

Sustainable Success Reports

from the St. Louis Green Business Challenge

ST. LOUIS™



GREEN BUSINESS CHALLENGE

The Advertisers Printing Co. Proves “Green” Means Business

By Jean Ponzi

Locally owned and operated since 1923, this central-city print shop is thriving through shifts in the printing business, thanks in large part to investments in sustainable thinking and practice. “Our sustainability philosophy is simple,” says John Heaney, Vice-President of Sales, Chief Sustainability Officer and a 23-year company veteran. “We lead by example, share what we know, and advocate for relentless improvement, both personally and professionally.”

Advertisers was first in Missouri (26th in the world) to earn the Sustainable Green Printer (SGP) certification, awarded through rigorous documentation of a printer’s integration of resource conserving measures into both planning and operations. They were also first in the state to earn printer’s certification from the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

These credentials helped win the contract to print General Motors’ 2013 Annual Report, which emphasized GM’s sustainable factors and could feature the SGP brand on its back cover because of Advertisers.

“Our combination of craft and sustainability got this job,” says Heaney, “proving that a small firm can do great work at the Fortune 500 client level.”

Advertisers is a family company. Third-generation Bill Fechner is owner and CEO; the fourth generation works there too. Fechner’s support for Heaney’s time, over a year and a half, to earn the SGP certification, yielded multiple ROI. “Some of our 48 longtime employees were skeptical about ‘that green stuff,’” recalls Heaney, “but during our SGP qualifying process, staff interest caught fire. We get continual process improvements from individuals applying the company sustainability standards.”

Processes that keep Advertisers competitive and growing in the digital age include waste minimization. A computer-controlled ink mixing system ensures color accuracy, preventing remixes and waste of both ink and time. All inks are not only free of volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions, they are pigment-rich, yielding better outputs with less ink used.

Most recent audited waste management results include recycling over 22,000 pounds of metal plate and over 592 tons of paper trimming and packaging per year. The plant recycles 14 different kinds of materials and encourages staff to bring materials from home if community recycling doesn’t accept them. Advertisers’ “School Share” donations of unused paper stock to inner city schools provided 2.3 tons of paper in 2013.

Advertisers’ participation in the St. Louis Green Business Challenge since 2011 helps them market sustainability values alongside printing services. “B-to-B networking turns into advisory relationships,” reports Heaney, “Where we help build the green knowledge base for our region’s business sector. Fellow Challenge companies like Express Scripts, Enterprise Holdings, Graybar and Monsanto tap our expertise to evaluate the ‘green cred’ of paper products and suppliers. This translates into work. If we’re the best informational source, we’ll be the best source for production contracts.”

Advertisers’ main client base is colleges and independent schools, cultural institutions, and arts organizations. They specialize in high-end, die-cut, 5-6 color pieces: specialty folders, brochures, booklets, capital campaign pieces, annual reports. “Production for these clients,” Heaney explains, “must make a huge impression within non-profit budgets. Our process includes helping them right-size their print runs by studying their audience data, targeting their message, printing less quantity and more impactful pieces. This saves our clients money, uses fewer materials, and optimizes data-management to get great results.

“Our obsession with quality and sustainability,” says Heaney, “helps our clients print in good conscience. While the Advertisers Printing Co. conserves resources, our processes make the materials we use do their best work.”

The St. Louis Green Business Challenge, a joint program of the St. Louis Regional Chamber and the Missouri Botanical Garden, delivers “triple-bottom line” results (financial, social, and environmental) to businesses across the St. Louis region. The Challenge’s scorecard of strategies and customized coaching helps companies “green up” everyday practices that work for each company’s goals, type of business, and company culture. This column is funded in part by the St. Louis-Jefferson Solid Waste Management District and the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.



Green Savings Plus Message on the Move: the Advertisers Printing fleet of hybrid delivery/staff vehicles delivers almost \$11,000 in savings a year.

Learn more at www.stlouisgreenchallenge.com