

# Serious About

By Barbara Wichmann

## SUSTAINABILITY

### Digital Trends Support Sustainability.

As we look to the key trends that will help define the business agenda in 2016, one thing is clear: the sustainability imperative will remain front and center. As global corporations increasingly align sustainability goals with financial goals—with sustainability initiatives often falling under the remit of CFOs—they are also looking to their suppliers to raise their sustainability game in a measurable way. But the good news is, you have probably been making significant progress in acting more sustainably without even realizing it. Over the past few years, technology has revolutionized marketing and communications, enabling more efficient, better targeted and less wasteful ways of engaging with our audiences—attributes that neatly mirror the desired outcomes of sustainability.

With that in mind, here are the top trends in marketing and communications that will help your company bolster its sustainability efforts in 2016.

**Mobile is your new direct mail solution.** Mobile is set to totally dominate desktop in 2016, with mobile traffic, according to data released by **Google**, already having overtaken desktop traffic in 2015. Mobile offers highly targeted advertising opportunities, including Facebook's location-based advertising, that provide an excellent, greener alternative to paper-based mail-shots. The move in traffic away from desktop to mobile also means it's crucial to have a site that is optimized for mobile, particularly as Google has created an algorithm which phases out sites which aren't mobile friendly.

**Dare to go paperless.** Becoming a 100 percent paperless office might never be fully achievable, but there are lots of apps and cloud solutions available to put a serious dent in paper usage and save a few trees along the way. Google Calendar and Google Docs are great, and free, ways of sharing information and documents with multiple members of staff, allowing changes and comments to be made without ever having to print a single page. Dropbox is another very useful and free (paid versions with more storage space are also available) cloud service that makes sharing documents, videos, and photos a breeze.

**Create eBooks, not print collateral.** Another key trend

set to hang around in 2016 is content marketing. Creating a library of eBooks on any number of topics, for example, to help support better use of your product or focused on a particular aspect of your company's offerings in the context of a broader trend is a powerful way of communicating your position as an industry leader without the expense of printing out hundreds of copies. Asking people to register before being able to download a copy is a great way of building up a strong email database.

**Ditch the paper holiday cards.** Instead, create a bespoke email version. Depending on how creative and interactive you want to make it, and with plenty of companies dedicated to producing digital cards, the sky is the limit. Similarly, it's time to move away from highly disposable eco-unfriendly corporate gifts. We've all seen abandoned piles of branded giveaways left at conventions—a waste of both money and resources. Instead give something potential customers will really value, such as an eBook that would only normally be available to actual customers. Creating a QR code is a simple way of allowing people to download it.

**Embrace video.** You may have noticed a marked uptick in the amount of video advertisements on Facebook, Twitter, and on websites in general over the last year. In 2016, this is set to continue. And away from advertising, videos are useful ways of providing product demonstrations and "how-to's" (and hosted within your website and uploaded onto sites such as YouTube). This potentially reduces the need for in-person meetings, thereby eliminating the amount of traveling required.

The digital opportunities to make smarter sustainability-focused choices are all around, with the added bonus that they often have a positive impact on the bottom line. Choose the right solutions for your company and be sure to highlight

your sustainable working practices to your client base. ◆



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