

# GREEN CARD

You may find that being a fully fledged 'green card' carrier can offer more to you and your company than you think.

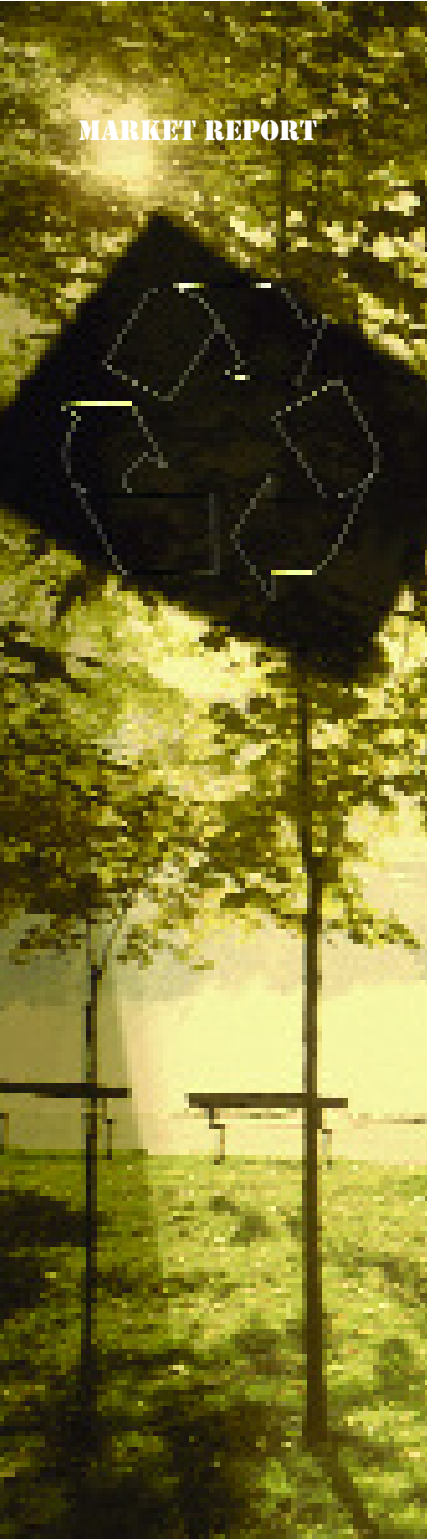
KNEEZ BUKHARI

Almost all office equipment, either in its waste form, during manufacture or throughout its life has the capacity to affect the environment; from paper to photocopiers. At a very basic level, products affect the environment simply because electricity is consumed.

Working up from this, it's necessary to consider the materials which the product is made from, which can affect the environment to a greater or lesser degree depending on type. Printers, PCs, copiers, faxes and monitors all affect the environment in the production, use and disposal stages of their life

cycles, and these factors should be borne in mind by customers purchasing them. This is particularly relevant in light of the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) directive which will come into force in January 2006 and will require the safe disposal of all electrical and electronic equipment.

Paul O'Shaughnessy, brand manager at M-real UK Ltd, says that because all products are transported and any movement of goods result in emissions, buying products made in the UK minimises this particular negative impact on the environment. Mark Pashley, UK trade marketing manager at Fellowes, says, >>



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**HELEN HOPPER,  
PR MANAGER AT  
KYOCERA MITA UK**

“Everyone has a duty to act responsibly when it comes to the environment and, as consumers, we have the choice between an environmentally friendly product and a non environmentally friendly product. It’s down to the consumer to make the decision.”

Helen Hopper, PR manager at Kyocera Mita UK, adds that the UK discards a million tonnes of WEEE each year (enough to fill 81 HMS Belfasts), which can end up in landfill sites, or shipped to countries with less stringent environmental laws than Europe. It remains a serious and hazardous problem wherever it ends up. It’s therefore vital that we start to consider the impact of products in production, use and at the end of their life, even before we buy them.

Companies across all sectors are being increasingly encouraged to reduce their CO2 emissions and numerous incentive schemes have been set up to help them to do this. The public sector has paved the way by introducing stricter green procurement measures for all government departments and other industries are now likely to follow suit.

We all need to face up to our green responsibilities. Mike Dinsdale, communications director, Brother UK, comments that, “Government should introduce legislation to protect our environment, forcing manufacturers to design more eco-friendly products, implement cradle-to-grave product life cycles and reduce the amount of waste going straight to landfill.” In turn, he adds, dealers should promote environmentally friendly goods and end users should select these products wherever possible.

By using environmentally friendly products, we help protect and preserve our environment. Aside from the corporate social responsibility benefits of using environmentally friendly products, there can be significant financial benefits too.

Tim Barker, environmental manager at Robert Horne Group, comments that recycled papers bring the benefits of helping to reduce

waste going to landfill sites, a lower environmental impact during production and reduced pressure on natural forest resources. The quality of recycled paper has also improved greatly over the years and the price can be surprisingly affordable. This is a point that consumers need to be told about as many people still think that ‘green’ products cost significantly more than ‘non-green’ products.

And it’s not just about the products themselves, but also about the whole approach to developing an environmentally friendlier office. Carrying out an audit of IT and determining whether it is possible to rationalize the number of printers and copiers in the organization will reduce overheads, and the amount of waste that the office generates.

Helena Arenson of the Arenson Group, adds that the actual buildings that products are manufactured in are also a cause for concern, “Conventional buildings often have a detrimental effect on the environment because of the carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases that are produced as a by-product of their heating and ventilation services.”

As a salesperson, you need to be fully aware of all the issues so you can talk about them briefly should consumers question you, but also so you can go into more detail about the benefits and provide relevant solutions. Environmental officer at Antalis, Liz Wilks, cautions that selling green products may not be as easy as one might initially think, as there remains a huge awareness deficit in the market place. Sales personnel need to become not only knowledgeable of the product but also of the concept.

Salespeople need to consider the entire product lifecycle from manufacture, through its normal use to final disposal, as each product will offer different environmental benefits at each stage. In particular, says Tom Wagland, QA and environmental manager at Ricoh UK, “The energy efficiency of products should be

highlighted as well as the life cycle design of machines and whether the manufacturer offers any help in disposing of them in an environmentally friendly way.” In addition, salespeople should be educating consumers on the accreditations that show a product has passed strict environmental tests.

Most manufacturers have recognised their responsibility to the environment and are taking it seriously; you need to be able to pass this information along so consumers know exactly what products they are buying and, importantly, what kind of company they are buying it from. This also includes your own company. Sarah Flower, Conqueror brand manager, says, “Business leaders need to take account of the way their businesses operate and the effort they put into sustainable development.”

Consumers will want to know what environmental standards the products meet. They’ll also want to know what facilities the sales company has in place to recover the end of life equipment that they are replacing. Many organisations now require that the products they buy meet certain environmental standards, so it is easier for sales people to offer such products. It’s probably true to say that financial factors still outweigh environmental ones where selling products is concerned, but the balance is shifting, and if you can present the holy grail – environmentally responsible products that will also save the customer money – you’ll be onto a winner.

Businesses can have a substantial negative impact on the environment, especially in terms of high levels of energy consumption and waste production and these effects have been neglected for decades as green improvements were believed to be unnecessary and costly. But that’s not the case anymore. By making small changes to day-to-day operations, businesses can create significant environmental benefits at no extra cost. ■