

Case study: O₂



“We actually had comments from our staff about an improvement in the quality of in-store literature.”

Beck Hughes – Head of Retail Trading, O₂

“We did blind tests with O2’s marketing staff to compare the print quality of the existing virgin grade to the recycled content paper. Everyone preferred the recycled paper.”

Mike Clarke – Account Manager, Williams Lea

Overview

O2 is one of the world’s leading mobile telecommunications brand names and one of the top four network providers in the UK. O2 has ambitious targets for reducing its impact on the environment for every aspect of business operations.

The challenge

Customer communications and print, particularly outsourced print management, were identified by O2 as a key area for reducing waste and environmental footprint.

The organisation wanted to shift to using recycled content for marketing materials but this presented significant risk.

The mobile phone industry is hugely competitive with customer communication - from new customer welcome packs to monthly and in-store literature - critical to maintaining customer loyalty and attracting new customers.

O2 had explored the possibility of moving to more environmentally friendly products for marketing materials in the past but costs had always been too prohibitive. They approached Williams Lea, the global leader in corporate information solutions, to find a cost effective solution to meeting their environmental targets.

Mobile phone network cuts carbon footprint by using 50 per cent recycled paper for all marketing material

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The solution

Williams Lea was already engaged with O2 to run a £multi-million contract encompassing above the line poster production, marketing direct mail, marketing print, instore POS and customer welcome pack collateral. As part of the solution the established eight man in-house team were able to interrogate O2's business needs and their existing design and print process.

Using this inside knowledge, Williams Lea were able to identify where improvements could be made to reduce waste and, with O2, agree the three criteria for the new product:

- The chosen recycled paper had to look as good as virgin grade paper
- It must run well on the printing presses
- The recycled product must have negligible cost implications

Working with McNaughton Paper, Williams Lea undertook an extensive market review to identify suitable alternative products. Comprehensive print tests were completed with five different print suppliers who added a short run of the recycled content paper to the end of scheduled print jobs. This allowed direct comparison with the virgin grade paper and testing to find the best scenario without compromising the quality of the finished product.

Results

Williams Lea was able to deliver beyond the objectives set by O2 at the outset of the contract::

- Identified and sourced 50% recycled content paper at a range of weights which had better visual print quality than product previously used
- Recycled paper was at a cost parity with incumbent stock
- Diverted in excess of 1,500 tonnes of paper per annum from landfill into new products
- Enabled O2 to clearly demonstrate to customers and staff its commitment to reducing its environmental footprint
- Also reduced O2's use of PVC materials for packaging by moving to recycled stocks
- The contract made the use of recycled paper central to O2's corporate responsibility targets, and has opened up the possibility in the future of moving all marketing materials to fully recycled product.

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