphic arts industry to take real action.

With around 1500 employees and a turnover of €210m, Elanders is one of the largest printers in Sweden. The company has production centres in the UK, China, Hungary and Germany in addition to the six centres in Sweden. Elander's push into more environmentally benign production methods started in the late nineties and several of the company's production centres have achieved ISO 14001 certification since then.

This article is part of the Verdigris series of stories about understanding the environmental impact of print. The Verdigris project is supported by Agfa Graphics, Canon Europe, Digital Dots, drupa, Fujifilm, HP, Ricoh and Screen.

The ISO 14000 family of standards deal with Environmental Management Systems (EMS). According to ISO an EMS meeting the requirements of ISO 14001 is a management tool enabling an organisation of any size or type to:

- identify and control the environmental impact of its activities, products or services
- improve its environmental performance continually
- implement a systematic approach to setting environmental objectives and targets, to achieving these and to demonstrating that they have been achieved.

Beyond this (and as part of the work within the ISO 14000 activities), the Elanders production site in Malmö, southern Sweden, set up a special project together with the city council. This came about when the Respect Climate organisation, a consulting company which helps businesses become responsible corporate citizens, invited

Elanders to set a goal for the site to reach carbon neutral production. In essence this is about trying to lower the emission of carbon dioxide locally, as well as supporting work on emissions reduction internationally, especially in developing countries.

Elanders Malmö managed to cut its own emission levels by close to 45% and then, through Respect Climate, bought shares in a project in India to extract energy out of farming waste, to make up for the remaining emission caused in its print production. This is known as carbon trading and is in line with Europe's Emissions-Trading Scheme (EMS). Under this scheme organisations in member states receive permits to emit carbon dioxide, and if they need to produce more than the permit allows, the organisation can buy more. The idea is that the cost of the additional permits is high enough to act as a disincentive to excess emissions.

However companies who want to declare themselves as being carbon neutral can't just buy themselves that title. Rather, they need to make tangible efforts to reduce their own energy consumption. This is supervised and audited by Respect Climate, and the assessment procedure follows the GHG Protocol closely, set up by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol Initiative using methodologies approved by the CDM Executive Board. The applicant must make the case that the carbon project would not have happened anyway, and must establish a baseline estimating the future emissions in absence of the registered project. The case is then validated by a third party agency, to ensure the project results in real, measurable, and long-term emission reductions.

Respect Climate is a privately owned consulting company working with issues relating to sustainability and environmentally friendly production. The head office is located in Sweden, but amongst the owners is Body Shop, founded by Gordon Roddick and the late Dame Anita Roddick. Body Shop is a cosmetics company based in the UK that has been active in environmentally sustainable work for many years, not only within production of cosmetic products. Respect Climate in turn cooperates with a network of organisations and governmental bodies to further spread knowledge and

share experiences about sustainability and reduction of greenhouse gases.

Robert Gilderson, coordinator of environmental issues at Elanders Malmö explains: “We accepted the invitation from Respect Climate and Malmö city council to participate in a project to analyse how and if we could reduce the level of carbon dioxide in our total production process. We soon found that the largest contribution came from our power consumption, and switched to only buy electricity produced in hydroelectric power plants.”

He continues: “Other sources of greenhouse gas emission is transportation, both for deliveries, but also transportation of people involved in the production. We decided to replace two company cars with more environmental friendly models, as well as switching the delivery van into a new diesel-based model with less emissions than the old one. All in all we reduced the amount of CO₂ by 45.4% thanks to those steps.”

This is where Respect Climate steps in, with suggestions of investments into projects that can help reduce CO₂ emissions in other parts of the world, in order to reach a climate neutral production status. This way of buying into projects to compensate for emissions caused by daily production, and that can't be avoided for the moment, follows the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) protocol, supervised by the UN, as part of the Kyoto protocol.

For Elanders this meant investing in a small scale project in the village Marhalli, in the southern Indian province of Karnataka. In the project, biomass fuel in the region is used to generate clean power, instead of being handled as waste.

Robert Gilderson at Elanders comments: “It feels good to support a project which not only contributes to a lower overall greenhouse gas emission, but also creates job opportunities, as well as helping farmers to get paid for what used to be regarded as waste.”

But Elanders activities for more environmentally-friendly production do not stop there. To help print

buyers choose among paper qualities recommended by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), Elanders have two production centres that are certified by the FSC. Elanders also has production sites certified according to the Nordic eco labelling system, with the right to use the Swan logo in printed matters.

For Elanders the cost of working with environmental issues is well motivated. Robert Gilderson concludes: “The work invested in finding ways to reduce energy consumption pays back with lower power costs in the overall production. We are also confident that showing that we are serious in our work with issues related to environmentally-friendly and sustainable production, attracts new customers as well as strengthens our goodwill, including in the eyes of our employees.”

– Paul Lindström 